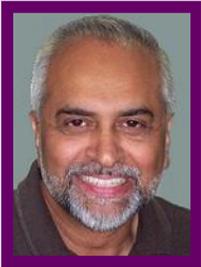


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Twenty-First Century and the Persistence of Tribalism

WRITTEN BY: ASHOK DHILLON



Ashok Dhillon has over 40 years of front-line business experience in Canada and International markets. His extensive experience gives him in-depth knowledge and intuitive insights into macro and micro, national and international, geo-political and economic realities and trends.

Mr. Dhillon has been invited to speak on international business at various forums, including as an Expert Witness for the Standing Senate Committee, Government of Canada, on "The Rise of Russia, China and India".



It is almost the end of 2015, and 'Tribalism' (*political, religious, race, colour, ethnic, and gender*) is alive and well, and playing havoc with our World. The most destructive kind, political/religious/cultural, which seems to describe the current conflicts, is particularly active and prolonged. Tit-for-tat violence and geo-political power plays, national and international, are generating waves of mistrust and hatred through much of the world, at a time when humanity should have been far beyond these most base behaviors from our ignorant, dark and barbaric pasts.

Last night (*November 13th*) Paris, France was hit with a series of coordinated attacks that killed over 150 innocent people, presumably from local Islamists incensed at France's opposition to ISIS, or any other type of Islamic jihadist.



Source: Time.com

Just prior to France, on November 12th, it was Lebanon, where two suicide bombers attacked a popular market place, killing 43 and wounding 200. In this case, it was Muslims killing Muslims, Sunni versus Shia, as is historically the case in most of the Middle East and South Asia.

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On October 30th, a Russian civilian plane was blown up in Egypt, in mid-air, killing over 224 Russian vacationers, including children. ISIS took credit for the bombing of the plane in retaliation for President Putin's support of Bashar Al-Assad (*a Shia*) and Russia's attacks on ISIS in Syria.

And of course there are almost endless rounds of bombings and killings in Iraq (*again mostly Sunni versus Shia, with the Kurds thrown in there for good measure*).

And then there is Afghanistan. What can one say about Afghanistan. The Afghan tribes have warred against each other for centuries and no one is better at it than them. They seem to live for the love of a good fight, and woe to them that get in the way or have the presumption to think that they can beat them with their modern technologies, advanced war strategies or sheer numbers, or fire power. In the past the British tried it and failed, in more modern times the Russians tried it and failed (*the Afghans had surreptitious help in modern weaponry from the Americans*), and not to be left out, lastly the American led coalition tried it and for all intents and purposes failed, as the Taliban are still a force to be reckoned with and are getting stronger, while the Americans and its coalition partners try to extricate themselves from Afghanistan in a face saving tactical retreat.

In Africa, from countries in the far North to South Africa, there are seemingly endless killings of people caught in political, religious and tribal and ethnic wars, of one kind or another, or all of them together. From Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan to Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda to the Central Congo countries, to Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, and to South Africa (*list not complete*) the Continent is wracked with conflict and murder. There is no sense of commonality of any kind even though the people of Africa have been persecuted, enslaved, raped and pillaged by the Europeans, Arabs, Americans and others for centuries. The people of Africa are still vulnerable to incitement, exploitation, wars and civil wars, by all those (*local or foreigners*) that have no compunctions about exploiting them for their own good.

In Asia, political, religious and ethnic conflicts are a constant. In all the Asian countries, be they smaller ones such as Korea, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand or the Philippines, or the major ones like China and India, political, ethnic and religious strife has been a part of life historically, at times wreaking havoc within the countries, killing millions, and fracturing them along ideological, ethnic and religious lines. The most commonly known examples being North and South Korea, Mainland China and Taiwan, India and Pakistan, and of course the infamous killing fields of Cambodia. The rest have constant insurgencies along religious or ethnic lines.

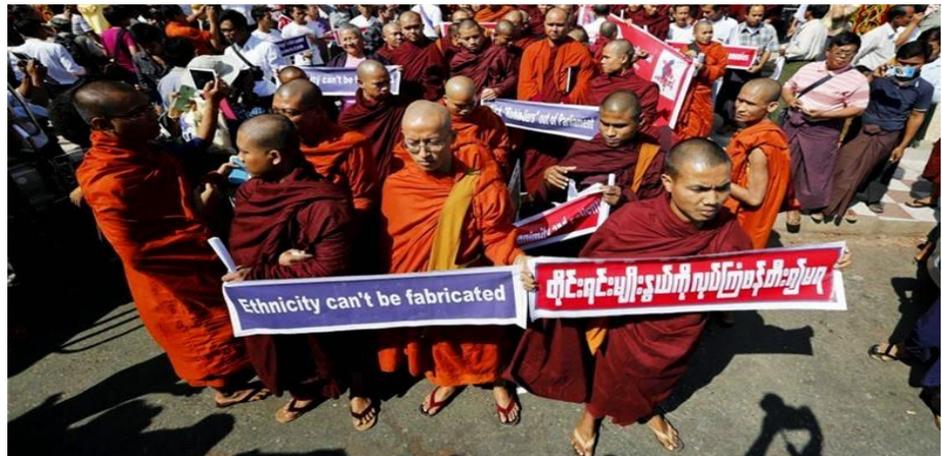
In most of these countries 'tribalism' is not only prevalent today but is the way of life, causing political upheavals, injustices, conflict, economic hardships and deprivation for a large segment of their populations. The most glaring example in this long and sordid history of blatant tribalism, being the long and

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horrific persecution of the minorities in Myanmar, where the latest sad chapter is the gruesome attacks on the Muslim population, implausibly led and incited by the country's *Buddhist* monks!

While human rights abuses have been, and still are, common place in Asia, persecution of 'lesser human beings' being based on every possible excuse - political, economic, caste, religion, race, colour or ethnicity - the region also is perhaps one of the most religious; going on to prove that most people ardently practicing their religions, do not necessarily practice them.



In America, the former beacon of hope for the rest of the World for individual freedom, equality and the pursuit of happiness, while most of the human frailties and prejudices seem to be not only alive and well, but actually thriving, the most basic difference between people, race and colour, are still the prime motivators of ongoing violence (*along with regular random shootings, which is a particularly American phenomenon*). White America seems capable of accepting almost anything and anyone, BUT, they seem to be unable to accept the 'African American' as equal. Just the moniker preferred to identify the black population, 'African American', seems to permanently isolate and pin the black American as an outsider. The white population does not have such origin based monikers attached and all others are identified less starkly. But America has a problem accepting its black population as equal, even today, prompting demonstrations in universities demanding an end to 'subtle' everyday discrimination.



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No country or region seems to be immune from this human scourge of 'us against them' mentality that is a throwback to our earlier more isolated and less informed times and had been the cause of constant violence among all people of all races.

Recent events show that humans all over the world have not evolved much, or moved appreciably forward from our need to identify with and instinctively cling to the comfort of the small world of our 'tribe', allowing our political and religious leaders to exploit our fear of 'others' to create division, mistrust and hatred.



Source: National Geographic Magazine 1963

This succumbing to our fears, coupled with our natural self centeredness, only caring about what is important to us, is resulting in an escalation in global violence and chaos, with the Middle East, North Africa and Europe being the widening vortex that threatens to inexorably engulf the rest of the world.

It is somehow always 'they' that are at fault for some provocation, hardly ever 'us', which continues the cycle of violence and counter violence. Most of the World is already affected and suffering some form of attacks, and the carrying out of counter-attacks, in a blood soaked and unsettled early twenty first century.

So far, evolution has been in mechanical, electronic, biological technologies only, as base human nature (*selective indifference and gross barbarity towards 'others'*) stays solidly intact, and once again creates mass misery and human suffering from a constant state of conflict and war, currently seeing scope and scale only identified with major world wars of the past.

The great tragedy of these violent events is the targeting of innocent civilians,

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on both sides, and the accompanying outrage and escalating hardening of attitudes and rhetoric of leadership, of all sides, as they promise an ever greater retaliation against their perceived sworn enemy, whoever they may be. An almost de-rigor required response of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, leading towards a sightless and toothless world, where the code of the vendetta rules supreme, and thus the world remains ablaze and constantly conflicted.



Source: forum.nationstates.net

It is 2015, 'the Twenty-First Century', and even to those of us living through these times, the ring of that phrase 'twenty first century' evokes feelings of advanced futuristic times. Times when, we had hoped, humanity would have advanced to the status of a truly enlightened and egalitarian society, one that had moved away from the Biblical commandment to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden '*go and subdue the earth*' (*we paraphrase*) to more of '*be good stewards and care takers, and respect all life*', and from the '*survival of the fittest – and- might- is-right*' to '*look after each other*' because we all need the other regardless of how brilliant and self sufficient we may think we are.

Unfortunately, in spite of all our accumulated knowledge, and technological advancements, we humans still remain frighteningly parochial, stubbornly clinging to 'our' beliefs and identifications of similarities, and still naturally mistrusting anyone of a different belief system and or different looks. These inherent insecurities of ours give our leaders, be they political, religious, or cultural, enough of an opening to exploit our inbred fears and whip up sentiments and resentments that inevitably lead to raw violence, atrocities and mass human misery.

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It is beyond time that humans grew up and suppressed their suspicion, fear, anger and greed, and self centeredness enough, to be able to live, and let live.