

The Paris Terror Attacks: Canada Helps Avoid Pitfalls of Irrationality

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The recent massacres in Paris have so far produced predictable emotional reactions. President Hollande called for national unity and intensified bombardment in Syria. Citizens lit candles and commemorated the victims. Observers continued to mull over the content of the Koran, deploring “the alienation of Muslims from Judeo-Christian civilization”. The focus has shifted to essentialism, to cultural and religious nature of the perpetrators.

This kind of thought was in fashion back in the 19th century when the social sciences were mobilized to buttress and justify Western colonial expansion. Today it appears incongruous how colonialism triumphed under the banner of *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*. Invasions of Asia and Africa were billed as *mission civilisatrice* or the White Man’s Burden. Those who resisted had to be pacified, i.e. imprisoned, exiled or killed. It was Britain’s air force, not Saddam Hussein, who was the first to use chemical weapons against civilians in Iraq. The purpose was to frighten people into submission, in other words, to terrorize them. State terrorism is no less terrorism than its home-spun variety.

Western colonialism did not disappear peacefully as a result of soul-searching in European capitals. Massacres in India, Algeria, the Congo and Kenya, to name just a few, were perpetrated by the declining powers before they grudgingly conceded freedom to their colonial possessions. These memories are still alive.

Moreover, Western aggression did not end with colonialism. British, French and American intelligence services have fomented coups d’état, military uprisings and other forms of regime change ever since. They have created local outlets, usually recruited from the most reactionary and fanatical circles. This is the origin of Al-Qaida, ISIL and Hamas, to name just a few of the organizations sponsored by neo-colonialists intent on crushing modern secular forces opposed to Western domination by means of mobilizing local allies under the banner of Islam.

In recent years, Western interventions destroyed secular and modernized countries (Iraq, Syria and Libya), while allying themselves with retrograde obscurantist regimes such as Qatar, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. These latter countries have become generous clients of Western weapons industry. France under the socialist government has recorded the highest industrial growth in the arms sector, which accounts for one fourth of the country’s exports. The orders for French arms grew by 43% in 2013. Predictably, the shares of weapon-producing companies rose in the wake of the terrorist attacks in Paris. Export of Western democracy has been a lot less successful than export of arms.

Since 2012 France has armed islamists opposed to the government of Syria. American intelligence estimates that much of the French arsenal supplied to “moderate rebels” ended up in the hands of ISIS. However, this did not cool down France’s determination to overthrow the government in Damascus. It is in this context that one should understand, not justify, the recent outbursts of terrorism.

In order to uproot it one must recognize its origin and causes. Unfortunately, Western leaders often ignore causes and focus on symptoms of violence. Self-pity and self-righteousness prevail. “They hate our values and our freedoms” is the common emotional refrain echoing the rhetoric of 9/11.

One of the few leaders to react rationally to 9/11 was the then Prime Minister of Canada Jean Chrétien. He saw in the attacks on New York and Washington a reaction to Western greed and arrogance: “You cannot exercise your powers to the point of humiliation for the others.”

Similarly, well before the recent wave of ISIL-claimed violence Justin Trudeau had promised to end its military intervention in the Middle East in favour of training and humanitarian assistance to the long-suffering population. Even though Canadian air force so far continues its mission in the Middle East, in the aftermath of the Paris attacks the Prime Minister reiterated his intention to withdraw the military and focus on uprooting the real causes of violence. This shows the new government’s determination to avoid pitfalls of irrationality.

Watch Mr. Rabkin’s interview with CTV:

<https://www.facebook.com/CTVNewsChannel/videos/989392444455420/>

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