

The Roots of Terror. Imperial Overdrive for Power and Control

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Global Research, November 17, 2015

[The Palestine Chronicle](#) 16 November 2015

I was sickened to hear and watch the events occurring in France. Part of that was for the immediate families, friends and neighbours of those so needlessly killed. Another part was the fear factor, not fear of terror or for myself but fear for how the powers that be would ratchet up the security control within their own societies by using their own biased racist fear factors in order to rationalize it to control their own populations. A wider perspective is the sick feeling of realizing that humanity in general is capable of producing such atrocities.

The latter is where a large problem arises within our supposedly 'civilized' western world. It is not just the terrorists who are capable of atrocities against humanity; it is not just Muslim fanatics who are capable of terrorising the west; it is not the 'other' who is capable of demonizing and killing their opponents. It is you and I and the societies that we support that are also capable of producing terror across large swathes of the world.



Just as the roots of terror lie within our own hands, so do the roots of an altruistic humanitarian outlook.

It is our history of moral superiority and technological advantage for which we, the 'western' world, the 'civilized' world, perceive ourselves as being superior – well, look at us, living lifestyles of comparative wealth and luxury to much of the world, of course we are superior. What is not contained within that narrative is that our wealth has much more to do with the imperial conquests by the European 'west' of various regions in order to extract their wealth of whatever sort. Our moral superiority is nothing more than a gloss of rhetoric over the

motivation to use a superior military technology to subdue, conquer, and extract wealth from other regions and other peoples.

In short the roots of terror lie within our own hands. Certainly other civilizations of past eras have done the same thing with their own versions of morality and technological advantages. That only underlines the idea that this is a human condition, with our current version apparently much more deadly than previous iterations of our collective and unrecognized heart of darkness.

Imperial overdrive for power and control.

Wherein, then, do the roots of terror lie, historically apart from within ourselves generally? One could trace the roots of terror back to the beginning of historical times, and then beyond into pre-history. But as we are supposedly a morally/technologically superior society today, the roots of today's terror can arguably be traced back to World War I, its imperial atrocities on all sides, followed by the demise of the Ottoman Empire.

Before then of course is the whole colonial history concerning the conquest of the Americas and the subjugation of its indigenous population. Societies then, almost wholly European, used the same old/same old tactics of arguing moral superiority while utilizing brutal technologies to subjugate and destroy native people. Africa was dealt the same deal, and while the indigenous populations were not destroyed, the slavery, resource extraction, and control of the physical land covered the entire continent. Most parts of Asia, whether the British in Southern Asia or the French in Southeast Asia, with the Portuguese and Dutch scattered throughout the region, underwent a similar colonial pattern.

World War I was effectively a clash of these empires trying to supercede the control of the other empires for the wealth and power of the rest of the world. From that war rose the divisions of the Middle East by the British and French into either outright control or spheres of influence ranging from the Sykes-Picot secret agreement through to the League of Nations mandates. The Versailles peace, while it 'worked' for some, failed miserably for others, not meeting the ideals of the Wilsonian rhetoric about all nationalities deciding their own futures democratically.

Because of that failure, World War II became the last and largest battle of World War I, witnessing again a change in the imperial overlords. Politically, financially, and economically, the U.S. became the dominant power gaining control of Europe through NATO, and using a combination of military and financial tactics to try and gain control of the rest who were not willing to submit to U.S. dominance. The readings of history are widely available, with various interpretations, with the general trend being one of an artificial moral superiority, combined with powerful economic forces (Bretton Woods, World Bank, IMF, WTO, OECD, et al), all sustained through covert and overt military actions.

The unipolar empire

The collapse of the Soviet Union is probably the most current historical turning point. It left the U.S. and its partners as the heirs apparent to being the global hegemon. A global peace would surely ensue, it was the 'end of history'. Unfortunately the same imperial imperative from centuries past survived and thrived with what was supposed to become the New World Order. It played out militarily through the designs of the Grand Chessboard, rather than through the logic of orderly trade and cultural interaction searching for a better

understanding of each other's cultures.

Arguably, the 9/11 attacks on the WTC could be labelled as a more important inflection point of history, but it is more readily seen as a culmination of blowback from actions taken by the global imperial hegemon after the collapse of the Soviet Union. That incident released powerful forces already prepared, ready to be set in motion. It was the 'New Pearl Harbour' desired by the authors of the Project for a New American Century (Kristol, Feith, Kagan, Wolfowitz, Woolsey, Rumsfeld, Bolton, Perle) who had been around since Reagan's tenure. It allowed the rapid passing of the Homeland Security Act, one so large it had to be by necessity ready to go for such a framework. It ramped up the rogue nature of U.S. military and corporate actions globally, as their infamous 'with us or against us' paradigm turned everything black and white, losing all perspectives of grey or colour.

The ultimate goal was global hegemony, the containment and or destruction of both Russia and China, the unparalleled support of Israel, and the demonization of all things Islamic. It was applied ruthlessly through all means of military operations, through the manipulation of international standards (e.g. the so called 'right to protect' doctrine), through the manipulation of financial markets and last but not least, the outright control of the mainstream media and its acquiescence, indeed promotion of, imperial rhetoric.

Multipolarity renewed

Fortunately we are at another inflection point in history – not fortunate for the depth of its current and potential violence – fortunate in that the 'rest of the world' has acted against the imperial overdrive of the U.S. and its imperial cohorts and satraps.

Yes, the attacks in Paris were brutal, vicious and intended to terrorize. But what of the terror that has been instigated in the name of empire, the empire in which you and I live? Is it less of a terror tactic to bomb cities, villages, and countrysides indiscriminately as in the Vietnam War? Are we more 'civilized' now that we pretend to use smart weapons? Is shock and awe a feature of technological morality making us superior to the thousands killed immediately, with millions more affected in subsequent years? Is the use of hyperbaric bombs, cluster munitions, white phosphorous, depleted uranium munitions, Hellfire missiles, dense inert metal explosives – all used by 'civilized' western powers in the wars of the Middle East and beyond – is that being more civilized?

Similarly is the control and manipulation of the financial world a morally justifiable act? Are 'free trade' agreements anything but free when they subjugate the junior partner to both financial and legislative/legal terms that essentially destroy sovereignty? Is our lifestyle – predicated on consumption, living within a rentier extractive economy (living in debt), buying cheap resources and goods from countries subject to financial and military imperial overdrive – is that how we rationalize our moral superiority?

This is understood by some of the world. It is seldom if ever recognized within the mainstream media, except for the odd occasion when a 'balanced' report is made on a situation in which there is no balance. What is being recognized, slowly and without huge rhetorical counter-attack, is that there is, fortunately, no longer a single global hegemon, even as they remain desirous to attempt it.

Putin asked at the UN, "Do you know what you have done?" They have created an empire of chaos that serves certain sectors well but for the most part to a level of violence not

witnessed for several generations, that could – if the right wing rhetoric and bluster of U.S. presidential candidates holds any meaning – could lead to the end of the world as we know it. The mujahideen “freedom fighters” of Reagan have morphed through the Taliban to al-Qaeda into the current ISIS iteration.

These groups have all been supported by the U.S.: certainly the mujahideen from which the Taliban; less so al-Qaeda other than as a useful ‘other’ as an excuse to combat on a global scale yet supported by long time ally, the medieval tribal monarchy of Saudi Arabia; and as can be extrapolated from current actions against ISIS who have proven to be a convenient destabilizer against Assad, receiving U.S. military aid indirectly through Turkey, Saudi Arabia and other partners.

As for France, it has been a willing partner in most if not all of these imperial endeavours. Asymmetric warfare has brought those endeavours to the ‘homeland’. France could have imposed martial law and locked the country down as more than likely would happen in the U.S. if a similar incident had occurred. In Canada the response has been measured and compassionate, a decided change from what would have happened if Harper was still in power and able to ramp up the terrorist fear factor. Fortunately, humanity also carries within itself an altruistic caring capacity towards others.

Just as the roots of terror lie within our own hands, so do the roots of an altruistic humanitarian outlook. That includes all humanity, indeed all of the global environment, and if nourished properly can result in the eventual reset to a more compassionate and caring social structure. I expect no miracles as the hatreds and animosities that have been developed by the control of the commons politically, financially, and militarily, presented with a subservient media, will not be easy to overcome.

What needs to be recognized is that we are all complicit partly through the acceptance of our lifestyles and what it is truly based on. As individuals sometimes not much can be achieved, but it becomes an individual responsibility to question authority, to question the *raison d’être* of our moral judgements, and to be prepared to do our own search for the truth, however painful that truth may be to predetermined ideologies.

Civilians in Paris have been killed because of these imperial drives for power, just as tens, hundreds of millions before them have been killed in the past. The human condition, its extremes of pathos and joy, requires a recognition of a global responsibility towards each and every ‘other’ that exists. Take personal responsibility, think globally, act locally towards an era when perhaps the world will be at peace with one another.

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