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I. Introduction

Each year the President has to address the annual Pugwash conference during its closing session, and he has the difficult task of trying to choose a topic which has not been exhaustively dealt with during the preceding week. This year my talk has been made doubly difficult because I felt it would be impossible to ignore the terrorist attacks on 11th September and yet it was clear that these would not escape attention during the rest of the conference. So I will take the terrorist issue as my theme but deal with it in my own way, and hopefully avoid repeating what has gone before.

Let me begin by asking: What are the effects on world security of the events of 11th September, both in the long-term and in the short-term? In the long-term it is still very uncertain: are we at the beginning of a new era, in which such devastating terrorist attacks on our cities become common? Will the retaliation in Afghanistan become a pattern for the future? Some commentators talk as though this is the inevitable scenario. It may even be that talking up this threat, and acting accordingly, will help aggravate the process and bring about the horrific future which is being contemplated. In other words, the long-term future may be affected by what happens in the short-term, so let me focus attention on this.

The attacks on New York and Washington were unprecedented in their nature, their scale and their symbolism. However, it is salutary to recall that terrorism has a long history and there is at least one famous episode in British history which, in its time, could have rivaled 11th September. This was the Gunpowder Plot of Guy Fawkes and his collaborators who planned on 5 November 1605 to blow up the Houses of Parliament at Westminster when the king and the entire political leadership were in session. Had it succeeded the effects would have been devastating and, even to this day, nearly four centuries later, bonfires are lit and fireworks set off while children recite the little jingle "Remember, remember, the fifth of November, gunpowder, treason and plot." Moreover, the plot had a religious dimension (the Catholic-Protestant conflict) and an international one, with the Catholic powers of France and Spain assisting their co-religionists in England. Spies and counter-spies were involved and historians still argue about

how much the conspirators were strung along, so that their eventual discovery would provide a pretext for repressive measures against the Catholics.

In any case, whatever the lessons of history, terrorism (or macro-terrorism, as such major events are now called) is perceived as a new global threat and this by itself has significant implications. First, there is the effect on major power confrontations, the source of much Pugwash concern over the years. We have lived through the US/Soviet arms race of the Cold War and there has been talk about the possible emergence of a new US/China competition, which might become dangerous. But, suddenly, in the face of a new common enemy (the terrorists), the major powers have played down their differences and relations between them are friendly. The criticisms of President Putin for his military actions in Chechnya are now muted - there is a rough parallel drawn between the Chechens and the Taliban, where terrorist actions in Moscow and New York are taken to justify preventive measures on their homelands. Similarly, the problems that China faces with some of the ethnic minorities in Central Asia now get a more sympathetic hearing from Washington.

In this way there have been beneficial effects on world security and this must be welcomed. On the other hand, this new harmony among the major powers comes at the expense of a gross over-simplification of the nature of terrorism. All terrorists are lumped together, and the underlying history and causes are ignored. This cannot be a healthy attitude for the long-term. To illustrate the diversity of terrorism and of the methods used to deal with it, I propose to look at four separate cases in more detail - it is important to get away from stereotypes and really examine each case with attention to its special aspects. At the same time, I will try to extract some general lessons from the past, some general principles which may help us for the future.

The four cases I have chosen all have one basic feature in common: they are all residual problems of the British Empire. I would like to say that I have a message from our Foreign Secretary, apologizing for the past sins of our forefathers, but alas, I am not authorized to convey such a message!

The four cases also share a common fundamental problem: two groups with totally opposed viewpoints, which appear irreconcilable, and for which no logical solutions appear possible. Yet, somehow, solutions do emerge and it is important to understand the circumstances that assist this process.

I will take my four case-studies in some sort of historical order.

II. Ireland

My first problem is that of Ireland, or more precisely, that of Ulster or Northern Ireland. Since I live in the UK, I have actually been exposed to this problem over many years, and though I cannot claim to be an expert, I am probably more familiar with it than the majority of Pugwash members.

Let me begin with a brief history. Ireland was essentially the first English colony, and it really got taken over in the 17th century. In particular Oliver Cromwell, the victorious leader of the Parliamentary forces who executed King Charles I, subjugated Ireland and encouraged large numbers of Protestant Englishmen to settle in Ireland, expropriating the indigenous Catholic population in the process. This was Cromwell's way of repaying his troops for their service in the Civil War. In a sense, democratic government in England was bought at the price of creating the "Irish Problem."

The conflict between the oppressed Catholic majority and the upper class Anglo-Irish Protestant establishment rumbled on through the centuries and became a dominant factor in British politics in the 19th century, when "Home Rule" (for Ireland) became the political battle-ground. Unfortunately the problem was not solved at that time and it continued and became more violent in the 20th century. A first step to a solution took place when the Republic of Ireland was established, but the resultant partition left Northern Ireland, with a protestant majority, as still part of the UK. This did not satisfy the Irish nationalists and the IRA then embarked on a long terrorist campaign. Although not as dramatic as the single attack on September 11, it was extensive and serious. Many civilians were killed, both in Ireland and on the mainland, Mountbatten was assassinated, Margeret Thatcher narrowly escaped and the city of London was badly hit. Moreover, there was counter-terrorism by Protestant militant groups and the IRA itself splintered into several factions.

For decades the standard response of the British Government was to use force to hunt down the terrorists, many of whom were caught and given long jail sentences. The British army was brought in to augment the constabulary. Those who urged negotiation aimed at a political settlement were met by the standard response "We do not negotiate with terrorists." Margaret Thatcher went so far as to ban the voices of IRA leaders on television: their roles had to be played by actors.

As you know, with changes in the government, political dialogue did eventually take place and after a long, slow and hesitant process, a peace was agreed and is now being implemented, with a provincial government in Northern Ireland including all political parties. It would be rash to assume that the problem has been totally "solved" - deep antagonisms die hard - but the longer reasonable peace continues the more likely it is that the deal will stick and will be reinforced by economic and social progress.

What lessons can we learn from this example? First, it is clear that, with a long-standing problem of this nature, rooted in religious divisions, there is no purely military solution. Decades of conflict have demonstrated this. But, for a political compromise, two essential factors are necessary.

1. Statesmanship by the political leaders in Britain - the courage to take difficult decisions. As the dominant player in the conflict, the responsibility to take the initial steps was with the UK. For the IRA to initiate peace moves would have seemed like surrender, and so unacceptable to its followers.
2. Some balance of power between the rival parties. This balance was only partly military, it was also political, since the IRA had the moral and financial support both of the Republic of Ireland and of the influential Irish community in the United States. We need only recall the role played by President Clinton and former Senator George Mitchell.

As a mathematician I am familiar with the laws of mechanics which govern the principle of balancing forces. They ensure that the point of balance is midway between the two ends provided the forces are equal. If one is much stronger than the other, the balance is achieved much closer to the stronger force. The same applies to the balance of political (and military) force. A negotiation between parties of very unequal strength will naturally lead to a very asymmetrical outcome, one that so humiliates the weaker party that the agreement will not be accepted by the rank and file. In other words, for a stable long-term solution between unequal opponents, outside intervention of some form is required.

Clearly related to this is the regional context of the conflict. By bringing in other players, the sharpness of the conflict may be diluted and the larger benefit of a peaceful solution may be clearer. Thus the fact that both the UK and the Republic of Ireland are now part of the EU has certainly helped, and the economic benefits of EU membership may cement the peace settlement.

III. South Africa

I was actually brought up in North Africa (Egypt and Sudan), so I have at least some familiarity with that continent. Again the history of the problems of South Africa goes back several centuries, when British and Dutch settlers came in increasing numbers. Although originally a British colony, South Africa became independent and the conflict was between the South African Government (representing the white settler population) and the large indigenous black population. Terrorism by the African National Congress was met by counter-terrorism by the government, and (as with Ireland) there were internal divisions, based on tribal loyalties, between the ANC and Inkatha.

The outside world was in general opposed to the Apartheid regime and sanctions were imposed, but no peaceful outcome seemed in sight. Most observers predicted a long and bloody struggle, culminating in some kind of cataclysm. Miraculously this did not happen. Mandela was released from his long stay in jail and negotiations with de Klerk eventually led to a peaceful transfer of power.

How did this miracle come about? What were the underlying reasons? As in the case of Ireland, we can discern two factors. First, there were bold political decisions by both de Klerk and Mandela, and de Klerk, as the man in power, had to take the lead. But second, there was in some sense a balance of forces. Although the white minority was in full control of the state, they had against them a large and increasingly militant black population and a hostile world overseas, whose sanctions were hurting the economy. A peaceful deal was by no means inevitable - this is where the statesmanship was involved - but the underlying forces were favourable.

IV. Palestine and Israel [1]

The conflict in Palestine has in some sense an extremely old history, going back over 2,000 years and involving three great religions. But, in its modern form, it belongs to the 20th century and took off with the famous Balfour declaration which offered to provide a home in Palestine for the Jewish people. Since my father is from Lebanon, and I spent my early years in that area, I am well acquainted with the recent history, though by the same token, I cannot pretend to be impartial.

Again, therefore, we have a conflict deriving directly from the last days of the British Empire, and merging, after World War II, into the realm of the American Empire. In a broad historical sense, Israel is the last Western colony, although it has its unique characteristics. The conflict is again between two peoples, the indigenous population and the immigrants, in which there is a very rough comparison with South Africa.

Unfortunately, the conditions for a peaceful settlement seem far away. Fundamentally, there is an imbalance of power with military, political and economic power all on the side of Israel, which has the full backing of the United States. At one time, the Arabs could play the Soviet card, but that time has now gone. Their only potential power lies in oil, and the time may come when the US, dependent as it is on Arab oil, will see that its best interests are served by brokering an equitable peace with the Palestinians.

It is also regrettably true that Arafat is no Mandela and Sharon is no de Klerk. The necessary statesmen have not yet emerged.

V. Kashmir

I come now to my last case-study - that of the disputed territory of Kashmir and the conflict surrounding it between India and Pakistan. Given that we are meeting here in Delhi, I could not ignore the issue, though I confess that I have no real first-hand knowledge of the area, as I have in the previous cases. However, I have been to India often and I have had lengthy discussions with senior figures in the Indian establishment who have explained to me at length the Indian case. So I am fully aware of the fact that India is the world's largest democracy, a secular state with a very large Muslim population and that Pakistan by contrast has been ruled by a succession of military regimes and harbours many militant Islamic extremists. The danger, therefore, is that I have not been adequately exposed to the Pakistani case.

While ancient history goes back to the Mogul invasion of India, the recent problem arises squarely from the last days of the British Empire with the partition of the sub-continent. The various states were given the choice of joining Pakistan or India and Kashmir elected for India, though the population is mainly Muslim, and Pakistan disputed the legitimacy of the decision.

Fifty years later on the problem looks as intractable as ever, three major wars and several minor skirmishes have been fought. Right now the two enemies are in direct confrontation along the entire border. Moreover, both countries now possess nuclear weapons so that the stakes have become even higher.

Where do we go from here? I offer no magic formula - that would be presumptuous on my part. However, based on the case-analysis I have been putting forward, and the general lessons learned I conclude the following.

There is a fundamental imbalance of power and although India can impose its terms, these will never lead to genuine peace if they are seen to humiliate the weaker party, namely Pakistan. Only India is in a position to break the impasse, and bringing in other parties, reflecting the wider concerns of the region and the world could help the negotiation process.

Finally, it is important to realize that there is a feedback between the internal problems of Pakistan and its conflict with India. As long as that conflict is unresolved it is unlikely that Pakistan will progress far towards a modern democratic government. Creating a peaceful resolution of the problems with India could be a catalyst for reform in Pakistan, something which would lead to greater stability in the whole area.

Similar remarks incidentally could be made about the Arab world and Israel. An equitable solution there could help all the Arab world to evolve towards more

democratic and responsible government, the only basis for a stable peace in the area.

ENDNOTE

1.Since my address in Delhi, the Palestinian/Israeli conflict has escalated and, by the time this appears in print, it may unfortunately have gone much further. I believe however that my analysis will, in general terms, still remain valid.