

Terror attack on America and the Bush Doctrine

Supporting repressive regimes and occupying territories without creating opportunities for the people, the frustration, hostility and anger of the masses cannot be solved by exporting democracy at gun-point.

ZAHID ZAMIR

TODAY is the seventh anniversary of one of the most heinous acts in the history of human civilisation, perpetrated by some terrorists in the name of the great religion of Islam to promote and gain some politically motivated objectives of their own.

In the aftermath of 9/11 that left nearly 3,000 Americans murdered, including some 50 Muslim Americans, it is the Muslims who have become the major victims of the attacks.

Since 9/11, the Bush administration has subjected 80,000 Arab and Muslim immigrants to fingerprinting and special registration, 8,000 were interviewed extensively by the FBI, and over 5,000 non-nationals were arrested and detained for as long as a year on technical immigration violations, under the so-called patriot acts.

More shocking are the 400 indictments that have been

returned against Muslims and Arabs, nearly all of them accompanied by press releases and frequent television appearances, by the attorney general, touting the almost never proven claims of connections to terrorism.

Criticisms were made that Muslim leaders and organisations were not outspoken enough in denouncing acts of terrorism. Muslims are constantly perplexed by this accusation. In fact, virtually all Islamic leaders, organisations, and countries condemned the inhuman attacks of 9/11 in the strongest terms.

The Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia summarised: "Hijacking planes, terrorising innocent people and shedding blood, constitute a form of injustice that cannot be tolerated by Islam, which views them as gross crimes and sinful acts."

Any Muslim will not unequivocally denounce any form of extremism and terrorism but also admit that targeting civilian life and property is haram (forbid-

den) in Islam according to the Quran and the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (SM).

The Fiqh Council of North America issued a statement right after 9/11 saying: "This condemnation of violence is deeply rooted in true Islamic values based on the Qur'anic instructions which consider the unjust killing of a single person equivalent to the killing of all humanity."

Those who are perpetrating this heinous act might have Muslim identities but due to their Muslim identities, this dreadful act cannot be labeled as Islamic terrorism just as it cannot be called Jewish terrorism if the perpetrators are Jewish or Christian terrorism if the perpetrators are Christian.

One of the strangest aspects of the post-9/11 world, is that despite all the talk about Muslim/Islamic terrorism, there is hardly any exploration of the complex causes of Muslim rage. Muslims in general are in a state of crisis but their most daunting problems are not reli-

gious, rather there are geopolitical, economic, and social problems that have caused widespread Muslim despair and, in some cases, militancy, both of which are expressed in the religious terminology.

Most Muslims live in the developing world, much of it colonised by Western powers. Not all Muslim shortcomings emanate from colonialism and neo-imperialism, but several do.

As part of the spoils of the First World War, Britain and France helped themselves to much of the Ottoman Empire, including Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and what is now Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority.

In recent years, the US has maintained repressive proxy regimes in the Middle East to keep control of oil and maintain a captive market for armaments. Hundreds of millions live in zones of conflict, precisely in the areas of European and American meddling, past and present.

These conflicts, along with the economic sanctions on Iraq, have killed an estimated 1.3 million Muslims in the last 15 years alone. In addition, nearly 400 million Muslims live under authoritarian despots, many of them Western puppets, whose corruption and incompetence have left their people in economic and social shambles. It is against this backdrop that one must look at the current mal-

aise of Muslims and their increasing emotional reliance on their faith.

As a matter of fact, United States and its allies have started fighting terrorism in the name of exporting freedom and democracy in the Muslim world without ferreting out the root causes of the problems that led some people and groups around the globe to wage war against the West.

The conviction that fundamentalism and terrorism emanate from lack of democracy and freedom, and therefore democracy and freedom must be exported to those countries by hook or by crook, has not only failed to reduce terrorism and fundamentalism but exasperated the situation and increased terrorism all around the world.

Benjamin R. Barber a distinguished fellow at Demos and a professor at University of Maryland has written: "The conviction that Islam cannot accommodate democracy is rooted in a shallow and incomplete understanding of Islam. But it is also true that the conviction that democracy cannot accommodate Islam is rooted in a shallow and incomplete understanding of democracy. It is tied to the false view that there is but one kind of democracy, one road to liberty, one formula for translating the theory of justice into practice. So the Bush-Cheney doctrine of exporting democracy is an absolute illusion.

No people have ever been liberated from the outside at the point of gun. An invader can overthrow a tyrant, but cannot create a democracy by doing so. Similarly freedom cannot be given to others; it must be won by those who seek it from inside."

Democracy is distinctive from one society to another and the road to democracy comes not from imitation but from excavation and invention. And for the citizens of a country to establish democracy, it must be constructed bottom up not top down. First educate citizens and do the hard slow work of making a civil society, then build a political infrastructure on top of it. The Americans had a hundred years of experience with municipal liberty and citizen competence before they declared independence.

Democracy takes time. If patience is required and democracy is built bottom up, then elections come last not first. The rush to vote is generally a sign that the ground for democracy has not been prepared and when voting occurs in the absence of educated and competent citizens, the prospects for liberty and justice will be poor.

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Why blame a religion?

world needs to understand the deeply rooted causes of people's frustrations and anger and help educate citizens, build civic institutions, and construct bot-

tom up political infrastructure that will empower people.

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He goes or the party dies

Brown won't be easy to force out. He spent a two-week holiday on the Suffolk coast devising new policy initiatives and public relations strategies. But, somewhere, Brown must know that there is little he can do to satisfy the members of the unofficial Dump Gordon movement. They bitterly resented his involvement in the "coup" against Blair two years ago.

STRYKER MCGUIRE

THE former chancellor's reputation for economic competence has been eroded by bad economic news and forecasts of slower growth and rising unemployment. He has led Labour to a string of embarrassing electoral defeats. His plodding ways at a time of a worsening inter-

national credit crunch and disenchantment at home after more than 11 years of Labour rule are killing his party in the polls. According to one newspaper analysis, the party is destined to lose nearly half its seats in the next national election, its worst showing since 1935.

Brown may not even make it that

far. An increasingly serious plot to unseat him has electrified British politics -- all the more so because allies of former prime minister Tony Blair are rallying behind another potential boy wonder, Foreign Secretary David Miliband, in an endeavour to save the party.

The betting among MPs and political professionals is that there's a 50-50 chance Brown will not last out the year. The case against Brown is "pure and simple," said one angry MP: "Either he goes or the party dies."

In a parliamentary system like Britain's, a prime minister can fall at astonishing speed. Recall that Margaret Thatcher was toppled in 1990, less than a month after the resignation of a key cabinet minister over policy differences.

Now London papers are full of reports of ministerial resignations, and three MPs who were cabinet members under Blair have publicly criticised Brown for nudging Labour to the left and shying away from some of the more radical free-market reforms.

Even if Brown hangs on until the last possible date for a general election, June 3, 2010, it appears that the Blair-Brown era of British politics is drawing to a close. The Conservative Party has recovered from more than a decade in the political wilderness, and now looks likely to return to power under the fresh leadership of David Cameron.

Meanwhile, a new generation of Labour politicians will have to resolve the tensions between the Brownite wing and the now emboldened Blairites. The party is split along a left-right divide.

Blair was pro-business and anti-union; he enjoyed the support of organised labour because it had no other party to turn to. Brown's policies are more traditionally to the left of Blair's. Furthermore, because Labour is politically weaker, under Brown, it depends more on its union allies for financial support. Labour's next generation will have to address the debilitating left-right fissure if the party is to move forward again.

Miliband is the unofficial leader of the Blairite rebellion. He once headed Blair's policy, spearheading reforms, which Brown sometimes sought to block.

At the end of July, Miliband wrote an article in The Guardian setting out his vision for Labour's credo and critique of Cameron. He defined Labour doctrine as he would like to see it -- "a political creed ... combining government action and personal freedom" -- and made a lucid attack on Cameron as "a politician of the status quo."

Miliband was not acting alone. Phil Collins, a former speechwriter for Blair and a veteran of think tanks that were incubators of Blairite thinking, had a hand in it as well. In June Collins helped write another critique of the Tories: "Radicals or Conservatives?" by James Purnell, a former special adviser to Blair, who is now secretary of state for work and pensions in the Brown government.

Along with a growing contingent of Blairite MPs, a number of other Blair-era aides are reported to be informally advising Miliband, including Peter Hyman, another

former speechwriter, and D. J. Collins, a former Whitehall special adviser.

Blair has avoided any connection to plots against Brown. He's kept busy working in his foundations and his role as special Middle East envoy for the Quartet. But recently, a memo came to light in which Blair analysed Brown's spectacular drop in popularity after last year's Labour Party conference. In the memo, Blair criticises the "hubris and vacuity" of the Labour conference, and complains that Brown "junked" the Blair policy agenda "but had nothing to put in its place."

Blair dismisses Brown's ability to fix what's wrong. "I am passing this message on to GB -- not in these terms -- and will try to help; but at present, there is every indication that the lessons will not be learnt."

But Brown won't be easy to force out. He spent a two-week holiday on the Suffolk coast devising new policy initiatives and public relations strategies. Over the coming weeks, Brown will throw his government behind what amounts to a personal rescue operation. The word is that government may suspend the "stamp duty" tax of 1 percent on residential home purchases below £250,000.

With fuel prices as high as they are, he may offer some people price breaks. He might reshuffle his cabinet in early September.

Bold personnel changes could demonstrate strength, entrench his supporters and possibly even straitjacket some rivals in the cabinet, like Miliband, by keeping them busy with new jobs.

Brown will then briefly transplant the entire cabinet from Whitehall to well outside London to try to show he hasn't lost touch

with the people.

Finally, he will use the party conference to try to re-launch his government by pledging, among other things, to steer Britain safely through troubled economic waters.

But, somewhere, Brown must know that there is little he can do to satisfy the members of the unofficial Dump Gordon movement. They bitterly resented his involvement in the "coup" against Blair two years ago. They also complain that Brown thwarted some of Blair's public-service reforms that were more market-oriented than Brown would have liked.

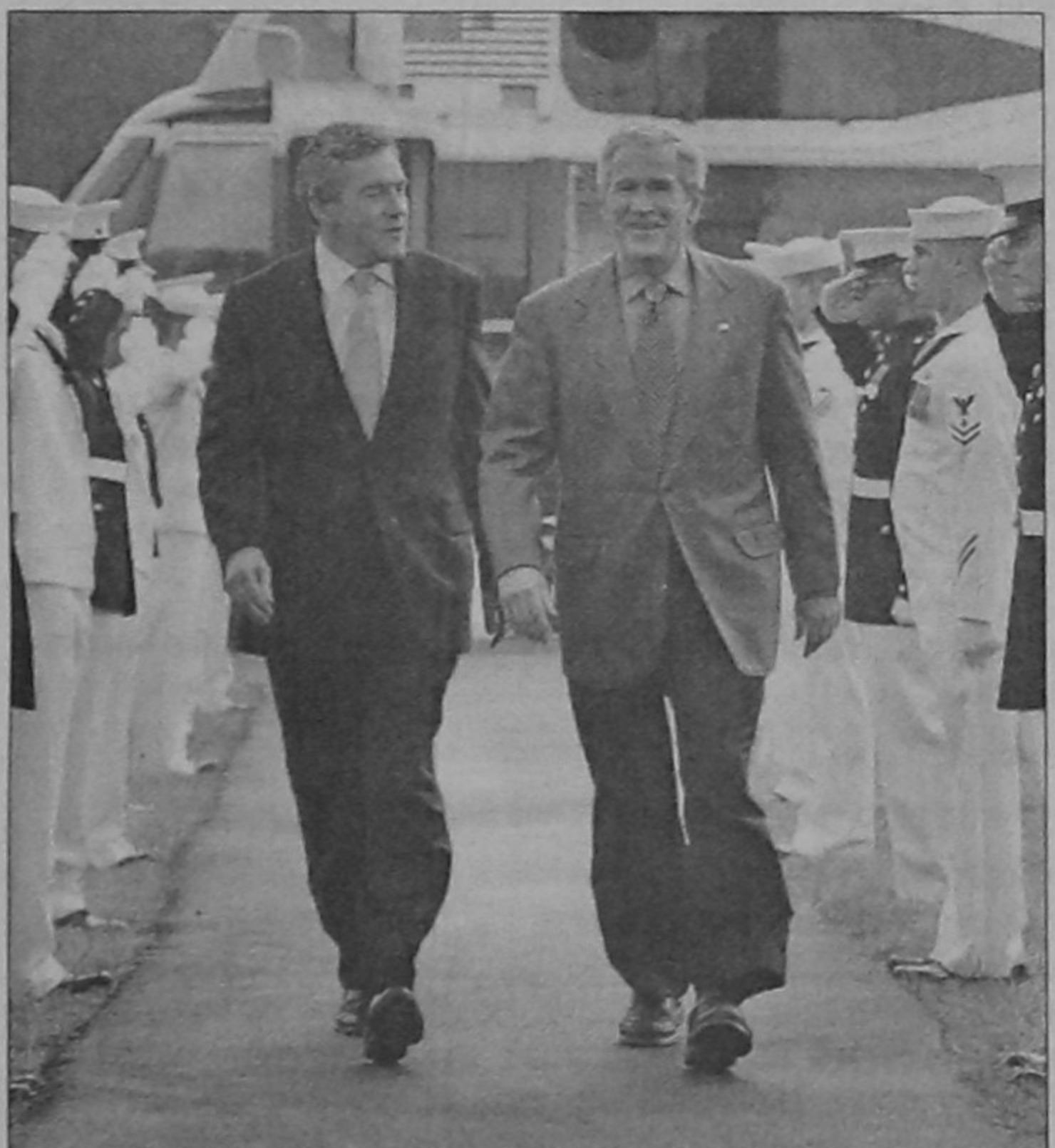
Indeed, they blame Brown for many of the perceived shortcomings of Blair's years in office. In their view, Brown -- politically to the left of Blair and harbouring a grudge against him over the leadership showdown between them many years ago -- was bound not only to play a role in Blair's undoing but also to make a poor prime minister.

Still, the drama unfolding this summer shouldn't be all about the past.

The more important battle concerns the nature of the Labour Party after Blair and Brown are both gone and the Conservative Party readies itself for power once again. "For the Labour Party to have a future, it has to overcome the gulf of the past," says a source close to Miliband.

Whether Miliband is the one to breach the chasm remains an open question. But whoever does it and whenever it is done, Gordon Brown will have to get out of the way first.

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Can Brown keep up?

Return of the angels

The new guardians are failing to put most of these angels to task for their misdeeds. Even the ones taken in on charges of criminal offences as serious as "accomplice to murder" and "obstruction of justice" are being freed on political considerations. The angels went in with victory sign and are coming out garlanded. They are being let loose -- one conjectures with raging anger, bitterness, and thirst for vengeance.

MD. RASHIDUZZAMAN KHAN

SHAKESPEARE wrote: "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Similarly, politicians in our country are also angels in different forms in the eyes of their supporters. They were once angels of death, destruction, corruption and chaos, and the nation was afraid for its existence. Missiles were thrown, bombs were planted, bystanders beaten to death in the so-called processions, somabesh and mohasomabesh, just to display party muscle.

The citizens did not feel safe outside and not even inside of their

own homes. Nothing could be done to the perpetrators. The angels guided the law to take its own course: George Miahs were created, Bangla Bhais were denied existence. Muggers, mastans, and Molom Parties had their field day.

No parent felt safe while their children were out to school, no wife could stay in peace until her husband returned, and brothers were lynched to death for protesting mastans' indecent proposals towards their sisters.

The angels paid no heed to the plight of common mass, they were busy making their fortune on the strength of their political positions and

connections. Massive funds earmarked for the poorest of the poor, food for starving masses were stolen, and billions of dollars was siphoned out of this poor country. Even the elderly and educated angels, whom the nation revered as honest guardians, participated in the shameless loot.

Then came 1/11. The nation with wide eyes pleasantly observed that the new guardians touched the untouchables and put them in jail that was known to us mere mortals as Hell. The charisma of these angels are such that Hell transformed for them: good food was served while the millions starved due to rampaging food prices, TVs



All hail the angel's comeback?

and air conditioners were installed to match the status of the angels, cabins of the hospitals were emptied of dying patients to make space for the angels suffering from headache. The public suffered silently the marauding unheard of price hike of essentials, in the hope that the guardians will at least keep these angels of death, destruction and chaos inside the four walls.

Now what does the public see? The new guardians are failing to put most of these angels to task for their misdeeds. Even the ones taken in on charges of criminal offences as serious as "accomplice to murder" and "obstruction of justice" are being freed on political considerations. The angels went in with victory sign and are coming out garlanded. They are being let

loose -- one conjectures with raging anger, bitterness, and thirst for vengeance.

Now, the mortals have some questions for the self imposed guardians:

- How can someone with 12 cases get "jamin" in a spate of weeks while victims like George Mia are in custody for much longer.
 - If you did not have the wherewithal to punish them, why did you put them through this process of faulty justice? After they come out unpunished, we would lose our privilege to brand them corrupt.
 - Why should the nation bear the huge financial burden you incurred in the seven star treatment of their accommodation, food, and medical treatment?
- Finally, dear guardians, if you are planning to leave the nation in the same condition as before your arrival (if not worse), then why did you put us through the fiasco of a broken dream?

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Vittachi

ONLY IN ASIA

by Nury Vittachi

Revenge is a dish best stolen from Oscar Wilde

TODAY, boys and girls, we are going to play "identify that quote." First question: who once wrote a column beginning with: "Today, boys and girls, we are going to play 'identify that quote?'"

Okay, that was an easy one, just to warm you up.

The day before yesterday, I was sitting next to a smart-seeming guy at a lunch in Singapore, when he came out with a bit of wisdom: "I used to have an incredibly intelligent teacher. He once said something I have never forgotten: 'In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.'"

I wasn't sure how to react. Sure that was a quotable quote -- but it wasn't from this guy's teacher. I decided to tell him: "Your teacher didn't say that. He nicked the quote from -- well, one of those dudes whose job it is to spout quotes."

It's clear to me that everything wise or witty ever said came out of the mouths of one of four people: Oscar Wilde, Mark Twain, Confucius or Winston Churchill. You can add their names to any phrase or statement and it sounds right. I use this all the time. Just try it. Tomorrow, say to your spouse: "Good morning, as Oscar Wilde used to say: "Doing this makes you sound incredibly erudite, or, as my wife prefers to say: "A total dork."

When I got back to my hotel, I Googled the "one-eyed man" quote. Wikipedia said it was Desiderius Erasmus, whom I had never heard of, and who I suppose could have been that guy's teacher.

That afternoon, someone made a speech at the conference I was attending: "With great power comes great responsibility, as Spider-Man teaches us."

As Spider-Man teaches us? That wasn't Spidey. He nicked it from Oscar Wilde. Or Confucius. Or that guy's teacher.

I decided to see what that crowd thought was the origin of what is probably the most mis-attributed quote in history: "Revenge is a dish best served cold." I have heard this attributed to everyone from Mel Gibson to Hello Kitty -- and she doesn't even have a mouth! As for hard-drinking Mel, I think "give us another beer" is closer to his idea of a deep philosophical statement.

Many people think the phrase is a Klingon saying from Star Trek. The majority of references on the Internet say the same thing. It appears in the opening sequence of the movie Kill Bill, identified as an "Old Klingon Proverb."

A few intellectuals thought it came from Hamlet. It doesn't, but sounds like it should. Shakespeare is no doubt spinning in his grave thinking, "Forsooth, dammit, why didst not I think of that?"

Actually, the phrase first appears in the works of intellectuals from the UK in the late 1800s. (The French reckon it comes from the 1782 French novel Les Liaisons Dangereuse, but this argument can be dismissed, because it doesn't. Someone checked.)

Talking of fake quotes, I was sorry to hear that one of the most famous Asian quotes (and there are not many from this side of the world) is also fictional. Deng Xiaoping never said: "To get rich is glorious." In fact, the experts say no one said it.

In which case, I'll say it, AND I'll improve it. "To get rich is glorious so how about a pay rise, boss?" (As Oscar Wilde used to say.)

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