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Postcard from America

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The BAD Boy Bombings of Bangalore, Ahmadabad and Delhi 2008

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Several years ago a colleague of mine, a leading authority on Islamist groups told me that Jihadi political violence would not take hold in India because "Indian" Islam peacefully coexists with Hinduism.

At the time I thought -Oh My God, how can this expert think this considering the partition of Pakistan and India? Why should India be so special to be immune from the globalization of Islamic terrorism?

But since I grew up in a household as the female "baby" of a clan in which one served the eldest male first, sat at a separate table and spoke only if spoken to -- a situation to which Indian Muslim and Hindu women of traditional families might also relate, I slid back into keeping my mouth shut as I was preconditioned to, even with this expert and my own expertise involving a doctorate and analytic training which is practically equivalent to a second doctorate!

I was not surprised to learn about the Bangalore bombings though I was deeply saddened. In particular, they spoke to me, because in 1996 in my own personal experience of a near fatal road accident, I was saved by a caring hospital staff of Muslims and Hindus in a Bangalore hospital.

In many of my other contributions[1 , 2], I have written extensively about terrorism analyzing terror through imagery more specifically, a symbolic unconscious dissociation in conjunction with the literal and concrete use of language. If we glean a little information from what is cited at Wikipedia about these bombings, we can shed perhaps a little more light on the nature of the infantile terrorists' behavior and mind set by delving into the information which is cited and expanding upon it. In the Wikipedia article on the 13 September 2008 Delhi bombings, we learn that they were dubbed "Operation Bad" by the terrorists. What does this name signify in psychological terms? How do these terrorists unwittingly reveal clues about their disturbed mindset?

...The Indian Mujahideen "called this operation "Operation B-A-D", encompassing the Bangalore, Ahmedabad and Delhi Bombings. Intelligence officials had intercepted a call made "from the border" claiming "Operation BAD is successful", after the Ahmedabad blasts, which the Gujarat police that interpreted as Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Delhi, though the dates and specific places were not known...

Operation BAD

The Indian Mujahideen "called this operation "Operation B-A-D", encompassing the Bangalore, Ahmedabad and Delhi Bombings. Intelligence officials had intercepted a call made "from the border" claiming "Operation BAD is successful", after the Ahmedabad blasts, which the Gujarat police that interpreted as Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Delhi, though the dates and specific places were not known."[3 , 4]

Prior to this phone call, the terrorist organization took "responsibility" through an email communication to the media. "Indian Mujahideen strikes back once more. Within 5 minutes from now. . .This time with the Message of Death, dreadfully terrorizing you for your sins. And thus our promise will be fulfilled. Inshallah. . .do whatever you want and stop us if you can."

Terrorist behavior is remarkably infantile. Not a far cry from aberrant naughty little toddlers as they taunt the police with "catch us if you can." They themselves dubbed the attacks as "BAD." They remain bad little boys because their superegos have never been born. [The superego is the part of a person's mind that acts as a self critical conscience, reflecting universally shared social standards.] The name, Operation BAD, is literal and the behavior concrete - yet lethal. Herein lies the brutality. However, unlike little naughty boys who do bad things in and during play and who wish to be caught in order to receive attention, the terrorists have no filter. The terrorists quite literally act out their rage and aggression inflicting it upon the innocent. The difference is that terrorists are grown

MEN and not developing young toddlers. Toddlers have not as yet developed a sense of guilt but grown men are supposed to have and should know the different between right and wrong. Superego develop is non-existent in terrorists and verification of this is that they have no empathy.

The serialized and synchronized nature of these bomb blasts are a further indication of infantile behavior. While it is, of course, deeply troubling because it graphically records how cross border terrorism works and is dependent upon a network of a like infantile mindset lacking empathy, terrorists from outside a nation-state such as India infiltrate to wreck havoc by tapping into locals to radicalize them. They embed themselves in a relatively stable and functioning environment. But synchronicity and serialization need to be understood as being more than just a tactical tool. Its special terror arousing effect plays on the terrorists' imposition of their grandiosity, omnipotence and severe malignant narcissism which demands partnership in a perverse sameness -- hence the synchronicity -- in tandem, not being alone which is terrifying to the terrorists who become this inflicting terror. Serialization is a kind of relentless pressuring rain of terror, chipping away at the other signaling that there will be more -- the other terror shoe will drop.

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As for assuming "responsibility" for the attack which is the way in which counter terrorist experts speak about and identify the terrorist groups, perhaps it is high time to come up with different language by substituting another word in place of "responsibility" to undercut the terrorists' alleged success. By calling it "responsibility," we have unwittingly bought into promoting the problem of the squeaky lethal hinge gets the most "oil." Even the term "responsibility" gets dismissed into nothingness for they have assumed, in fact, responsibility for nothing. In reality they have made a mockery of the word "responsibility" whose primary signification is moral accountability.

What an ironic word "responsibility" is to be used with the tragedy of such political violence. Indeed terrorists subvert the social norms of language and behavior. I propose that counter terrorism name them as the identified perpetrators of an attack. This leaves me to believe that playing out the role of the victim becomes more pervasive than life itself, like the following Arabic saying:

He hits me and cries, he races me to complain.

On the face of it, the Jihadi terrorist perpetrators claim they are victims. They have subverted the social norms. The dead and the maimed drop out of the brutal and cruel picture of the attack site. It is like a reverse superego -- the good guys are bad and the bad guys are perceived as good. The real victim is outrun and perverse empathy for the alleged downtrodden is obtained via identification with the aggressor. To recognize this symbolic level, to know and understand how it works in the psychology of terrorism and to be able to educate the public about this, is the first step in uprooting and disarming the terrorists' tactical use of such bomb blasts.

References and Notes

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