



The great divide

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A tumultuous year has elapsed since the tragic happenings in the USA on September 11, 2001. Future historians of world politics may very well describe the fateful day as the mark of a *Great Divide*. On that day unprecedented attacks were mounted by terrorists using hijacked American commercial aircrafts piloted by suicidesquads in New York and Washington. These attacks resulted in the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre and in great damage to the Pentagon and the grievous loss of some 3000 lives. These horrific events changed the entire world for the worse. In many respects, these tragic happenings also reflect the quiet changes, which our world has undergone since the disappearance of the bi-polar world and the end of coldwar.

Politics in the new emerging, uncertain world order

The new emerging World order is marked by uncertainty. The 'command and control structure' characteristic of the bi-polar world is no more in existence. In an uncertain 'unipolar world' actors other than the nation states have emerged with gradually increasing strength and expanding roles. Multinational Corporations (MNCs) have been joined by international groups and coalitions, which are not under the control of any particular state or group of states. The al-Qaida terrorist group led by the Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden which the USA and its allies against terrorist find responsible for the attack on America, evidently appears to be such a group. Its membership cuts across national frontiers and its location spans many countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and America. Such groups often claim to be founded on ideological considerations, however, misguided. For achieving their avowed ideological aims, they may resort to virtual wars against states. Obviously this is a new kind of struggle which reflects an unprecedented change in relationship between various countries and states and individuals.

Furthermore, the transition to the new uncertain world order has been marked by a grave weakening of the state as a governing entity. In many areas, states are in the throes of debilitating internal and external conflicts.

The transition from the bi-polar world was stunningly rapid and amazingly peaceful, at least in the beginning. The whole process, however, has been too good to be enduring. The East European states, former satellites of the erstwhile U.S.S.R., are in dire politico-economic distress. The world they had known for four decades until the 1990s no more existed. The world they pinned their hopes on has not still emerged. Participative democracy, without its economic underpinning, has proved to be an expensive adornment for them. In desperation some of these societies have

moved to the other part of their disturbed dream-ethno-cultural chauvinism, as manifest in sanguinary conflicts in Bosnia Herzegovina, and the strains between the Czechs and Slovaks. Even in the European heart of the erstwhile USSR, in Georgia and Chechnya for instance, life shorn of ideological passion and at the same time denied desired economic prosperity has brought forth ceaseless bloody feuds.

In the erstwhile Asian republics of the former USSR sovereignty and democracy have not resulted in the realization of politico-economically free and reasonably secure life. On the contrary institutional vacuum, economic underdevelopment and the unfriendly lack of compassion of a market-friendly economy have all contributed to the intensification of age-old ethno-cultural and religious hostilities seeking inspiration from divisive and intolerant orthodox.

Ethnic, religious, cultural conflicts in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Africa have thrown millions into nightmares of blood and fire, Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, Congo, Sierra Leone, Azerbaijan-Armenia, Georgia, Kampuchea, parts of the South Asian subcontinent, Sri Lanka, Angola and Mozambique are burning illustrations of these distressing phenomena.

Save in some prosperous North American, West European and Far-eastern states, governance is weak and under extensive threat and order is in short supply. In several African and east European states, government has virtually disappeared. The less said about economic emancipation in these areas where human life itself is hostage to mindless men in arms, the better.

Many areas in the post cold war Eastern Europe and in drought driven, tribal war riddled Africa are forecasting the shadows of a world caught in the web of uncertainty.

As a result of all this, several countries of the South have witnessed virtual disintegration of their societies. Lacking good governance that builds lively linkages between the society and the state, these societies have virtually broken-up.

The nature of the emerging world order and the true and persistent global divide

The First World, composed of the USA, its prosperous North American neighbour, Canada and its socio-economic and political ally, the European Union (nations of Western Europe) and the erstwhile Second World, the now-defunct Soviet Union, minus its Central Asian component, comprising Russia and European units of the erstwhile Soviet Union are 'visibly engaged in the unprecedented process of vigorous and close cooperation and collaboration, especially in the economic sphere.'

As a consequence, the erstwhile Third World, now the Second World, composed of numerous poor and weak nations is confronted with nothing

but a desperate and continued struggle against widespread poverty and economic, industrial and technological underdevelopment and the disastrous impact of environmental degradation. If the present trends persist, it may have to fight this war all alone.

The true global divide between the industrially developed countries of the North and the predominantly agrarian states of the South threatens to widen into a chasm. For the nations of the technologically and industrially backward and predominantly agrarian South, the transformation of the world order may eventually prove to be more philosophical than real.

The world is changing. The more it changes the more it remains the same. 'The true global divide' remains largely intact. The North, however, is visibly no more split by ideology. Political

and social systems as well as development strategies are converging among yesterday's contenders who are in the rapid process of emerging as today's friendly collaborators. The hitherto existent world economic order was loaded against the many nations of the South (including those of South Asia) who are poor and weak. The emerging economic order with increased and intensified collaboration among the nations of the North may hold out even grimmer prospects for the less developed and developing countries of the South.

The USA under the leadership of Republican President George W. Bush is now going ahead with its worldwide campaign against terrorism which it believes is being propelled by Islamic fundamentalists and extremists. President Bush also indicates that the USA considers certain states as patrons and supporters of global terrorist activities. The "axis of evil" according to President Bush is composed of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea; attacks on one or more of these countries may be

eye as a manifestation of what the American political scientist, Samuel P. Huntington described as "the clash of civilizations". In actuality, however, this is not the case. As already noted, the US-led alliance against international terrorism is also composed of important countries and governments that are predominantly Muslim, such as Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, Egypt, Jordan and Pakistan.

The problem, however, arises from the inability of the prime actors against terrorism to take a holistic view of the roots and nature of the discontent which breeds transnational terrorism.

With the removal of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the installation of a pro-western government there, the first phase of the war against new terrorism described by US President George Bush as the "the first war of the 21 Century" has ended. But is it the end of terror as it has emerged in the post 11 September period? We do not know.

Western leaders, in particular President Bush of USA and Prime Minister Blair of Britain have gone to great length to underscore that this war was not a "Crusade" against Islam and did not symbolise a "clash of civilisations". Most Muslim nations also agree with this view and many of them are fellow fighters of the USA and the West in this new struggle. The recent reassertions by the US Leaders, especially Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld seem to indicate that the US Administration is determined to attack Iraq. The preemptive strike will be designed to tackle the threats from Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's reported augmentation of weapons of Mass Destruction which could be used against the West. Statements by President Bush and his colleagues make the world face to face with the fear of another dangerous conflagration.

An yet incipient, though not overt, dichotomy may become the mark of the present times: the World may tend to be divided, if care is not taken now, between the largely prosperous, technologically, industrially and militarily mightier non-Muslim West and North and relatively poor and technologically and militarily weaker Muslim East and South. This may happen if the leaders of the West (North) continue to fail to distinguish between the overwhelming majority of tolerant and deprived Muslims and the minority of fanatics and extremists among Muslims. The danger is intensified by those leaders' inability or unwillingness to differentiate terrorism from struggles for national self-determination and liberation of peoples who are predominantly but not exclusively Muslims (e.g. Palestinians).

Too much concern with and stress on national security by Western nations, especially the U.S.A are increasingly eroding the bases of democracy, human rights and civil liberty. There is a marked tendency to disrupt the basis of the existing international order and states-system by:

It will need great care and patience of the concerned leaders and their peoples to ensure that terror is not only defeated on the surface, they will need to go deep into the root causes that spawn, nurture and strengthen such terrorism. The lack of human rights, freedom, social justice and economic equity from which people in such lands as Israeli occupied Palestine and parts of Lebanon and Afghanistan, Somalia, Rwanda, Congo, Sierra Leon, etc. suffer must be tackled at the very sources. Only then can a world transforming itself into a global village root out all forms of terrorism including the variety that emerged on the 11th of September, 2001.



War on terror: A superpower strikes an impoverished country - raising more rubbles than confidence in containing the terror



Incandescent terror revisited

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

There have always been defining moments in history: changing physical landscapes, political philosophies, social institutions and above all thought process at the level of peoples. Mindless yet far reaching tragic events of last September eleven was one of those defining moments. Suddenly the promise made to the people of the world (albeit a particular segment) was rudely denied as if shaken up from a pleasant dream replaced by the dreadful terror of turbulence and conflictual world one had thought had passed away into the eternal void of time. Berlin wall had been pulled down by the inexorable desire for freedom, the cold war had been enveloped within the unstoppable urge for material and moral advancement, erstwhile enemies had become nextdoor neighbours. Indeed the world was almost ready to accept the hegemonic stability though unsure of the system's potential benefits in exchange of the certitude seen in the Westphalian system over centuries. Gradual evolution of the European Union through phased surrender of sovereignty; periodic attempts by Quebec to break away from Canadian federalist construct; disintegration of former Yugoslavia (through Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia-Montenegro have been recognized as independent states) and consequent bloody expression of Kosovo Albanians to separate formal Serbia or to align themselves with Albania; Chechen dissidents in Russia; and Serbian dissidents in Croatia and Bosnia -- made sovereignty a contested concept though undeniably the Westphalian sovereignty had signalled the great transformation from medieval to modern era.

The Faustian bargain made by the British through the Balfour Declaration to court Jewish public opinion in favour of the allies in the war and also to help protect the approaches to the Suez Canal and the road to then British India (Churchill's 1922 explanation of Balfour Declaration notwithstanding) proved seminal to the intractable Middle East problem.

Regardless of the unjustifiability of the malevolent efforts of the Al Qaida and Osama bin Laden one has to recognize the umbilical connection between terror and the continuing US policy of total support to Israel's genocidal activities in Palestine.

The world vividly remembers the horrific

scenes on television screen on the assault on twin tower and the consequent disbelief, which turned into anger. International condemnation of the barbaric acts was instantaneous. Organization of Islamic Conference "strongly condemned the brutal terror acts (which) ran counter to the teachings of divine religions as well as ethical and human values." Arab League called the attacks as "dreadful" and urged that "the cancer of terrorism" be urgently and pressingly combated. ASEAN "unequivocally condemn(ed) in strongest terms the horrifying terrorist attacks." King Abdullah of Jordan observed "extremists have hijacked Islam and killed innocent Muslims." President Yasser Arafat emphatically declared "Fighting terror is not a war against Arabs and Muslims or Islam. There can be no mix between

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our just Palestinian cause and the acts of terrorism and killing of civilians which recently happened in the United States." Such worldwide support helped from the global coalition to eliminate terrorism as a force in international relations as well as the world consensus holding Osama bin Laden and Al Qaida network responsible for the Nine-Eleven devastations. British FCO drew up a

culpability statement (updated on 14.11.01) in which the British government clearly concluded that Osama bin Laden (OBL) and Al Qaida planned and carried out the atrocities of September 11; that AQ, a terrorist organization, and the Taliban regime jointly exploited the drug trade; that a symbiotic relationship existed between OBL and the Taliban. The culpability statement mentioned UNSC Resolution 1267 which condemned OBL for sponsoring international terrorism and operating a network of terrorist camps and demanded of the Taliban regime to surrender OBL to face trial which Taliban refused to comply with. As further proof of OBL's complicity the Culpability Statement quoted OBL's threat to use chemical or nuclear weapons if the Americans attacked him with such weapons. "We have the weapons as deterrent" he reportedly said. In a broadcast on 13th October 2001 a spokesman of OBL advised Muslims in the USA and Britain not to travel by air nor to live in high rise buildings. Recently German authorities have unearthed evidence that the Hamburg cell of Al Qaida was planning attacks on the USA in October 1999 which was changed later. Hamburg cell included two of the people who crashed into the World Trade Center while the third crashed into a Pennsylvania field. Munir al Mutassadeq, the accused, the Germans have alleged was responsible for supporting the suicide pilots, arranging for financing of their activities including payment of flight school in Florida. Munir was an electrical engineering student at the Hamburg Technical University from 1955 till his arrest, the same school also attended by the twin tower suicide pilots.

Armed with Security Council Resolutions and international coalition of forces military action in Afghanistan began on 7th October 2001. Though NATO's formal role was neither necessary nor desirable given the location of the conflict, NATO invoked Article V -- the mutual defense clause -- after Nine-Eleven. Frequent contributors to Afghanistan campaign were United Kingdom, Australia, France and Canada. Forces from Denmark, Norway and Germany also participated. Holland, Italy and Japan deployed ships to the Arabian Sea. Today major Western allies constitute the backbone of UN authorized Stability Force in Kabul. One political analyst (Michael O'Hearn-Foreign Affairs-volume 81 No. 3) blamed American inefficiency for the escape of

OBL and top Al-Qaida leaders from Tora Bora. According to him "The United States relied too much on Pakistan and its Afghan allies to close off possible escape routes from Tora Bora. It is not clear that these allies had the same incentives as the United States to conduct the effort with dogged persistence ... Rather than relying on the Afghan and Pakistani forces Rumsfeld and (General) Franks should have tried to prevent the Al Qaida fighters from fleeing into Pakistan by deploying American forces on or near the border."

With Afghanistan tamed would Al Qaida or similar terrorist organizations face difficulties to find alternate bases? Not necessarily. Transnational terrorist organizations are constantly on the look out for failing or failed states. In these places the terrorists can acquire large tracts of land to accommodate training camps, arms depots, communication facilities etc e.g. taking control of number of villages in Bosnia; business interests in gummastic plantation in Sudan; or small factories in Albania. Because failed states have weak or non-existent law enforcement facilities OBL could use Fargana Valley as a transshipment point for Afghan drugs enroute to Europe. Failed states are characterised by high degree of corruption, repressive regimes, stagnant economies, bad governance contributing to frustration among the youths in particular which becomes breeding ground for fresh recruits who are paid much more than they would have got even if some were lucky enough to get jobs. These states having outward signs of sovereignty can issue passports and legitimately acquire weapons ostensibly for their military but actually they act as agents of the terrorists. Ray Takeyh & Nikolas Gvosdov (The Washington Quarterly-Summer 2002) believe that terrorist network can survive at places like Kashmir, Kosovo, Chechnya -- despite the fact that unique convergence of factors like existence of an anti-Taliban force and absence of international recognition may not occur. Besides, some states may be tempted to use terrorists for cross-border infiltration as in the case of Kashmir providing the government "plausible deniability" in case any thing were to go wrong.

While the need for pursuit of evil and destruction of terror can not even be debated, it should be morally obligatory for the judge and the jury to make exact determination that real wrong is being rightened and anger is not being wrought

upon the innocent. According to Lamis Andoni, a Middle East expert, (The Washington Quarterly-spring 2002) the collapse of the twin towers symbolised the collapse of American policy in the Arab and Muslim worlds. He fears that US policy based solely on power and dominance leaves no room for dissent driving all discontents into the arms of extremists and terrorists. President Bush's ultimatum to the world that either you are with us or with the terrorists reflects myopia of

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power. He was shocked with Madeline Albright's reply in the affirmative to a question whether deaths of thousands of Iraqi children was "worth it" to keep sanction in place; and also by Ross's description of suicide bombers as "murders of children" and that Israel does not target civilians -- an assertion contradicted by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Physicians for Human Rights etc. The point to be noted here is that neither Saddam Hossain nor OBL speak for the Arabs or the Muslims -- their methods and deed are too abhorrent for any modicum of sympathy even from the victims for whom they supposedly are fighting for. They have somehow have been able to articulate the grievances of millions of people, their hopelessness and helplessness even though their forms of articulation has more harmed the causes they claim to espouse. On Thursday the 5th of September President

(a) Overwhelming domination by the U.S.A. acting alone or in concert with its allies (e.g. U.S.A.'s refusal to recognize the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court over its citizens and soldiers; defiance of majority opinion in U.N. with regard to unjust Israeli action in West Bank).

(b) Limitation put by military might (on the plea of fighting terrorism) on the sovereign rights and powers of weaker states.

All this may lead to an erosion of the bases of democracy, economy of free enterprise and a participatory international order. The resulting scenario can lead to a grim situation in which moderate governments especially in Muslim countries may tumble giving rise to either anarchy or extremist dispensations committed to a war to death against the U.S.A. and the West. The oil-rich middle-east may be in the throes of disastrous convulsion, disrupting the secure supply of fuel and energy to Europe and Japan, their very life-blood. This would mean grave damage to the present day dominant civilization. Perhaps, this is why the Secretary General of the Arab League speaking at the meeting of Foreign Ministers of Arab Nations on the 5 of September observed that an attack on Iraq would "open the gates of hell".

These depressing and disastrous trends can be arrested only by sound, informed, farsighted and tolerant statesmanship in the mighty societies of the West and North. The leaders must learn and understand the societies beyond the pale of their way of life and respect and tolerate these. They need to work in cooperation on the basis of equal partnership with the appropriate leaders of these societies. They require to move with care and caution, blending concerns and measures for security against terrorism with respect for and commitment to the principles of democracy, tolerance, human rights and civil liberty. The demands are exacting, yet these must be met because the stakes are very high: the continued existence of civilization and peaceful international order as we know it.

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President of the Carnegie Foundation For International Peace apprehended that Bush's "with us or against us" warning may result in a coercive coalition and portray Washington as an "aggressive Rome". This attempt at bringing about a "regime change" in Iraq without UN sanction may not spell well for the unipolar world in the long run. Already Russia had assured that it would support pre-emptive measures under UN auspices. Australian Prime Minister, however, had served notice that this time he would not blindly follow the US lead. EU Foreign Ministers meeting in Denmark had reportedly counseled restraint. They reportedly gave widespread support to a plan seeking Palestinian independence by 2005. If the plan gets the support of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel and Palestine then it would have been placed before the Quartet -- US, EU, Russia and UN -- scheduled to meet in New York this month. So diplomatic efforts are on to avert another crisis. Discontinuance of Saddam Hossain and Osama bin Laden would be a matter of supreme indifference to the Muslim world if a just solution were found to the problem which has attracted global attention in varying degrees for the last half century. Economic advancement and not conflictuality should be on the global agenda for this century. Reason and not brute force would add to the hegemonic stability. Any challenge would detract the power of the hegemon. The latest US-British military action has the potentiality to do just that. One, however, hopes that above all, justice and fairness should rule inter-state relations in this yet evolving global political construct for peace to be durable and prosperity to be shared by all.

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