

Has world really changed?



Emergency personnel battle a fire at the Pentagon in Washington on September 11, 2001 after an airplane crashed into it. The five-sided structure, center of the US military, was struck on one side and collapsed.

Rarely has history unfolded so dramatically and with such stunning impact on live television. The enormity of the attacks on America was shockingly and immediately clear to millions of people watching around the world, transfixed by the image of New York's twin towers buckling and crumbling into dust. It has become a cliché, repeated in countless headlines, to describe September 11 as the Day that Changed the World. But for some historians the jury is still out as to whether the events of a year ago, devastating and traumatic as they were, represented a one-off episode in history or a decisive turning point. "Everybody is saying that this changed America for ever, and that just seems to me a kind of nonsensical statement. It's not clear in what sense anyone means that, other than that they're going to remember this for a long time," said Professor Francis Fukuyama of Johns Hopkins University in the United States. "I can't see how this fits into any historical context. It's an isolated act, perpetrated by what is in effect a secret society," said British

historian Professor Lord Robert Blake. Certainly the public statements of the leading September 11 protagonists have been charged with a sense of historic mission, with President Bush casting America as the champion of the free world and defender of civilisation. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld recently compared Bush's pursuit of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, whom Washington accuses of developing weapons of mass destruction, with Winston Churchill's dogged stand against Hitler. Historians typically are wary of such analogies, but some do see parallels between current events and past world crises. British professor Eric Hobsbawm compared the catalyzing effect of the September 11 attacks with that of the 1914 assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, the spark that ignited World War One. In the same way that the great powers chose Sarajevo as the occasion for a European war that had long been expected, Hobsbawm said, the United States must assert itself as a military

power capable of bringing massive force to bear anywhere in the world. This was not a sudden impulse, he said, but the expression of a doctrine that began to take shape under the first Bush administration to combat insurgency, terrorism and drug trafficking. "I think in this respect the 11th of September was the occasion for the Americans to say: well, we've been preparing it, this proves that we need it: we're going ahead," Hobsbawm said. "What made it a turning point was that the USA chose to make it one." The other often drawn analogy has been with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that prompted America to enter World War II. But here again, some historians see crucial differences as well as parallels. "It's very different from Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor instilled an idea that the United States was caught up in a worldwide crisis... It declared war on Japan and Germany immediately as part of the same threat," said Professor Lord Kenneth Morgan, a specialist in 19th and 20th century British and American history.

In contrast with the collaborative Allied effort against Hitler, the current crisis would promote a "Fortress America" mindset. Faced with "a more impenetrable and unknowable adversary who might crop up anywhere," the United States would look to its own resources and pursue a more self-sufficient and quasi-isolationist stance, he said. In telephone interviews with Reuters, Fukuyama, Hobsbawm, Morgan and Blake all agreed there was no sign that the September 11 attacks had weakened the United States or undermined its global pre-eminence. On the contrary, they saw a stronger America emerging, more purposeful and assertive in its foreign policy. To Hobsbawm, a Marxist historian who says he has "an old-fashioned prejudice against empires," America's current international domination is without precedent, outstripping even British imperial supremacy. "I think that is the main danger. They have to learn, as the British did in the 19th century, that there are limits even to the most unchallengeable military power."



Laden claims US attacks in latest tape

AFP, Doha

Qatar's al-Jazeera satellite television station on Monday aired video-clips in which it says suspected terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden was heard claiming responsibility for the September 11 attacks on the United States. The following is a transcript of the remarks, which were broadcast two days before the anniversary of the attacks. "When we evoke the raids on New York and Washington, we speak of the men who changed the course of history and cleansed the (Arab-Islamic) nation from the filth of treacherous rulers and their subordinates..."

"These great men had the deep-rooted faith in the hearts of believers, and confirmed the (Islamic) doctrine and annihilated all the designs of the crusaders and their lackeys among the regions leaders during these last years. "I cannot name all the men or evoke what they were capable of. "The pen can longer capture their acts of generosity and the consequences of their blessed raids. "Mohamed Atta, leader of the group, originally from the land of paradise, Egypt, destroyed the first (World Trade Centre) tower... He carried in him all the concern for the nation. That God welcomes him to paradise a martyr." "Ziad Al-Jarrah, a purity coming from Lebanon and the Levant, descendant from Abu Ubaida al-Jarrah," one of the military lieutenants of the Muslim prophet Mohammad.



Tiffany Miller, (L), and her mother Cathy Stefani, (R), of San Jose California, place flowers and a teddy bear at a memorial for their sister and daughter Nicole Miller who was one of the 40 passengers on United Airlines Flight 93 that were killed when the aircraft crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania after being hijacked by terrorists on Sept 11. The temporary memorial site in Shanksville will be part of the Memorial Ceremony on September 11. Stefani will attend the Memorial Service with her husband Wayne Stefani, stepson Wayne Jr. and her daughter Tiffany.

US warns of terror strike

AFP, Washington

The United States warned US citizens around the world of the threat of new terror strikes surrounding this week's anniversary of the September 11 attacks. In a statement labelled "World-wide Caution" the State Department urged Americans abroad to be "especially vigilant during the period around the anniversary of the attacks of September 11." "There is a continuing threat of terrorist actions, which may target civilians and include suicide operations," it said. "The US government has continued to receive credible indications that extremist groups and individuals are planning additional terrorist actions against US interests," it said. "Such actions may be imminent and include suicide operations.

We remind American citizens to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution. The warning told American civilians that they may be especially at risk and could be targeted for kidnapping or assassination. "Attacks on places of worship and schools, and the murder of American citizens demonstrate that as security is increased at official US facilities, terrorists and their sympathisers will seek softer targets." The caution -- which will stay in effect until October 31 and supersedes a previous similar one that had been due to expire on October 1 -- was issued two days ahead of the September 11 anniversary of attacks blamed on Islamic extremist Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida network. It was a general warning to

Americans all over the world and did not mention any specific countries where US citizens may be most at risk but earlier Monday the department said it was closing two diplomatic missions in Indonesia due to terrorist threats. "(We) have received credible and specific threat information that the American embassy in Jakarta and the consulate general in Surabaya are at risk of terrorist attack," spokesman Richard Bouchers said. "They closed their facilities to public activity until further notice and are reviewing their security postures," he told reporters, declining to elaborate on the nature of the threat. The embassy in Jakarta issued a message to US citizens in Indonesia earlier Monday, urging that they be "extremely cautious during the coming days."

Blair terms Saddam outlaw

US sees growing consensus on Iraq

AFP, London

In the strongest terms from any international leader yet, British Prime Minister Tony Blair has labelled Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein an "outlaw," and planned Tuesday to urge action against him. Blair, whose headline position seems to run counter to both British public opinion and many other European leaders, was, in a speech Tuesday, to urge the international community to "do everything we can to stop (Saddam) from using the weapons he has and getting the weapons he wants." It is time for the international community to stand up for itself in the face of a real threat and the real defiance of an "international outlaw," argues Blair in an address prepared for the British Trades Union Congress which he is attending. The speech, part of which was released to the press late Monday, marks a sharp stepping-up in the war of words with Baghdad following Blair's weekend meetings with US President George W. Bush, whose administration is convinced that Saddam is producing, and plans to use, weapons of mass destruction. "We cannot stand by and do nothing," the British leader argues in his speech, while noting that the United Nations should deal with the issue as Saddam has consistently flouted its resolutions since arms inspectors were barred from reentering the country in 1998.

In the wake of the US-led campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan, to which Britain was a major contributor, Baghdad is unrivalled as the world's worst regime, according to Blair -- a brutal, dictatorial government with a wretched human rights record. It is a threat to its neighbours, the region and to the stability of the world. The excerpts of Blair's speech were released on the heels of a telephone conversation he had with French President Jacques Chirac, who in an interview with the New York Times Monday again made clear his opposition to military action against Iraq, the French government said. Chirac rejected out of hand Washington's talk of preventive action against Iraq to achieve its stated goal of a change of regime. Meanwhile, US President George W. Bush sees growing global support for giving new teeth to UN resolutions on Iraq, the White House said Monday, days before he lays out his hard-line approach to the world body. Bush made his case for ousting Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien and ramped up his telephone courtship of often sceptical world leaders ahead of Thursday's speech to the UN General Assembly. The US leader, who has won over only Britain to the notion of unilateral military action against Baghdad, called leaders of Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, NATO, the European Union, as well as UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

New Harrison album

AFP, Los Angeles

A new album that former Beatles guitarist George Harrison was working on until two months before he died will be released in November, 10 days ahead of the first anniversary of his death, his record label said Monday. "Brainwashed," the album -- Harrison's first release of new material in 15 years since his 1987 hit "Cloud Nine" -- is produced by Harrison, his son Dhani and his longtime friend, record producer Jeff Lynne and will be released on November 19.



Eleonora Pedron, 20, from Padua, poses for photographers with crown and sceptre after being elected Miss Italy 2002 late Monday.

US warns Pakistan not to meddle in Kashmir polls

Militants vow to continue killing to foil 'sham' polls

AFP, Washington

US Secretary of State Colin Powell said Monday that Washington had warned Pakistan not to interfere in looming elections in Indian-ruled Kashmir. Powell also signalled, as he hosted Indian Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha, that the United States was still pressuring Pakistan, its close ally in its campaign against terrorism, to rein in militants in the divided region. Powell and Sinha met to lay the groundwork for a meeting between President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee at the United Nations this week. They met after authorities in Indian Kashmir accused Pakistan of hiring local militants to disrupt phased legislative assembly polls which start on September 16. "I reaffirmed to the Minister that we have spoken to the Pakistanis about not interfering in any way with those elections, which we expect will be free and fair," said Powell. Sinha later said at a press conference that New Delhi was committed to holding "free, fair, peaceful and lucid elections in Kashmir." But in an oblique reference to Pakistan, India's age-old foe, he added: "Naturally our neighbour has an important role to play." Powell said that Washington was

still pressing Pakistan to crack down on incursions into Indian-controlled Kashmir by militants, an issue constantly inflaming volatile India-Pakistan relations. "I reaffirmed to the minister that we would continue to press the Pakistani government to do everything possible to stop the cross-border infiltration," he said. The United States says it believes that President Pervez Musharraf has acted to halt the incursions but cannot certify they have halted completely. India says Islamabad has done too little, too late. Powell, who made his latest foray into the South Asian political firestorm by visiting India and Pakistan in July, said he frequently reminded Pakistan that it had made a commitment to halt incursions. India has blamed Muslim militants for a string of attacks on political figures and civilians in its sector of Kashmir and for some strikes in India itself, notably an attack on parliament in New Delhi last December which set tensions to boiling point. Sinha said he was "totally satisfied" with the talks which he said set the "substance of discussions" for the Bush-Vajpayee encounter on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly on Thursday. The United States has in recent years, prioritised its relations with

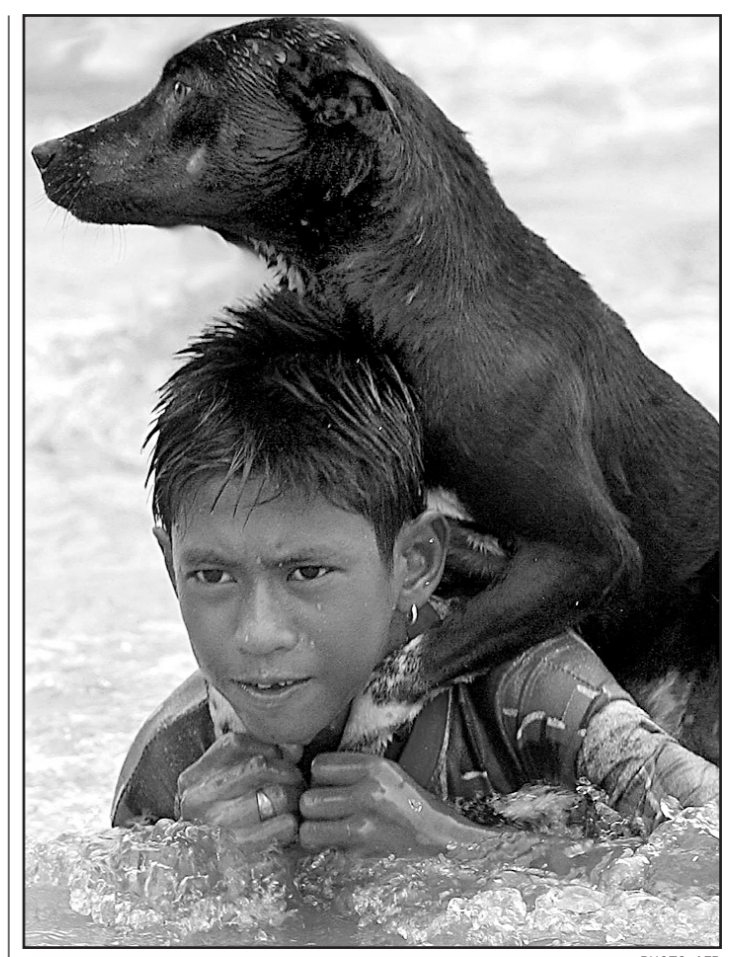
India, as it has emerged as an economic power, emphasising its philosophical similarities with India, the world's largest democracy. But since the terror attacks on Washington and New York on September 11 last year, Pakistan has emerged as a key ally in its campaign against terrorism. Meanwhile, a Muslim militant group said Tuesday it would continue killing supporters of a "sham" election starting next Monday in the Indian zone of disputed Kashmir. "We not only stand by our announcement to disrupt the mock polls but we are vigorously implementing it," said Abdur Rafia, a senior leader of the Jamiatul Mujahedin group. Rafia said his group had killed and would continue to kill all those taking part in or willingly supporting the "sham exercise." "We have killed around 25 activists, including candidates, of the National Conference (the ruling party in Indian Kashmir) in the past three months. All of them were active in electioneering," Rafia told AFP. "These people want to keep up and strengthen India's rule in Kashmir. Whosoever, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, Kashmiri or non-Kashmiri, strengthens India's illegal occupation will be our target, just like the Indian soldiers," he said.

Threat of war on Iraq overshadows UNGA

AFP, United Nations

Fifty-two heads of state and government are so far due to attend the start this week of the 57th United Nations General Assembly, against the sombre background of the threat of war on Iraq. The first scheduled piece of business -- after the election Tuesday of the new Assembly president, former Czech foreign minister Jan Kavan -- is the admission of Switzerland as the 190 member of the world body. East Timor has opted to join on September 27, a week after the end of the so-called debate of world leaders -- in fact a series of set speeches from the historic green marble Assembly rostrum. The debate traditionally ushers in the UN year and lasts for two working weeks. Speech-making this year has been delayed by Wednesday's ceremonies marking the first anniversary of the September 11 attack that destroyed New York's World Trade Center, five kilometres (three miles) south of here. The debate will be concentrated into nine days, starting Thursday and ending on September 20, with one day -- September 16 -- set aside for a conference on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Presidents, kings and prime ministers, plus foreign ministers from another 130 countries, will hold countless meetings and news conferences on topics including conflict in Africa, the Middle East, HIV/AIDS and Third World debt. US officials said that during his 42 hours in New York, President George W. Bush had scheduled separate meetings with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the leaders of Afghanistan, India, Pakistan and Japan, as well as group sessions with a dozen African presidents. But it is Bush's speech to the Assembly on Thursday morning that is expected to set the tone for the debate and many of the meetings on the sidelines. Many world leaders, such as Presidents Jacques Chirac of France and Vladimir Putin of Russia, have expressed reservations about the Bush administration's declared aim of toppling Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. In particular, they have warned the United States that unless it can get the approval of the UN Security Council for military action, it will not have their support. Bush's spokesman Ari Fleischer said Monday that it appeared to the White House that "the movement is budding to put some force into previous (UN) resolutions" on Iraq.



A Thai boy carries a dog on his back as he wades through a flooded street at Ta Pan Hin district of Phichit province, northern Thailand on Tuesday. Dozens of provinces throughout Thailand remained in the grip of severe flooding on Monday which officials said has left at least 55 people dead over the past six weeks.

EU team to meet Suu Kyi

AFP, Yangon

European Union delegates here to assess Myanmar's political reform process were due to meet on Tuesday with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and a top junta member, officials said. The first EU delegation to visit Yangon since the May release of Aung San Suu Kyi would call on her National League for Democracy (NLD) party in the afternoon, a party source told AFP. "The EU delegation is expected to call on the NLD headquarters at 2:00 p.m. (0730 GMT) where they will meet with the NLD leadership," the source said.

European Union delegates here to assess Myanmar's political reform process were due to meet on Tuesday with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and a top junta member, officials said. The first EU delegation to visit Yangon since the May release of Aung San Suu Kyi would call on her National League for Democracy (NLD) party in the afternoon, a party source told AFP. "The EU delegation is expected to call on the NLD headquarters at 2:00 p.m. (0730 GMT) where they will meet with the NLD leadership," the source said.