

Spring Conference hosted by Uniting for Peace
and PeaceJam

Global Terrorism: The Peace Movement Response

Responding to Terrorism – Building a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence

Saturday 25 March 2017

Venue:

Wesley's Chapel
49 City Road
London EC1Y 1AU

VIJAY MEHTA | vijay@vmpeace.org | www.unitingforpeace.com

Contents

1. Introduction – Turmoil in the World Today
2. Being Open to Terror, Violence and Extremism and its Consequences
3. Linking Generalisation, Manipulation Resulting in an Unstable World
4. Terror Threats Used as Excuse for Increased Military Spending
5. Ten Ways to Stop Terrorism
6. Actions for Building a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence
7. Conclusion and Way Forward



1. Introduction - Turmoil in the World Today

Hello and welcome. Dear friends, we are confronting Global Terrorism. We need to better understand and be open about threats of terrorism and War on Terror. Is it a false flag for continuation of permanent war strategy without any end? Why can't we discuss terrorism in a more open and honest way instead of being manipulated on a massive scale. How can we curb terrorism and war on terror by old militaristic model applying more military means as conflicts around the world yield rich pickings for the Military Industrial Complex. Why liberals, politicians, law enforcement and the media are complicit in blaming religion and Muslims for war and violent crime? In my talk today, I will be outlining 10 counter terrorism strategies which can be adopted to tackle this global menace along with actions for building a culture of peace and nonviolence.

Terror and violence dominate the daily news in the media while 20,000 people die from hunger and starvation every day. We need to find or determine various causes and effects, and perhaps, how these present problems might be dealt with. What solutions we have to offer? What are the root causes of terrorism and security concerns? In this turmoil and chaos, can we build a transparent, open and equitable world in which threats of terror and security concerns can be contained? Can rivalries and hatred be turned around for cooperation, freedom and rule of law?

The increase in terrorism, extremism and fundamentalism, continuing fruitless wars and massacres in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Pakistan and the present terrorist attacks in Paris, Berlin and Istanbul have created a dangerous atmosphere of violence and fear. It seems as if the whole world is up in arms. It is worth noting that none of these countries have ever attacked US, UK or any other European countries.

According to Global Peace Index, the historic ten-year deterioration in peace has largely been driven by the intensifying conflicts in the MENA region. Terrorism is also at an all-time high, battle deaths from conflict are at a 25 year high with more than 13,370 terrorist attacks in more than 93 countries killing more than 32,658 people and with the economic cost of \$14.3 trillion. 40 countries including some G20 countries are funding the gruesome activities of ISIS and other terrorist organisations.

Around the world conflicts make handsome profits for the military industrial complex. No wonder the stocks and shares of leading weapon/defence industry manufacturers like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, General Dynamics have surged after the Paris attacks. It seems that selling arms to most reactionary and authoritarian regimes has become the ultimate purpose of the military for profit and control of resources in many parts of the world.

The terrorist attacks are mostly perpetrated by Muslims and White supremacists. Most of these happened in five countries. Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Nigeria and Iraq. 51% of all terrorists acts are committed by two groups – ISIS and Boko Haram. The only difference is if attacks are carried out by Muslims – that is terrorism, if the mass killings are done by white people in the US and elsewhere, it is never called terrorism but is always a mental health issue with the offender. There were 300 mass shootings in the US in 2015 and only 1% of them were committed by Muslims and they were called terrorists attacks. Right wing think tanks cast suspicion on the entire Muslim community, stigmatising Muslim populated neighbourhoods as hotspots and portraying Muslim women as potential ticking bombs.

2. Being Open to Terror, Violence and Extremism and its Consequences

The war against terrorism is terrorism. How do we stop terrorism? Be open about it and stop committing it. And stop creating fear by acts of terrorism. The UN definition of terrorism is:

“Terrorism is violence carried out by individual, group or state actors designed to frighten a non-combatant population for political reasons. The victims are usually chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a population in order to pass a message which may be intimidation, coercion and/or propaganda. It differs from assassination where the victim is the main target.”

Can we have openness about the security threats facing us here in Europe, and around the world.

It occurs to me that true “openness” in our world is ever harder to find.

I’ve noticed that nowadays, people who profess to speak “openly”, often do so only to express sweeping generalisations about very large groups of people.

“All Muslims are the same,” they tell us.

Or: “All women think the same way.”

Or even: “Indians are good at maths.”

Many people seem to find comfort in such generalisations, because they are a shortcut...

...An expression of one’s own frustration at what one has just read in the newspaper, or seen on TV.

If I could offer one axiom for debate in the modern world, it would be this: never generalise about large groups of people. It is the fastest way to being certainly wrong!

3. Linking Generalisation, Manipulation Resulting in an Unstable World

Generalising about large groups of people, and then portraying those groups as opposing one another, is an effective means of generating “click bait”... those headlines that you know you should ignore, but are tempted to read anyway.

So we see headlines from the past year, such as:

“The 10 Worst Anti-Cop Signs At Black Lives Matter Rallies”

and

“Men-only Muslim swimming pools are an insult to a United Kingdom built on equality”

Perhaps you would agree with me when I suggest that the drumbeat of conflict and violence can be heard beneath these kinds of headlines.

This is not the kind of “openness” that will keep us safe.

All this raises a troubling thought.

We know we are being manipulated on an industrial scale.

And we know that many parts of the world are becoming ever more unstable.

Could the two be linked?

Why is it that many Western institutions seem shocked by President Donald Trump, not because of his contempt for women or minority groups, but because he dares to suggest that Russia isn't the threat we're told it is?

When there are so many good reasons to criticise Trump, why is he attracting so much criticism for his views on Vladimir Putin?

One answer would be to say, well, Trump is a deplorable human being, so everything he says must be wrong.

But isn't that just another easy generalisation? After all, even a broken clock is right twice a day.

And it does not explain why quite so much official attention has been paid to Trump's relationship with Russia, and why his views on this issue above all others have been so furiously denounced by senior U.S. military and intelligence officials.

Could it be that something else is going on?

Could it be that there are financial interests at stake, here?

4. Terror Threats Used as Excuse for Increased Military Spending

In December, Trump issued Tweets in which he condemned what he called the “tremendous cost and cost overruns” of the Lockheed Martin F-35, a new fighter jet. Trump suggested that the U.S. go back to using Boeing's older F-18 model.

Even Trump's most vigorous detractors must surely concede that on this issue, he has a point.

In March 2016, TIME magazine reported the total cost of the F-35 over its lifetime.

It put the figure at 1.45 trillion dollars.

Let me repeat that: 1.45 trillion dollars.

Can we honestly say Trump's Tweet condemning this programme was wrong?

It's why the concept of “openness” is so crucial to assessing what we're being told.

For me, “openness” is about intellectual bravery.

It takes bravery to be the person who is prepared to disagree with his/her colleagues, friends and family, in order to champion complexity over generalisation.

It requires bravery, to be the person who says that although Trump is wrong and offensive in many ways, he might not be wrong about Russia, or the outdated Soviet-era weapons and alliances such as NATO.

It requires bravery to be the person who says that not all Muslims are pursuing the same agenda, and that not all aspects of Western civilization are superior, and that not all our men and women in uniform are brave and noble.

So in the spirit of openness, let us each try to summon up the intellectual and moral energy to confront the complexity of our world, rather than hiding within the wisdom of crowds and behind the false generalities into which, too often, we seem to be herding ourselves.

Only then, can we find the complex solutions to our complex challenges.

5. Ten Ways to Stop Terrorism

a) Addressing Root Causes of Extremism

To contain threats of terror and security concerns, we need counter terrorism strategy addressing root causes of terrorism and security concerns by building transparent, equitable international institutions, assuring social justice, democracy and good governance.

Terrorism and intolerance especially in the West in the year since 9/11 have led to a huge military response and a constant obsession with public security. Politicians reach for simplistic, aggressive solutions which worsen the situation.

But they should know that the roots of the problems are complex mix, involving historical grievances, contemporary wars and occupations of Muslim-majority lands, religious intolerance and social polarisation closely linked to injustice, austerity and globalisation. The increasing failure of neo-liberal economic model resulting in inequality and widespread marginalisation of educated and knowledgeable population are some of the other root causes of extremism. It is naive to think it is possible to overcome terrorism by military means.

In recent years we have witness an increase of militant fundamentalism. All must challenge this violent extremism as it will not be stopped by yet more violence from Governments.

Security threats are hyped up to create fear in the public and for military to get more money for weapons and military hardware. There are military advisors whose job is to bump up non existing threats into near real ones. There are no peace advisors to any Presidents, Prime Ministers or any governments in the world. There should be as a routine people of authority whose job should be to give alternative peace solutions to the conflicts. That will surely make the world a safer place.

b) Strategy for Openness

So the strategy for openness is dialogue, diplomacy, conflict prevention and cooperation between governments, corporations and civil society for addressing threats and security concerns and also for strengthening good governance, human rights and the rule of law.

Countries need to disarm and campaign for that the military budget of nations should never be bigger than budget for health, education and development. The economic impact of violence on the global economy in 2016 was \$14.3 trillion according to Global Peace Index.

The cold war paradigm of confrontation and militarisation should be abandoned for close cooperation between Europe and Russia, USA and the Middle East for seeking peaceful solutions.

c) We are all one

To stop terrorism, we need to realise it's not us or them, but we are all one and together we can resolve the problem. I attended a lecture at PeaceJam conference at Winchester recently, given by Nobel Laureate Leymah Gbowee who explained the concept of oneness beautifully.

She alluded that this sense of our common humanity, at its deepest, flows from a mystical experience of 'Oneness.' This is why the growth in inner peace is a vital contribution to the peace of the world and why the roots of lasting peace are to be found in the great religious and spiritual traditions of the world. Nonviolence is nurtured by inner peace, unity and spiritual development will lead to universal peace.

To sense the oneness of the human family, the oneness of all life is the well spring of compassion and our commitment to human rights, peace building, non-violence, reverence for all life. Without such a starting point I feel terrorism cannot be contained.

d) Stop Overthrowing the Moderates and Arming the Radicals

We know it's a difficult concept to grasp, but if we want to stop terrorism we should – stop supporting terrorists. Specifically, we're arming the most violent radicals in the Middle East, as part of a really stupid geopolitical strategy to overthrow leaders we don't like – Saddam Hussain, Assad and Gaddafi. Strangely, we're overthrowing the moderate Arabs who stabilised the region and denied jihadis a foothold.

Indeed, the U.S. and its allies are directly responsible for creating and supplying ISIS. As an internal Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) document produced recently shows, the U.S. knew that the actions of "the West, Gulf countries and Turkey" in Syria might create a terrorist group like ISIS and an Islamic CALIPHATE. Indeed, the former head of the DIA explained: It was a wilful decision [by America] to ... support an insurgency that had salafists, Al Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood If we want to stop terrorism, we need to stop supporting the terrorists.

e) Stop Supporting the Dictators Who Fund Terrorism

Saudi Arabia is the world's largest sponsor of radical Islamic terrorists. The Saudis have backed ISIS and many other brutal terrorist groups. And the most pro-ISIS tweets allegedly come from Saudi Arabia.

According to sworn declarations from a 9/11 Commissioner and the Co-Chair of the Congressional Inquiry Into 9/11, the Saudi government backed the 9/11 hijackers. Saudi Arabia is the hotbed of the most radical Muslim terrorists in the world: the Salafis (both ISIS and Al

Qaeda are Salafis). And the Saudis – with U.S. support – back the radical “madrassas” in which Islamic radicalism was spread.

And yet the U.S. has been supporting the Saudis militarily, with NSA (National Security Agency) intelligence and in every other way possible for 70 years.

The U.S.-backed dictatorships in Qatar and Bahrain also massively fund ISIS. So if we stop supporting the tyrannies in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar and Bahrain, we’ll get a two-fold reduction in terror.

f) Stop Bombing and Invading When a Negotiated Settlement Is Offered

The U.S. rejected offers by Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria to surrender ... and instead proceeded to wage war. Security experts – including both conservatives and liberals – agree that waging war in the Middle East weakens national security and increases terrorism.

For example, James K. Feldman – former professor of decision analysis and economics at the Air Force Institute of Technology and the School of Advanced Airpower Studies – and other experts say that foreign occupation is the main cause of terrorism. University of Chicago professor Robert A. Pape – who specializes in international security affairs – agrees. So negotiating peaceful deals will drain the swamp of terrorists created by war and invasion.

g) Stop Imperial Conquests for Arab Oil

The U.S. has undertaken regime change against Arab leaders we don’t like for six decades. We overthrew the leader of Syria in 1949, Iran in 1953, Iraq twice, Afghanistan twice, Turkey, Libya ... and other oil-rich countries. Neoconservatives planned regime change throughout the Middle East and North Africa yet again in 1991.

Top American politicians admit that the Iraq war was about oil, not stopping terrorism (documents from Britain show the same thing). Much of the war on terror is really a fight for natural gas. Or to force the last few hold-outs into dollars and private central banking. And the U.S. military described terror attacks on the U.S. as a “small price to pay for being a superpower”:

Remember, Al Qaeda wasn’t even in Iraq until the U.S. invaded that country. And the West’s Iraq war directly led to the creation of ISIS. If we want to stop terrorism, we have to stop overthrowing Arab leaders and invading Arab countries to grab their oil.

h) Stop Drone Assassinations of Innocent Civilians

Top CIA officers say that drone strikes increase terrorism. The CIA – the agency in charge of drone strikes – even told Obama that drone kills can increase terrorism. If we want to stop creating new terrorists, we have to stop the drone strikes.

i) Stop Torture

Top terrorism and interrogation experts agree that torture creates more terrorists. Indeed, the leaders of ISIS were motivated by U.S. torture. Once again, we have a very current example: Charlie Hebdo-murdering French terrorist Cherif Kouchi told a court in 2005 that he wasn’t radical until he learned about U.S. torture at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. If we want to stop creating new terrorists, we have to stop torturing ... permanently.

j) Stop Mass Surveillance

Top security experts agree that mass surveillance makes us MORE vulnerable to terrorists. Indeed, even the NSA admits that it's collecting too much information to stop terror attacks.

6. Actions for Building a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence

To build culture of peace and end violence, we need to start from UNESCO preamble which is as relevant today as it was in 1945: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

Can the western leaders really think they can tackle the militants by bombing them? If you need to create a just and civilised world we must try to understand the root causes of conflict – talk with, listen and to empathise with the people in the region and explore non-violent alternatives. Violence is a tragedy, but by getting distracted by it from the road of non-violence is a double tragedy. It is time for us to take powerful actions for peace.

We can tackle terrorism and create a peaceful world by influencing policy makers and civil society by:

- Appoint peace advisors to Presidents, Prime Ministers whose job should be to give alternative peace solutions to conflicts and terrorism which would surely make the world a safer place.
- Nurturing a culture of peace, bridge building between hostile communities, conflict prevention, diplomacy, economic and social aid. Can we inspire young citizens via education to be peace leaders, instead of choosing a path of radicalisation and extremism.
- Starting dialogue, diplomacy, mediation to create an atmosphere of tolerance and nonviolence to end glorification of wars, terrorism, militarism and hate crimes.
- Creating an inclusive society based on peace education, community spirit, shared values, social justice and economic equality.
- Instead of opening war academies and recruiting soldiers, establishing peace cities, peace universities, peace ministries to develop peace policies adopting alternatives to violence
- Oppose immoral, illogical, anti-human business of funding military hardware for war-mongers. No to Arms trade and progress in reduction of weapons of all kinds
- No more attacks and no more invasions and to solve conflicts through dialogue and not by force
- Educate the public for replacing revenge and gun culture by culture of peace , forgiveness and non-violence
- Holding meetings like today to foster values of oneness , harmony, multiculturalism and diversity
- Be your own peace media to emphasize the importance of peace to survival of humanity and promote equality and tolerance
- Need for global religious leaders to speak out against violence, terrorism and have a dialogue and cooperation between faiths for building harmony
- Start a Campaign for countering global terrorism

- Change begins with one person: Gandhi, Mandela, Martin Luther King – were individuals who fought against their political system to achieve their objectives.
- Empowering the world's 1.8 billion young women and men to become driving force to prevent extremism.

The aim of a peace activist is to create and leave behind a legacy of a better world for future generations, a humane world where there is social equity, justice and a nurturing environment for once and all. Most especially in the wake of trauma and terror, how we each decide to engage with “the other” is our own individual choice, but the fate is shared by us all.

7. Conclusion and Way Forward

Real change would be to alter the paradigm built on violence as a solution and to stop training successive generations of soldiers and jihadists to kill or be killed in a war.

The total economic impact of violence and terrorism in 2016 reached \$14.3 trillion. That's equivalent to the combined economies of Canada, France, Germany, Spain and the UK. So we can see how much savings we can achieve by eradicating violence and create enough stimulus to tackle terrorism, financial, climate change crisis and wipe out hunger and extreme poverty. It could also provide enough funds for education, multiculturalism and improve social justice.

To prevent terrorism and end wars, heal wounds, reconcile communities and nations, build durable peace, we require citizens and leaders with vision, courage, determination, humility and compassion.

What we need today is urgent change by extraordinary change makers, courageous peace leaders who do not give up against all odds to inspire global movement for a just and peaceful world. Our greatest strength as individuals is citizen power. Individuals, organisations and countries - let us cooperate on a global scale to take bold but doable, practical steps to change things around and sow the seeds for a more just, peaceful and prosperous world. Then we will have as good a chance as any for building a safer world.

Thanks for listening.

This article can be reproduced anytime, anywhere giving credit to the author and the Uniting for Peace website: www.unitingforpeace.com

Notes:

1. Mairead Maguire, The Disturbing Expansion of the Military-Industrial Complex, 14th October, 2014
2. Lord Hannay, Who Rules The World, 9th September, 2008
3. Ramsey Clark, United Nations Turning into NATO Tool of Aggressions
4. Vijay Mehta, The Economics of Killing: How the West Fuels War and Poverty in the Developing World, Pluto Press, London, 2012
5. Vijay Mehta, A new Momentum for Peace: No Syria Intervention – What Next?, 29th March 2014
6. Noam Chomsky, US, The World's Leading Terrorist State, November 04, 2014
7. IPB Statement: There Is No Military Solution To Fundamentalism, Geneva, 16 October 2014
8. Pax Christi, 2014 Report on global financing on nuclear industry

9. Noam Chomsky, Can Civilisation Survive Capitalisation, New York Times News Syndicate 2013
10. Nita Bhalla, Spend Less on Arms, More on Schools, says Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi, 21st Oct, 2014
11. Vijay Mehta, A Nonviolent Sustainable Future is Possible by Overcoming Violence, Wars, and Inequality, 8th ICPNA, India
12. War Impoverishes Us, World Beyond War
13. Adams, David, "A Culture of Peace is the Best Alternative to Terrorism," World Beyond War
14. Washington Blog, "Nine Ways to Stop Terrorism," Global Research
15. Paul Rogers, Irregular War and How to Reverse It, October 2016
16. Mark Karlin, Why are mass killings by white people in the US almost never called terrorism?, Truthout, September 2016
17. United Nations General Assembly, Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism

Bio:

Vijay Mehta is an author and peace activist. He is Chair of Uniting for Peace and founding Trustee of Fortune Forum Charity. His books include United Nations and its Future in the 21st Century (2005), Arms No More (2005), The Fortune Forum Code: For a Sustainable Future (2006), "The Economics of Killing" (2012) and "Peace Beyond Borders" (2016).

The Sunday Times described him as a "longstanding activist for peace, development, human rights and the environment, who along with his daughter Renu Mehta has set a precedent for striving to change the world" (**The Sunday Times, February 01, 2009**).

In 2014, Vijay Mehta's bio "**The Audacity of Dreams**" appeared in the book form "**Karma Kurry**" published by Jaico Publishing House, India with a foreword to the book by Nelson Mandela.

"Thank you for all you do Vijay – both the organisation Uniting for Peace and yourself are inspiration and give us all hope that both yourself and the organisation can bring a world without a war. Indeed it is possible, even in our own time." – **Mairead Corrigan Maguire, Nobel Peace Laureate 1976**

"This book, Peace Beyond Borders by Vijay Mehta, an astute non-European observer, uses this unprecedented, extraordinary experience as the centrepiece of a carefully crafted theory on the construction and maintenance of peace and prosperity on a global scale. It is my hope that many non-Europeans will use it as a source of inspiration as they attempt to carve out long-lasting peace in other parts of the world."

- **Jose Ramos-Horta, Nobel Peace Laureate 1996 and Former President of Timor-Leste**