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# Terrorism and its Causes: is the USA Headed in the Right Direction

Aubrey W. Bonnett



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## CAN WE TALK

### Terrorism and Its Causes: Is the USA Headed In The Wrong Direction?

By Dr. AUBREY BONNETT



I had just emailed a relative in England to inquire as to his safety in the wake of the terrorists' bombings. He was fine and stated that he was sure it was the work of Al Qaeda but that the root causes must be addressed by the Western nations, even as he tried to draw parallels with the IRA in Ireland and the Mau Mau in Kenya. I demurred, slightly, only as I felt that these causes were multi-causal in nature — some causative, others correlative — and my 'cuz' was only touching on some of them.

But Tony Blair, England's Prime Minister, is on the right track when he

contends, publicly, that the root causes of terrorism lie in the abject deprivation of global poverty, world wide; a failure to bridge deep felt religious differences; to facilitate people in the Middle East (and I would add the rest of the developing world) to find effective paths to democracy; and, ultimately, finding a way to finally and justly solve the Palestinian /Israeli conflict.

Coming in the midst of massive sorrow and mourning, and his own attempts to reclaim the high ground on the 'war on terror' at the G8 conference in Scotland, I found Blair's comments reassuring. Moreso now, because of the serious absence of such dicta in the policy making levels here in Washington.

To be fair these views were echoed earlier in the Bush administration and especially by former cabinet secretaries O'Neil and Powell in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on our shores. Powell, especially, at State tried to use the Millennium Account for this purpose, and lead his agency at promoting the empowerment of Women, and buttressing educational and intercultural endeavors through US agencies for international development and cultural education. This point of view, in my opinion, is weakly represented now, and despite the noble efforts of Secretary Rice — the Millennium Account is seriously under funded and under spent, and our 'strategic interest' still trump the push for real governance and democracy among our 'significant allies' in the war on terror- especially in countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia

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and Kuwait, for example.

True, we hear this echoes of rhetoric from the President, at times, but the prevailing view seems to be focused on counterterrorism activities — ‘taking the fight to the enemy’, and the criminalist approach — surveillance, interdiction and prosecution — even as we are forced to become more insular oriented, and obsessively protected in this global world. It seems as if the President is afraid to offend his conservative base by stressing the ‘soft’ approach to what he has declared as a ‘war on terror’, even as he desperately tries to find a nuanced way to disengage before the 2006 mid year elections. It will be interesting to see how adept and really influential Rice is, now no longer as an unobtrusive national security adviser, but as a countervailing force in this ideologically focused cabinet — a role that both Powell and O’Neil failed at miserably as they were not really “friends of the president”, in the sense that Condi Rice is?

As most political scientists and political sociologists would concur, terrorism is the weapon of the poor and relatively deprived, militarily, as used to confront the powerful through violence. The British, as a once major colonial power, know this from their exploits in Kenya, Malaysia, Malta, Palestine etc; and as we know from the days on the civil rights movement, the KKK atrocities, Black and new left militancy in the 60’s and the new militia violence of the late twenties and early twenty-first centuries. But while we may acknowledge that the aim of the terrorists is to wreak mass panic and hysteria by striking the enemy at its ‘soft spots’, and by using unsuspecting agents — such as attractive women, children and converts who are phenotypically different — we should not lose sight of the ideological position of these ‘true believers’, and their ability to use these values to conquer the fear of death by elevating the status of martyrdom to galactic, heavenly proportions and morphing it to their cause. That is a lethal combination which the counterinsurgency/militaristic and criminalist approaches will not solve, in that reliance on these stances heavily and solely may force us to scapegoat and demonize the enemy and, in our strikes with their likely collateral damages, fail to build support exactly in demographic and regional arenas where it is sorely needed. We as Americans can learn much from British and French experiences in this regard.

What then should be our posture as we try deal with the twin scourges of terrorism, and insurgency, (both national and international), global poverty, international racism and religious persecution on the other. At a September 2003 conference called to address these problems and entitled: Fighting Terrorism for Human-ity, Norwegian Prime Minister, and Kjell Magne Bondevik gives us an appropriate paradigm. He argues that our attempts at trying to become more insular, and relying heavily on military options, counter insurgency strikes and the freezing of monetary resources are not the sure path to the success that our leaders crave. Even then, he too argued for addressing the root cause of intolerance and hatred and a need to change the tremendous social, economic and political despair which envelop so many in the poor nations of the world.

So having ‘herculean’ special police teams in the New York subways, and instruments that try to sniff or measure for deadly gases in Atlanta, Washington DC and Los Angeles may help the psyche in the short term. But, in a democratic and open society, a determined terrorist – emanating, strategically from covert sleeper cells — will always have the advantage. The most we can do is to limit and contain the damaging effects of determined, brilliant ‘true believers’ determined to use targeted, but indiscriminate violence. Sure, we must continue to make our intelligence, police, immigration and customs forces more diverse and reflective of our society — a trend that New York’s Police department is rapidly ratcheting — as we try to effectuate the ‘big stick’ approach’. But we must do more with the ‘soft-power approach’ — a more humane foreign policy that deals with easing restrictive and protective trade practices that help our citizens maintain a competitive advantage, and one that addresses the widening global inequality and unattainable democratic revolution in much of the world. As futurist and comparative sociologist Wendell Bell argued in 1967 in his, *The*

Democratic Revolution in the West Indies: “The problem of the haves and the have-nots has been obscured by ideological schisms based on legendary concepts. The real problem is how to harness science, the energies of man and modern techniques for the exploration of material resources and how to integrate all cultures into the universal culture of the equality of man, of all races and colors and of all tongues and customs, so that the struggle against nature becomes a social enterprise.”

I believe this is what Tony Blair genuinely had in mind at the recently concluded G8 conference; what has been echoed previously by Kofi Annan, Colin Powell and Kjell Bondevik for example; and now emphatically restated by Blair, again, even as he tries to deal decisively with a major turn in the war on terror on his soil. Blair has avidly supported Bush in his post 9/11 policy statements and excursions, and now I would hope that the President would sincerely heed Blair’s in this regard.

Terrorism will not be defeated by simply ‘taking the war to the enemy’. As Bell so cogently put it: “No society can honestly boast a present state of affairs that is not in some important respects negated by the image of a future egalitarian society. As long as that is true and images of a better future outdistance the realities of the present, one can rely on the fact that some men everywhere will continue the struggle”

It is from these struggles that the cesspool of true believers and terrorists are made. This we must as a nation address, effectively, and not reflexively and reactively as we now tend to do.

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## CARICOM's agenda addressed at CHOGM in Malta



Commonwealth Heads at this year's CHOGM (Queen Elizabeth in center)



Fishing Village in Malta was the venue for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting



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## Pres. Jagdeo meets with Brooklynites



Guyana's President Bharrat Jagdeo addressing the Brooklynites

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## Guyanese receives Barbados' Highest national honor



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December 1, 2005	November 16, 2005	November 01, 2005
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**Dennis Nelson** — C.E.O./Production Manager. Dennis has been working with newspapers companies in his native Guyana since 1962, his last position in Guyana was Production Manager of the Daily Chronicle newspaper. He is responsible for the overall advancement of the Caribbean Impact and also does the graphic layout and design.

**Godfrey Wray** — Editor-in-Chief. Godfrey has also been working in the newspaper industry since 1962. His last position in Guyana was Sunday Editor of the Guyana Chronicle newspaper. He is responsible for the editorial content and the overall advancement of the Caribbean Impact.



**Edgar Henry** — Financial Adviser and contributing writer. Edgar is a licensed real estate broker, accountant and businessman. He is currently the President of the Flatbush Business Improvement District and brings a vast knowledge of accounting skills and financial advice, which adds considerably to the enhancement of the Caribbean Impact.

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