

Russell Ackoff Presentation

Systems Approach to Terrorism
Conference

July 15 -16, 2002

Our government's current policies and activities reveal a lack of understanding of both the causes of terrorism and the mind-set of terrorists.

The USA's position on terrorism is considered futile and of negative value by many experienced with terrorism abroad.

For example: A professor in South Africa

And former student of mine (25 years ago) recently wrote :

I have...followed the USA response to this problem with alarm. There is no way you (USA) will succeed in getting rid of this problem with all the military might, financial might, and various responses I have seen so far. It will take a long time, because USA is big and strong, but you cannot win this, in the sense that the terrorists will be defeated. I grew up in a society structured around terrorism, I have seen this in my own and other countries:

You will not overcome this ... unless there is a culture and value shift of enormous magnitude. You will contain it for short periods, but “getting rid of it” requires to rethink your society....

Johan P. Stumpfer

**I hope here to initiate some such
rethinking.**

**I begin with the nature
of “fundamentalism.”**

Those who cannot cope with change effectively — with chaos and complexity — either try

- **to prevent it (*conservatives*),**
- **to unmake it (*reactionaries*), or**
- **to make disjointed incremental adaptive changes to relatively limited aspects of the real world (*liberals*)**

Some reactionaries seek generalized ways to unmake or suppress change, real or imagined, and agents of change, real or imagined.

Such reactionaries become fundamentalists.

Fundamentalism

is a response to an inability to deal with an environment that is undergoing an accelerating rate of change and rapidly increasing complexity - a *turbulent* environment, one characterized by uncertainty and unpredictability.

It does so by accepting a *fixed set* of beliefs about what are acceptable ends and means, and what are meaningful questions and answers to them.

**Fundamentalism is an effort to find
a static equilibrium in a dynamic
environment:
to fly through a storm on automatic
pilot.**

To fundamentalists

the “good” requires strict adherence to basic principles and doctrines promulgated to disciples by gurus.

No exceptions are allowed; no transgression is tolerated.

Fundamentalism ends the need for thought, hence dialogue.

There are two types of fundamentalist:

introverted

and

extroverted.

Introverted fundamentalists

- **seek isolation from the rest of society, want to be left alone.**

For example:

the Mennonites and Mount Carmelite nuns.

Extroverted fundamentalists

consider those who do not accept their doctrines either to be targets for conversion or enemies who obstruct their pursuit of their conception of “the good.”

Therefore, suppression or elimination of their enemies is taken to be necessary.

**Fundamentalists who are willing to use
violence to accomplish their objectives
are *terrorists*.**

**Few fundamentalists are terrorists, but
virtually all terrorists are
fundamentalists.**

To reduce or eliminate terrorism we must enable extroverted fundamentalists to deal with their turbulent environments effectively.

This requires providing them with the knowledge and resources required to achieve what is to them an acceptable standard of living and quality of work life.

As Johan Strumpfer wrote to me:

There is simply too much inequity in the living standards of the 3rd world people, and there are too many of them, for these forces to leave USA and Europe unscathed. If you (USA) do not want to hear this, the the opportunistic forces (terrorists) will exploit it and force the American society to listen.... So the mind-shift that is required is in the first place to see yourself for what you are, and start there.

The shift in mind set that is required involves realization that the inequitable distribution of wealth and opportunity that our policies and activities support and create must change;

and that organizations such as the IMF and World Bank act in ways that preserve all that is wrong in our policies and activities.

**Our policies and behavior, and those
of our allies in the “war against
terrorism” must be changed in five
ways:**

One:

Make available to disadvantaged nations and communities an amount of money and other resources to be used only for development of its members, that is, for increasing their ability to satisfy their needs and legitimate desires and those of others. A *legitimate desire* is one the fulfillment of which does not decrease the ability of any other to satisfy their needs and legitimate desires.

Two:

the funds may only be used in ways determined democratically, that is, by decisions made either by those affected by them, their elected representatives, or elected guardians or advocates of those who are incapable of such participation (e.g., children, the mentally ill, and future generations).

Three:

Corruption must be excluded from the handling of the funds and other resources provided.

Four:

experts are available to assist

decision makers and those

responsible for implementing

decisions *in any way they desire.*

Five:

Compliance with the four conditions set forth is monitored by a group whose members are agreed to by both the providers of the aid and its recipients.

**These conditions have been met
successfully in a number of
smaller-than-national
disadvantaged communities**