

# Aftermath of 9/11 ...

HABIBUL HAQUE KHONDKER

SOON after the attack of September 11, 2001 on the United States one commentator said that in the future people would divide time as before and after 9/11. The comment was prescient. 9/11 has changed the world.

By now many may have forgotten that the United Nations designated the year 2001 as the "Year of Dialogue Among Civilisations" largely at the suggestion of the Iranian President Khatami who wanted to promote world peace through dialogue among civilisations. The idea was bred in the atmosphere of a sense of optimism ushered by the new millennium following the end of the debacle of the Cold War. The end of the history thesis popularised by Francis Fukuyama created a mood of complacency, hence the US was completely unprepared for such an attack.

The condemnation of the heinous attack was nearly universal at the time. Except for an odd celebratory footage in the West Bank, news of shock, sympathy and solidarity with the victims poured in. "We are all Americans," was the caption in *Le Monde* on September 12, 2001. A candlelight vigil in Tehran expressed solidarity with the victims.

The great loss suffered by the Americans was matched by the outpouring of sympathy worldwide. Only odd commentators such as Susan Sontag, in the *New Yorker* of September 24, 2001, criticised the self-righteousness of the US position and reminded Americans of the ongoing bombing of Iraq (following the First Gulf war). Noam Chomsky criticised the US as a terrorist state a year later. However, these were voices from the margin.

It was expected that the US would be able to make good use of the spirit of solidarity, and consolidate the support it received to launch a jihad against terrorism by taking the whole world with it. The disaster presented an opportunity in its wake. The Bush response frittered away such an opportunity and divided the world.

Sections of hawkish groups in Washington were

waiting for such an opportunity to pursue their own pro-Israeli agenda. What could be a genuine war on terror was hijacked into a war against the vocal enemy of Israel, namely Mr. Saddam Hussein, who was a dictator but not the only one. President George Bush, whose MBA degree from Harvard prepared him to be decisive, decided to fight a war. It did not matter whether the target was Iraq or Iran. Heads of some dictators had to roll.

I spent my sabbatical in the US in 2002 with memories of 9/11 fresh in the minds of the Americans. My friends invited me to give a talk at Colorado School of Mines at Golden, Colorado. My audience expected me to give a justification of the attack. I

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disappointed them. I saw 9/11 as a macabre attack where civilians were targeted (except for the Pentagon) and innocent passengers of civilian airlines were used as weapons in one of history's most horrific attacks. I spoke my mind and called it a crime against humanity. My talk dwelt on the responses from Asian countries on the attack.

Like all historic events, the meaning and interpretations of events change over time. Interpretations of 9/11 also changed over time. Some American critics began to question the passionate patriotism

and pursued a dispassionate analysis of the events. The idea of "blow back" gained some traction. On 9/11 of 1973, the democratically elected president of Chile Salvador Allende was removed by a CIA-sponsored coup d'état. Some critics did not hesitate to remind us of the notion of collateral damage. Yet, one crime cannot be justified by another. Two wrongs do not make a right.

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The popularity of the US declined worldwide. In 2011, only 54% Indonesians, 44% Chinese, 41% Indians, 20% Egyptians, 12% Pakistanis and 10% Turks had favourable opinion of the US, according to a PEW survey. A similar survey in 2002 found that 61% Indonesians, 54% Indians and 30% Turks had favourable opinion of the US.

9/11 has also spun a host of conspiracy theories. Rather than trying to refute such theories, it may be useful to examine the variations in the reception of conspiracy theories across countries. For example, in 2008 in Germany 64% people believe that al-Qaeda was responsible for the attack yet 23% of the Germans believed that the US itself was behind the attack. 36% Turks, 30% Mexicans, 27% Palestinians, 15% Italians, 15% Russians and 14% Indonesians believed that US itself could have been responsible for the attack. (Worldpublicoopin.com).

There may be a correlation between unpopularity of the US and the popularity of conspiracy theory exonerating the al-Qaeda of this heinous attack. Rational discourse must reject the conspiracy theories for what they are, unsubstantiated hypotheses, yet one can hardly ignore the decline of the popularity of the US. Such unpopularity, sadly, is of America's own doing.

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## IN REMEMBRANCE

# September 11 ... in Santiago, in New York

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

HISTORY comes replete with tragedy. There is that darkness about it, that bizarre undertone, which envelops it in its many dimensions and reminds us of the ugliness that some people have always descended to in their efforts to stymie the voices of other people. You tend to feel that Hobbes was right, that men are nasty, brutish, short. No matter how much you idealise men and consider humanity to be a sublime instance of Creation, there is something about human behaviour, indeed about human nature, which leaves you questioning the very principle on which life was shaped -- only to be destroyed in bits and pieces, through the sheer malignity of those uncomfortable with the worldview of others. Intolerance, then, has through the rough passages of time laid humanity low, at the many bends of the river.

Intolerance resting on hate was what destroyed close to three thousand lives on September 11, 2001 in New York. The fall of the twin towers, the attacks on the Pentagon and the near attack somewhere in or near Philadelphia was darkly, horrifically symbolic of all that was -- and is -- bad about life. Medievalism is not dead. Barbarity has always lurked in the bushes. On that dreadful morning a decade ago, it was villainy spawned by medieval barbarism that went to work. You did not expect it in this day and age. After the horrors of the Second World War, after the trauma of Vietnam, after the genocide in Bangladesh and Cambodia, one would have thought that something of the civilised had come into life the world over.

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And yet there ought to have been little reason for complacency. There was Lockerbie. And al-Qaeda had caused destruction to life and property in Africa. It had outsourced the job of attacking the twin towers to a devoted follower in the early 1990s. The towers stayed, did not fall. And remember that other warning of impending trouble, the Taliban. These wild men went looking for beards and veils to clamp people with. And they went forth with pickaxes and shovels to destroy the history encapsulated in the statues at Bamiyan. So these premonitions of evil were all around. Not many cared to notice. And thus death came to those bright men and women who had little way of knowing on that gleaming morning that life promised them no new dawn. With airliners moulded into fiery missiles, into inconceivable and yet terrible vehicles of murder, these good people rushing through life were not prepared to ward off the sinister claws of death. They became dust and powder, even as the penetrating aircraft burned up and left charred remains of intense activity that which seconds earlier had been instances of human engineering ingenuity.

And so we grieve for the dead this morning. It is their souls we recall today in much the same way that we recall those who perished on another September 11, this one in 1973, as bloodthirsty soldiers went after the elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile. The world's first elected Marxist president had promised change of a substantive sort when he took the oath to serve his people three years earlier. It was not he, intoned Allende, who was stepping into the La Moneda presidential palace in Santiago, but the nation of Chile that was marching its corridors with him. For the first time in endless decades, Chileans could reclaim their country. Allende was their own. And they were truly the source of his power.

It was this alliance of president and people that Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger were determined to destroy through means foul and ugly. The American president, destined to go down in the scandal of Watergate, hissed that the Chilean economy should be made to scream. And Kissinger, today unable to fly freely into the world's capitals because of threats of arrest warranted by conscientious people everywhere, oversaw the Central Intelligence Agency create the perfect ground for disorder to take over in Allende's land. Lavish funds were expended to promote rightwing protests on the streets of Santiago; transport workers were made happy with plentiful supplies of money to have them bring the country to a standstill, which they did.

Here, then, was grand conspiracy at work. All that President Allende had achieved in the preceding three years -- land reforms that gave hope to the poor, housing that meant to do away with slums, jobs that capitalism could not take away, nationalisation that restored Chile to its citizens -- came under threat. On the morning of September 11, 1973, all hell broke loose all across Chile. Soldiers fanned out of the cantonments with tanks and armoured vehicles; and the air force, in a wretched display of shameful power, bombed La Moneda. A brave Salvador Allende refused to surrender, chose death before the infamy of life under a regime of scoundrels.

Chile passed into the dark ages. Ten thousand of its citizens fled abroad. Forty five thousand were detained and subjected to unspeakable indignity. Bloody treason reigned supreme.

Today, under a different sky, we pray for the dead in America, for those who died and suffered in Chile.

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Milia Ali's article will appear on Tuesday, Sept. 13.

# The world after 9/11

BRUCE RIEDEL

THE al-Qaeda attacks on the US on September 11, 2001, what al-Qaeda calls the Manhattan raid, changed the course of global history in a morning. The decade that followed would see America engage in two costly wars abroad, change its national security structures profoundly, and pursue al-Qaeda around the world.

The decade ahead also promises to be dangerous. Although wounded by the killing of founder Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda is still an active global terror group with an ideology that has attracted a small but committed band of murderers. It aspires to change global history again by provoking more conflict and war to set the stage for its new caliphate. The strategy is insane, but al-Qaeda is determined to pursue it.

The 9/11 attack cost al-Qaeda about a half million dollars to organise and execute, according to the US 9/11 Commission report. The property damage in New York and Washington alone cost about \$100 billion. The cumulative economic cost to the global economy has been estimated as high as \$2 trillion. The attack led directly to the war in Afghanistan and indirectly to the war in Iraq. Brown University recently estimated the cost of those two wars at \$4 trillion. So 9/11 was not only traumatic, it was a cheap investment that cost America dearly in lives and treasure.

It also transformed the national security infrastructure of the US more profoundly than any event since the start of the Cold War at the end of the 1940s. Whole new bureaucracies have been created in its wake including the Department of Homeland Security and the National Counter Terrorism Center. The entire intelligence community was reorganised and a new position, director of national intelligence, created because the 9/11 attack revealed serious lack of coordination among the agencies. It also encouraged America to use torture and secret prisons to fight back. Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib are 9/11's legacy and will forever tarnish America.

For more than a decade al-Qaeda has sought to provoke wars. Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri assumed from the start of their self-proclaimed jihad that the more chaos and violence they could provoke between the Islamic world and the West on the one hand and with India on the other, the more likely they would achieve their goal of creating a caliphate that would restore the apposition Islam once held as a world power. In the decade ahead, the global jihad has great expectations that it can provoke more wars and will do all it can to make this decade more dangerous than the last.

Al-Qaeda attacked the United States on September 11, 2001, to provoke America into what it calls a "bleeding war" in Afghanistan. Bin Laden's goal was to recreate the quagmire that bled dry the Soviet Union in the 1980s with America as the vic-

tim. George Bush gave him a bonus -- bleeding war in Iraq and bin Laden's protégé Abu Musaab Zarqawi quickly turned it into a civil war. Obama is still trying to find a way to extricate America from these two wars that do not leave chaos behind.

Al-Qaeda's December 25, 2009, attack on Detroit, which failed only because the suicide bomber misfired his bomb, was also intended to provoke America into another war, this time in Yemen. Al-Qaeda proudly said its goal was to snare America into "the final trap." It tried again with the parcel-

Under Zawahiri we can expect al-Qaeda and its allies like Lashkar-e-Taiba, or LeT, to try to provoke more conflict in the decade ahead. War between the nuclear powers India and Pakistan is at the top of their agenda. Research by Pakistani journalist Syed Saleem Shahzad, including exclusive interviews with key al-Qaeda officials shows this is a high priority objective. Shahzad was murdered for his efforts, probably by Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) which maintains its own shadowy links to many of these jihadists in the syndicate, as described by Syed Saleem Shahzad in his book published by Pluto Press, *Inside al-Qaeda and the Taliban Beyond Bin Laden* and 9/11.

A South Asia war would ease the pressure on al-Qaeda's core team in Pakistan; vastly complicate if not imperil Nato's logistics in Afghanistan, benefiting the Taliban; and could set in motion a jihadist coup in Pakistan depending on how the war came out. A jihadist takeover of Pakistan has long been on Zawahiri's wish list, he has even written a book about it. He knows it would be a global game-changer like nothing else. Zawahiri worked closely with the late Muhammad Ilyas Kashmiri, killed in a drone attack this year, to start a war in the subcontinent to hasten what al-Qaeda calls "the end of times."

Al-Qaeda will try to set traps elsewhere. Its franchise in Iraq is making a comeback and has often said it would welcome a war between America and Iran, pitting the Crusaders against the Shia. It does not want America to leave the "trap" in Mesopotamia.

Now, al-Qaeda also sees opportunity in Zawahiri's own Egypt. The Arab revolution has opened Cairo's prisons and released many of his old comrades who have regrouped in the Sinai where they have already begun attacking Israeli targets. Zawahiri began his life in terror helping to kill Anwar Sadat for the crime of making peace with Israel. He now hopes he can finally kill the peace.

At the end of the day, however, we must keep al-Qaeda in perspective. It is a relatively small band of fanatics who have alienated the vast majority of Muslims with their mindless violence. The demonstrators in Cairo, Sana'a, Benghazi, Hamah and Tunis are not calling for al-Qaeda's caliphate. Al-Qaeda is not Nazi Germany, Stalin's Russia or Mao's China. Today it is under unprecedented stress from the strategy Obama has developed. We should be vigilant but not panic. We don't need torture to defeat al-Qaeda; we need respect for Islam and a determined effort to resolve the conflicts like Palestine that give it so many recruits.

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GROUND ZERO

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bomb attempt last October in Chicago. After the bombs were discovered, thanks to Saudi intelligence help, al-Qaeda announced that the plot cost only \$4, 200 to pull off and promised more to come to "hemorrhage" the American economy.

The global jihad has had more success in Pakistan where it has fomented unprecedented terror and violence from Karachi to Indian-held Kashmir, murdered Benazir Bhutto and created the Pakistani Taliban as a new arm of al-Qaeda. America now carries out routine bombing strikes in northwest Pakistan and will probably do so for the foreseeable future, along with rare commando raids like the one that killed bin Laden in Abbottabad. Zawahiri places a high priority on Pakistan. Al-Qaeda has more links to terror groups in Pakistan than anywhere else; it swims with a syndicate of likeminded jihadists. It was this syndicate of terror that helped hide bin Laden for a decade and is hiding Zawahiri today.

At least twice the jihadists have tried to provoke war between India and Pakistan. The first was in December 2001 with the attack on the Indian Parliament and then again on "26/11" 2008 with the attack on Mumbai. Two Indian prime ministers have been too smart to take the bait.