

**THE CHALLENGE OF RELIGIOUS
EXTREMISM:
SETTING THE SCENE**

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RELIGION AND EXTREMISM: THE ISSUE OF TERRORISM

- **TERRORISM DEFINED**

- **INTIMIDATING THE INNOCENT AS A MODALITY OF ACTION**
- **ACTION FOR POLITICAL AND/OR IDEOLOGICAL PURPOSE**
- **COMPLEX OF CRIMINALITY, PSYCHOLOGY AND IDEOLOGY**
- **SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGIOUS DIMENSION ONLY MORE RECENTLY RECOGNISED**
 - **WHEN RELIGION EMPOWERS POLITICAL TERRORISM**
 - **THEN THE TERRORISM APPARENTLY HAS NO LIMITS AND ACKNOWLEDGES NO BOUNDARIES**

TERRORISM:

FIVE CONCEPTUAL LENSES

- **CRIME:** *TERROR IS A CRIME*
- **POLITICS:** *TERROR AN INSTRUMENT OF POLITICAL STRATEGY*
- **WARFARE:** *WAR AND TERROR RELATIONSHIP COMPLEX*
- **COMMUNICATION:** *MESSAGE IS THE POINT OF THE ACT*

TERRORISM:

FIVE CONCEPTUAL LENSES

- **RELIGION (*RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM*)**
 - ***LONG ASSOCIATION OF TERROR AND RELIGION***
 - ***PARADIGM OF SACRIFICIAL OFFERING: MARTYRDOM***
 - ***DEATH / KILLING: ENNOBLING FRAME OF REFERENCE***
 - ***HIGHER DICTATE/COMMAND: OBVIATES CULPABILITY***
 - ***RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGIES ALLOW FOR EXTREMISM***

WHAT IS EXTREMISM?

(1) AT THE MARGINS – EDGES – ‘EXTREMITIES’

- *TENUOUS LINK TO CENTRE*
- *LOOSE CONNECTION TO NORMATIVE TRADITION*
- *EXPRESSES HETERODOXY AGAINST ORTHODOXY*

WHAT IS EXTREMISM?

(2) A MATTER OF INTENSITY – FOCUS – ‘FANATICISM’

- CLAIMS CENTRAL POSITION **EXCLUSIVELY**
- PROCLAIMS NORMATIVE TRADITION **INTENSELY**
- TAKES TRADITION **BEYOND USUAL LIMITS**
- EXPRESSES **ULTRA-ORTHODOXY** AGAINST **ORTHODOXY**

ISSUE OF FUNDAMENTALISM...

- **DISTINCTIVE 'RELIGIO-POLITICAL' PERSPECTIVE**
- **TOTALISING CLAIMS – 'ABSOLUTIST'**
- **'WORLDVIEW' – COMPREHENSIVE IDEOLOGY**
- **VARYINGLY ASSOCIATED WITH:**
 - **RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM**
 - **RELIGIOUSLY-ORIENTED TERRORISM**

ISSUE OF FUNDAMENTALISM...

- **'MORAL PANIC' CONTEXT – SOCIETY 'FAILING'**
- **CRISIS MOOD – RELIGION/CIVILISATION AT RISK**
- **POPULIST MOVEMENTS – EMOTIONAL REACTIONS**
- **INTERPRETS CURRENT EVENTS AND ISSUES:**
IN SIMPLIFIED AND DISTORTED WAYS
IN ORDER TO FIT 'WORLDVIEW'

FUNDAMENTALISM:

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

- **AMERICA – EARLY 20THC**
- ***‘THE FUNDAMENTALS’* OF FAITH**
- ***‘FUNDAMENTALISM’* AS POSITIVE IDENTITY**
- **NEGATIVE SHIFT: OPPOSITIONAL, CLOSED**

FUNDAMENTALISM:

ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION

- **FUNDAMENTALISM PROJECT** (*LATE 20THC*) —
 - **'GOLDEN AGE' FOCUS**
 - ***DEEPLY ROOTED PHENOMENON***
 - **GIVES RISE TO POLITICAL ACTIONS**
 - ***REACTIONARY: FEAR OF RELATIVISM, PLURALISM***
 - **INTENTION TO 'MAKE A DIFFERENCE'**
 - ***NARROW BELIEFS & LIMITED METAPHYSICS***

AN ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM / ABSOLUTISM

THREE PHASES / TYPES:

- **PASSIVE – NORMATIVE**
 - **ASSERTIVE – HARD-LINE**
 - **IMPOSITIONAL – AGGRESSIVE**
- **EACH WITH 3 OR 4 FEATURES COMPRISING PAIRED FACTORS...**

PHASE III: IMPOSITIONAL (MILITANT) FUNDAMENTALISM

FACTORS:

- **'OTHERNESS' NEGATED**
- **SELF-SUPERIORITY ASSERTED**
- **MANIFEST CONTEMPT**
- **IMPOSITIONAL ACTS SANCTIONED**
- **VIOLENCE LEGITIMATED**
- **TERRORIST EVENTS**

FUNDAMENTALISM AND EXTREMISM

- RELIGIOUS EXTREMISTS/TERRORISTS ARE TYPICALLY FUNDAMENTALISTS BUT
- RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM IS NOT NECESSARILY 'EXTREME' EVEN THOUGH –
- FUNDAMENTALISM CAN RESULT IN EXTREMISM
- THUS
 - DISCERNING THE DIFFERENCE IS CRITICAL
 - UNDERSTANDING THE PARADIGM IS PIVOTAL

SCRIPTURES CONTAIN...

- **STORIES OF PROFOUND VIOLENCE PLUS**
 - *INJUNCTIONS, AND COMMANDMENTS*
 - *ALLUSIONS AND EXAMPLES AS RESOURCE FOR...*
- **TERRIFYING AND TERRORIZING BEHAVIOURS**
- **IDEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR**
- **EXTREME ATTITUDES, VALUES, AND ACTIONS**

SCRIPTURAL ABSOLUTISM

- **BIBLICAL NARRATIVE = HISTORICALLY RELIABLE DATA**
- **NAÏVE BELIEF IN THE BIBLE/QURAN AS**
 - **DIRECTLY GIVEN DIVINE TEXT**
 - **ABSOLUTE FOR ALL TIME,**
 - **CONTAINING APODICTIC TRUTH AND INSTRUCTION**

THAT LEADS NECESSARILY TO

- **DIRECT OBEDIENT ACTION**

BIBLICAL NARRATIVES OF VIOLENCE AND JUDGEMENT

FORMATION OF IDEOLOGICAL THEMES:

- BIBLICAL MOTIF OF SACRIFICE
- RITUAL HUMAN SACRIFICES
- KILLINGS AND MASSACRES TO DO WITH WAR
- ABRAHAM – WILLING TO SACRIFICE ISAAC (*GENESIS*)
- DEMAND FOR THE DEATH OF ALL 'FIRSTBORN' (*EXODUS*)
- ASSASSINATIONS; MURDERS; IMMOLATIONS
 - BEATING PLOUGHSHARES INTO SWORDS, AND PRUNING HOOKS INTO SPEARS (*JOEL*)

THE ISSUE OF INTERPRETATION

- **MODES OF 'READING' –**
- **'LITERALIST' LENS OF FUNDAMENTALISM VS.**
- **'SPIRITUAL' MEANINGS**
 - **SYMBOLISM**
 - **METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE**
- **ORIGINATING CONTEXT VS.**
- **SUBSEQUENT MEANING AND APPLICATION VS.**
- **ABROGATION –**
 - **PROBLEMATIC TEXTS CORRALLED**

EXTREMISM & THE BIBLE ...

- ANCIENT ‘TALES OF TERROR SPEAK ALL TOO FRIGHTENINGLY OF THE PRESENT’
- ‘A REMARKABLY MILITANT TEXT THAT INCLUDES AN EXTRAORDINARY RANGE OF AGGRESSIVE THEMES AND MODELS’, YET
- ‘PROVIDES A RICH SOURCE OF ANTI-VIOLENT THEMES, HUMANIST IDEALS, AND DESCRIPTIONS OF IDYLIC PEACE AND JUSTICE’.