

Why Do Certain Nations Behave The Way They Do?

VIOLENCE and terrorism are no way for creating peaceful and stable societies, which embrace norms and standards that are generally seen to be universally acceptable. Differences in ethnicity, culture

and religion will occasionally present significant problems, but we are required to deal with these and to find solutions that are meaningful and sustainable - not go to war.

We have recently come

to recognise the gulf of understanding between the Muslim and non-Muslim world. From an ethical and moral perspective, there are very few differences regarding principle, but there is a very big difference in

perception. Why is it that the Taliban and Muslims in Saudi Arabia, for instance, interpret the Q'ran so differently? Is it merely fundamentalism building up its own head of steam on the one hand, and Arab hedonism built upon oil wealth on the other, or is there more out there that we should be aware of?

Why are some nations invariably so predictable?

That question is now being asked about America. Though there is a clearly understood difference between the American people and their Administration, it is the psyche of the nation that gives cause for concern. In discussion many Americans will admit that their government leaves much to be desired, yet their use of the ballot-box does little to change the status quo. Many American friends and colleagues understand and share the concerns of those living outside the borders of the USA, but are powerless to do anything constructive. Big Brother is invasive and insidious!!!

There is a brutal streak in the psyche of the American people. The USA might be the most powerful world power on the planet to-day, but it is not the most civilised! It still practices capital punishment and ex-

ecutes human beings in the most horrendous and bizarre ways devised by so-called modern man. From passing thousands of volts of electricity through the human body to lethal injections, and all in the name of justice, must rank as the cruellest indictment of civilised norms and standards! The American people have come to believe that this is how one exacts justice! They turn it into a spectacle by watching it on closed circuit television in true Hollywoodian fashion! Can anything else be more bizarre, or more brutalising? Yes, watching Afghan women and children scatter for their lives while American bombs rain down, is more bizarre and brutal!!

Not to talk of weapons of mass destruction! America is the only country on the planet to have dropped an atomic bomb on another country. The immediate destruction was bad enough, but what about the nuclear fallout, not just for Japan but for the region? Did America care? They regarded that as a major achievement in the annals of technology and modern warfare! So much for caring about the planet! And the refusal of the Bush Administration to sign the Kyoto Accord, what does

that say about commitment to the well-being of the planet and the rest of us mortals who are not Americans? And the use of agent orange in Vietnam, was that humane?

It is my belief that the power and might of the American people is partially based on their damaged psyche. Institutionalised violence and brutality desensitises them to the feelings, aspirations and sensitivities of the rest of the world. A judicial system based on brutality cannot create justice, just as war and destruction can never bring about peace.

After the liberation struggle, both South Africa and Namibia removed the death sentence from their legal systems. None of our oppressors and persecutors was condemned to death, and no Nuremberg-type trials were held to revenge the deeds of the past, during which thousands also lost their lives over many decades. Instead, we opted for reconciliation, and we are all the better for that. This self-same apartheid regime in South Africa was supported by the USA as was Unita in Angola. Bill Clinton's administration went as far as requesting the De Klerk government to ensure that no nuclear technology fell into the

hands of the Mandela-led ANC government, because they could not trust the new black leaders! They were happy to throw their lot in with the white pariah racist regime, but they would not trust the new black government.

No, we do not need any form of moralising from those who backed our erstwhile persecutors. We particularly have no interest in being on "their side!" Backing ourselves certainly does not imply backing terrorism and that is what the Bush administration is so clumsily trying to infer in its statement that "we are either with them or against them!"

Americans need to divest themselves of the notion of revenge as a means of creating a peaceful world. They can do so by distancing themselves from their own forms of institutionalised violence, which they mistakenly believe to be justice. And they can begin to show some regard for the millions of us who are not Americans, and who do not share all of their values, ethics and morals notwithstanding.

The rest of the world does NOT have to catch a cold when America sneezes!!

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