

New York one year on: How nothing but everything changed



M ABDUL HAFIZ

IN the wake of September 11 a year ago the buzzword was 'change'. The people lived under those impending 'changes' indefinitely. Soon after the events of the fateful day the people read and were told that the world had changed forever, that nothing would be the same again. But when the American dynamism really showed up, started picking up the pieces of life from virtual ruins and put them on rail, it pretty well started moving. The Americans were back to business as usual - just within days. Only around 'Ground Zero' a glance skyward still brought back those lurid memories. On the wall street a few days before the anniversary of the dreadful day both the markets and dollars fell and the jittery traders rushed home fearing a repeat programme of September 11, 2001. On September 12 when the conventional wisdom prevailed that

life would never be the same again, most people were surprisingly talking in their neighbourhood not global politics, but their day to day life. The anticipated wave of spectacular follow-up horrors did not come, no anthrax was found in the tube, no dirty bomb exploded in Los Angeles and no nuke dropped on Rome. The result was that the Americans did not have to be under permanent shadow of fear they

the greatest surge of patriotism since the Second World War. His party may lose seats in Congress in November, but few would bet against Bush for 2004. For the best part of the year it has been considered virtual heresy to criticize him or talk of his handling of war on terror. Now the President considers himself as Winston Churchill, a wartime hero courageous enough to stand up to tyranny while all around him

replaced by militant unilateralism not confined only to governing elite. Whereas once there was an US's urge to withdraw from the world - to have no part in global governance like the ones embodied in Kyoto Protocol or International Criminal Court - now interestingly there is an acceptance that America must have a responsibility for the world but not in a nambly-pamby arrangement but by grabbing it, if

new American assertions an increasing number of its own commentators from both right and left proudly describe the US as a latter-day empire - with a duty to protect, and, if necessary rule the world. Here, yet another interesting phenomenon will fast make its appearance. Whereas once Europe was faulted for its anti-Americanism, a new anti-Europeanism is back and alive in post 9/11 America regarding

our hands.' If the American politics has shifted to a go-it-alone, gung-ho self-confidence, it's okay. But even outside the US the feeling of the twin towers has left its marks, which are difficult to erase or the issues might have even changed. Last year the future of global capitalism felt like the most important question of our time. Now it has been displaced by the panic of 'clash of civilization'. Anti-capitalists will insist that we are all making a terrible mistake, that only clash of civilization that matters is the one between rich and poor. They may be right but the public imagination tends to have room for only one bogeyman. After 9/11 it's the prospect of a murderous violence that terrifies at least the west rather more than the omnipresence of Nike and Starbucks. But that's not the end. More fears and uncertainties are in the making with their unpredictable potentialities. The racists' change of target is but one of the symptoms of a deeper change brought on by September 11. Earlier the race relation used to be about tension between black and white. No longer. After 9/11 it's Islam that gets the prejudiced's juices flowing. Whether the row is about faith school, citizenship classes or American/British value the imagined threat today is of a Muslim enemy within.

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PERSPECTIVES

If the American politics has shifted to a go-it-alone, gung-ho self-confidence, it's okay. But even outside the US the feeling of the twin towers has left its marks, which are difficult to erase or the issues might have even changed. Last year the future of global capitalism felt like the most important question of our time. Now it has been displaced by the panic of 'clash of civilization'.

anticipated. That's all were the changes in the life of an average American even to the most discerning eye proving that the 'changes' were overly exaggerated.

Yet there are changes - not the ones we imagined. The Americans may well think of change because their country certainly seems different - starting with the man at the top. George W. Bush looked vulnerable a year ago. The most shabbily-elected American President enjoyed poor rating. He, however transformed, is now venerated as the embodiment of America during

were falling to their knees. And that mood has spread throughout America.

What really changed after 9/11 and the changes to be brought must have been a matter of the 'western fraternity' and could be done only surreptitiously. Its outline is however perfectly in order because, in any case, they are the ones those would constitute the future shape of things to come for the planet. Will the Bush Presidency would like to revert back the US to isolationism that could be heard among the handful of Republicans before 9/11? It has now been

required, by seizing the scruff of the neck. It must always be in charge.

The aftershocks of 9/11 are still felt across the world - but they are not the ones we imagined. Some of the large tectonic plates of our world have certainly been shifted - but not perhaps in the way we expected that to happen. Instead we live in a world changed in a different way. It was not either transformed the way we wanted.

Look at still more changes - subtle but crucial. It used to be foreign leftists who once spoke of US imperialism. Now as a result of

the continent's nations as craven in the face of dictatorship, congenitally anti-Semitic and with a limp-wristed readiness to surrender their sovereignty either to EU or UN. It only implies that only the US can be relied on to save the European swath. As the *Washington Post* columnist Charles Cranhammer put it recently: 'We are in a war of self-defence. It is also a war for western civilization. If the Europeans refuse to see themselves as part of this struggle, fine. If they wish to abdicate, fine. We will let them hold out only our coats, but not tie

Honest Americans think of America only

Which side is Dr. Wolfowitz on?

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED
writes from America

THE writer has not met a single Muslim who likes the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. Saddam is the reason the Iraqi civilians have suffered so much. The United Nations sanctions, which have resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilian men, women and children over the last twelve years, have left Saddam unscathed. Saddam could do his nation a great service by simply disappearing, which of course he will not do. Ideally, the Iraqi people should remove their oppressor through similar mass movement that toppled Pakistan's Field Marshall Ayub Khan in 1969, Bangladesh's General Ershad in 1990 and Indonesia's General Suharto in 1999. Since the Iraqi people show no such inclination, the United States has declared that it will do that itself.

Logic is the first casualty of why the US wants to go after Iraq. According to the CIA, President Clinton and everyone else, Iraq's military capability is at best one fourth of what it was in 1990; America's fighting prowess has increased many-fold in the meantime. After desperate attempts, no link has been found between Iraq and the Sept. 11 terrorist acts. The CIA says that the Iraqis have not sponsored any terrorist acts against the US in the last ten years. When Iraq's neighbours said that they do not feel threatened by Iraq at all, the warmongers were alarmed. After a weekend at Camp David, President Bush and Prime Minister Blair came up with the theory that Iraq has gone from being a threat to its neighbours to becoming a threat to the whole world! With the transformation of fallacy into fact, Iraq has suddenly catapulted to the top of US agenda in its fight against terrorism. Although former UN inspector and a frequent visitor to Iraq, Scott Ritter, insists that the inspectors had destroyed most of Iraq's weapons, and that Iraq had rebuilt very little, the war drums are beating louder.

Why is this massive inconsistency between logic and plan of action? President Bush needs to change the subject in a hurry. The war in Afghanistan has not gone well. President Bush promised to catch Osama Bin Laden "dead or alive"; currently, America does not even know whether Bin Laden is dead or alive. The US troops have orders not to leave their bases or major cities. Afghanistan continues to be ruled by warlords. President Hamid Karzai, under the protection of US troops, was almost assassinated a few weeks ago. American economy is going down the tubes. Every time President Bush gives a major speech, the stock market plummets further. With the mid-term elections looming in November, the people's mind has to be diverted from the tanking economy.

When a nation prepares for war, sane voices are rare. One such voice is that of Mr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's National Security chief. Chiding President Bush for using semi-religious terms ("evildoers") to define terrorists, in a *Op-Ed* piece in the *New York Times* on Sept. 1 Mr. Brzezinski said: "It is as if terrorism is suspended in outer space as an abstract phenomenon, with ruthless terrorists acting under some satanic inspiration unrelated to any specific motivation.... Missing from much of

The only time people rally around the President is when he talks about war on terrorism. Attacking Iraq fits the bill perfectly. A lot rides on the November elections for the President. Several Supreme Court Justices are old and want to retire. If the Senate remains under Democratic control, the President will not be able to nominate rightwing Justices to the Court. It may be recalled that although Al Gore received more than half a million more popular votes than Bush in the general elections of 2000, the five rightwing Republican appointees to the Supreme Court anointed Bush the President by stopping the popular vote counting in Florida.

Let us reiterate certain facts. Ninety percent of the Muslim grievance would vanish if the US were to be fair to the Palestinians and lifted the sanctions against Iraq. Unfortunately, showing little patience for the sensibility of the Muslim world, President Bush has decided to do

the public debate is discussion of the simple fact that lurking behind every terrorist act is a political antecedent. This does not justify either the perpetrator or his political cause. Nonetheless, the fact is that almost all terrorist activity originates from some political conflict and is sustained by it as well. That is true of the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland, the Basques in Spain, the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, the Muslims in Kashmir and so forth."

Mr. Brzezinski criticizes some supporter of the Bush administration for "arguing that Islamic culture in general is so hostile to the West, and especially to democracy, that it has created a fertile soil for terrorist hatred of America." Mr. Brzezinski continues: "In the case of Sept. 11, it does not require deep analysis to note - given the identity of the perpetrators - that the Middle East's political history has something to do with the hatred of the Middle East-

special risk that foreign powers will cease upon the word 'terrorism' to promote their own agendas, as President Vladimir Putin of Russia, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee of India and President Jiang Zemin of China are doing. For each of them the disembodied American definition of the terrorist challenge has been both expedient and convenient.

"When speaking to Americans, neither Mr. Putin nor Mr. Sharon can hardly utter a sentence without the 'T' word in order to transform America's struggle against terrorism into a joint struggle against their particular Muslim neighbours. Mr. Putin clearly sees an opportunity to deflect Islamic hostility away from Russia despite Russian crimes in Chechnya and earlier in Afghanistan. Mr. Sharon would welcome deterioration in United States relations with Saudi Arabia and perhaps American military action against

render. Instead, it will only be divined from the gradual waning of terrorist acts. Any further strikes against Americans will thus be a painful reminder that the war has not been won. Sadly, a main reason will be America's reluctance to focus on the political roots of the terrorist atrocity of Sept. 11."

Clearly, President Bush does not listen to the impartial advice of the likes of Mr. Zbigniew Brzezinski. Who does he listen to? In an article in *The New York Times Magazine* on Sept. 22, senior writer Bill Keller says that Deputy Defence Secretary Dr. Paul D. Wolfowitz has the President's ears. It is not surprising that a "resolutely unintellectual President" would have a weakness for a former Professor of Political Science at Yale, which is what Wolfowitz was. Dr. Wolfowitz, who is Jewish, has also been described as "Israel-centric" according to the magazine. According to the article, in a meeting at the White House the day after

They would participate in coalitions but they would be 'ad hoc.' The US would be 'postured to act independently when collective action cannot be orchestrated'...

The guidance envisioned preemptive attacks against states bent on acquiring nuclear, biological or chemical weapons. It was accompanied by illustrative scenarios of hypothetical wars for which the military should be prepared. One of them was another war against Iraq... A number of years later, in an essay published in *The National Interest*, Wolfowitz contended that most Americans had come around to favouring the kind of Pax Americana envisioned in that document. He argued that American interventions in the Balkans and elsewhere had demonstrated that a growing consensus for an American leadership, which entailed "demonstrating that your friends will be protected and taken care of, that your enemies will be punished and those who refuse to support you will live to regret having done so." According to Wolfowitz's theory, Israel the "friend" should receive complete US protection in spite of its atrocities against the Palestinians, and the Muslims, the enemy, should be punished, in spite of saving American consumers trillions of dollars through selling cheap oil.

Before charges of anti-Semitism comes flying, let me quote a little more from the article: "You hear from some of Wolfowitz's critics, always off the record, that Israel exercises a powerful gravitational pull on the man. They may not know that as a teenager he spent his father's sabbatical semester in Israel or that his sister is married to an Israeli, but they certainly know that he is friendly with Israel's generals and diplomats and that he is something of a hero to the heavily Jewish neoconservative movement." Why should it be "offensive," then, to suspect that someone who is Jewish, spent time in Israel, has family connection with Israel and is "friendly with Israel's generals and diplomats and that he is something of a hero to the heavily Jewish neoconservative movement" and who uses his high position in the US government to consistently divert US policy towards attacking Israel's enemies exclusively, not be suspected for working for the interests of Israel to the detriment of US interests? Who does Dr. Wolfowitz really work for?

America should require its citizens of all faiths to touch their holy books and take an oath to uphold the interest of America exclusively. The writer is pretty confident that close to 100 per cent Muslim Americans will gladly take that oath of allegiance to America exclusively. It should be interesting to see how many Jewish Americans take the same oath and say that they owe 100 per cent of their allegiance to America, and 0 per cent to Israel!

LETTER FROM AMERICA

"You hear from some of Wolfowitz's critics, always off the record, that Israel exercises a powerful gravitational pull on the man. They may not know that as a teenager he spent his father's sabbatical semester in Israel or that his sister is married to an Israeli, but they certainly know that he is friendly with Israel's generals and diplomats and that he is something of a hero to the heavily Jewish neoconservative movement."... Who does Dr. Wolfowitz really work for?

exactly the opposite: he has given mass murderer Ariel Sharon carte blanche to do whatever he likes to the Palestinians, and is itching to destroy Iraq again. If one listens to the Zionists on American media, their assertion is that the terrorists have only one agenda: to kill Americans. The writer has heard Zionists like Mr. Steve Emerson say, "Terrorists hate us because of our democracy, our way of life, our wealth. They hate us because we exist. There is no way we can satisfy them through a dialogue. By killing Americans the terrorists get the biggest bang for their buck!" The Zionists have mastered the art of deflecting any justified attempt to blame Israel for America's suffering, as they heap all the unfair blame on the entire Muslim world. In truth, America is in danger of getting banged in the future, every time Israeli tanks take dead aim at, and massacre unarmed Palestinian civilians, which they do every day.

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ern terrorists for America... American involvement in the Middle East is clearly the main impulse of the hatred that has been directed at America. There is no escaping the fact that Arab political emotions have been shaped by the region's encounter with French and British colonialism, by the defeat of the Arab effort to prevent the existence of Israel and by the subsequent American support for Israel and its treatment of the Palestinians, as well as by the direct injection of American power into the region. Yet there has been a remarkable reluctance in America to confront the more complex historical dimensions of this hatred. The inclination instead has been to rely on abstract assertions like the terrorists 'hate freedom' or that their religious background makes them despise Western culture.

"To win the war on terrorism, one must therefore set two goals: first to destroy the terrorists and, second, to begin a political effort that focuses on the conditions that brought about their emergence. That is what the British are doing in Ulster, the Spaniards are doing in Basque country and the Russians are being urged to do in Chechnya. To do so does not imply propitiation of the terrorists, but is a necessary component of a strategy designed to isolate and eliminate the terrorist underworld. The rather narrow, almost one-dimensional definition of the terrorist threat favoured by the Bush administration poses the

Iraq, while gaining a free hand to suppress the Palestinians. Hindu fanatics in India are also quite eager to conflate Islam in general with terrorism in Kashmir in particular. Not to be outdone, the Chinese recently succeeded in persuading the Bush administration to list an obscure Uighur Muslim separatist group fighting in Xinjiang province as a terrorist organization with ties to Al Qaeda."

Mr. Brzezinski concludes: "For America, the potential risk is that its nonpolitically defined war on terrorism may thus be hijacked and diverted to other ends. The consequences would be dangerous. If America comes to be viewed by its key democratic allies in Europe and Asia as morally obtuse and politically naive in failing to address terrorism in its broader and deeper dimensions - and if it is also seen by them as uncritically embracing intolerant suppression of ethnic or national aspirations - global support for America's policies will surely decline. America's ability to maintain a broadly democratic antiterrorist coalition will suffer gravely. The prospect of international support for an eventual military confrontation with Iraq will also be drastically diminished. Such an isolated America is likely to face even more threats from vengeful terrorists who have decided to blame America for any outrages committed by its self-appointed allies. A victory in the war against terrorism can never be registered in the formal act of sur-

Sept. 11, when everyone was talking about Al Qaeda, Taliban and Afghanistan. Dr. Wolfowitz would talk only about attacking Iraq! Afghanistan, after all was no threat to Israel militarily; Iraq was. Dr. Wolfowitz's believes, according to the article, that after Iraq, America should go after Iran, Syria and Libya. Interestingly, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Libya are all enemies of Israel, and since they do not have good relations with the US, with proper goading, Dr. Wolfowitz must believe that the US might be persuaded to go after them.

It has always been Zionists' aim to use American power to destroy Israel's enemies, without being blatant about it. They have authored grandiose papers about the projection of American power, where the recipients are never the powerful such as Russia or China, but the enemies of Israel, such as Iran and Iraq. The author of one such 1992 document, "Defence Planning Guidance," was Dr. Wolfowitz, then undersecretary for policy under Dick Cheney's Defence Department. The document, which has become the mainstay of the recently enunciated Bush Doctrine, said in part: "United States doctrine should be to assure that no new superpower arose to rival America's benign domination of the globe. The U.S. should defend its unique status both by being militarily powerful beyond challenge and by being such a constructive force that no one would want to challenge us.

OPINION

An insult to Washington's memory

MOHAMMAD A AUWAL

NOT sure how the US government itself now flouts the foundational and fundamental principles of American foreign policy? Just review and reflect on George Washington's valedictory to the nation. In his farewell address on September 19, 1796, the foremost founding father outlined the fundamental principles of American foreign policy. He framed them as "the disinterested warnings of a parting friend, who can possibly have no personal motive to bias his counsel." He urged "solemn contemplation" and "frequent review" of these principles for "the permanency of your felicity as a people."

Definitely, unlike today's G.W. Bush whose speech and acts are politically constrained or motivated, the founding father had a lot "more freedom" and wisdom when he said goodbye to the nation. Washington told fellow-Americans, "Observe good faith and justice towards all nations." He advised them to pursue a foreign policy of "justice and benevolence" that would "richly repay any temporary advantages which might be lost by a steady adherence to it." He said, "permanence inveterate antipathies against particular nations and passionate attachments for others should be excluded." He explained, "The nation, which indulges towards another an habitual hatred, or an habitual fondness,

is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interests." Washington warned that "a passionate attachment of one nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favourite nation . . . betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter . . . It leads also to concessions to the favourite nation of privileges denied to others . . . And it gives to ambitious, corrupted, or deluded citizens (who devote themselves to the favourite nation) facility to betray, or sacrifice the interests of their own country, without odium, sometimes even with popularity."

The founding father cautioned Americans against "the insidious wiles of foreign influence." He said, "history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of Republican government. . . . Excessive partiality for one foreign nation and excessive dislike of another, cause those whom they actuate to see danger only on one side, and serve to veil and even second the arts of influence on the other. Real patriots, who may resist the intrigues of the favourite, are liable to become suspected and odious; while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people, to surrender their interests." Unfortunately, today, the foundational U.S. commitment to equal

justice to all nations has been compromised, and the U.S. government has become a "slave" to its "passionate attachment" to some states like Israel and passionate hatred of some others like Iraq. Consider how passionately the U.S. rewards Israel and punishes Iraq for similar crimes. The pattern is that when Israel ignores a UN demand, it receives U.S. understanding, but when Iraq does the same, it receives showers of bombs and missiles or threats of invasion. Israel has violated more than 70 UN resolutions, while Iraq has resisted less than a handful. Israel invaded all its neighbours, while Iraq invaded two. Israel continues to occupy the entire Palestine and parts of Syria and Lebanon. Iraq no longer holds

the territories it seized. Both states have committed war crimes and both have had to be disciplined. Yet, Israel has received more than \$100 billion in US aid and commanded more than 30 American vetoes on UN resolutions that condemned or sought to change its illegal actions. In contrast, Iraq received the massive US-led war that killed several hundred thousand Iraqis in 1991 and the unending sanctions that have since killed a million more. Today, all Israel's neighbours regard its aggressive policies and weapons of mass destruction as a threat to world peace. None of Iraq's neighbours thinks the weakened Iraq poses a security threat any more. Yet, Bush administration

is rushing to invade Iraq. In an ironic fulfilment of Washington's prophetic words, Bush has adopted "through passion what reason would reject"-- a war on Iraq policy that many Americans and most people and governments of the world find morally indefensible and "contrary to the best calculations of policy." It doesn't take a genius to figure out the "insidious wiles of foreign influence" that is prompting Bush's war. The right wing Israelis like Benjamin Netanyahu and their American backers are in the frontlines of the rhetorical campaign against Iraq. The US citizens who are leading this campaign are like those who, Washington warned, "betray or

sacrifice the interests of their own country" by creating "an illusion of common interest" with the nation -- Israel -- they are passionately, not rationally, attached to. As a result, welfare and education budgets for the American people are cut in times of crunch, but the billions of annual aid dollars for Israel remain untouched. Briefly, the US government's foreign policy -- anchored in a passionate attachment to Israel and enmity to some Muslim nations -- is against the letter and spirit of America, a disgrace for American democracy, and an insult to the memory of George Washington. Mohammad A Auwal is an associate professor in the Department of Communication Studies at California State University, Los Angeles.