

# SEPTEMBER 11: TWO YEARS LATER

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**DAWN**

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"The world has fundamentally changed after 9/11". This is a message that American leadership and media spin-doctors are conveying all over the world. There is no doubt that the disastrous events of September 11, 2001 have shaken America and its leadership to the roots and influenced the course of events.

It is, however, worthwhile to seriously reflect on what is it that has changed. Two years is long enough time for social scientists, political analysts and all thinking persons to assess whether the change has been for good or for bad.

There is near-consensus that the destruction of Twin Towers in the New York and attack on Pentagon in Washington were dastardly acts of terrorism which led to the death of around 3000 persons.

This was condemned universally and if the American leadership had acted wisely, it could have led to the emergence of a moral and ideological movement against terrorism and would have generated serious concern for the causes that led to terrorism anywhere in the world in general and against the US and Israel, in particular.

This historic opportunity was unfortunately squandered. The American leadership chose to adopt a chauvinistic approach emanating from 'wounded ego', conceited arrogance, blind self-righteousness, and power-intoxication. The outcome was predictable: desperate attempts towards indiscriminate use of power aiming at establishing US military and political hegemony in pursuit of the trodden imperialistic path of "pax-Americana" abroad, and drift towards a virtual police state within. This was a tragedy many times greater than the tragic events of 9/11.

On the positive side at least three major reactions to 9/11 deserve to be noted.

First and foremost is the futility of use of terrorism as an instrument of political agenda. Although terrorism lacks clear definition on which some kind of the consensus could be claimed, all justice-loving people disapprove of the use of indiscriminate violence against innocent civilians even if it is directed towards promoting certain political objectives, otherwise justifiable. But this is true of state terrorism as much as group terrorism.

Secondly, the debate that has taken place all over the world, including America and Britain, both about the dynamics of terrorism and the American-British so-called "war on terrorism"

which in the opinion of a large number of social scientists and political analysts, has actually become another form of state terrorism and international gangsters, is a positive development. It should be acknowledged that whatever be the self-evaluation of the American leadership, the 'war on terrorism' has become counter-productive.

It goes to the credit of the US and Europe that they remain free societies where state and individual actions are being openly discussed and merits and demerits of different strategies debated. The way President Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair have handled the whole affair, has been openly questioned and their popularity in their respective countries as well as globally has dived downwards during the last two years, particularly after the invasion of Iraq.

Thirdly, the most important aspect of the post-9/11 scenario is the emergence of grassroots rebellion against the political establishments. People all over the world have expressed moral abhorrence against naked abuse of power and outrageous manipulation of the media.

Protests that have taken place all over the world against war, and against US unilateralism and brinkmanship, have qualitatively influenced the grammar of world politics. This global grassroots movement of the post-9/11 era represents the next phase for the ascendance of democratic values at the global level.

These three positive developments deserve to be noted and pursued as they can become milestones in humanity's efforts to establish a just world order.

The negative side, however, is gruesome and challenging. American leadership has tried to blatantly use this occasion to concentrate power in its own hands, to whip up a kind of hyper-patriotism in the American people so as to blind them to its own failures, misdeeds and duplicities, and harness their 'forced consent' to unleash imperialistic pursuits in different parts of the world to establish American hegemony over the world.

The Republican Party and its leadership are very much under the influence and manipulation of the forces known as neo-conservatives in American politics and religion. The evangelists, the Zionists and the extremists of the right have joined hands to promote what can only be described as the worst form of religio-political fundamentalism in American history.

The principles on which the American Constitution is based are being flouted with impunity. Privacy is no longer an American virtue. The sanctity of private life is being violated and a kind

of neo-McCarthyism is surreptitiously overtaking American society. Liberty, personal rights and values of human equality are the first victims of this approach. Over 2000 people were arrested in America and most of them are still detained without trial and the right of recourse to due process of law.

This has devastating psychic affects on the population with the result that the index of high uncertainty syndrome has shot up in all parts of America, particularly so in New York. Whatever goodwill America had won over the last 200 years as champion of human rights, democracy and international law, has been tarnished beyond repair.

Whatever be the American claims of being 'liberators' in Afghanistan or Iraq, the fact is that the people of these countries, as also an overwhelming majority of the people all over the world, look differently. Even the UN has described the US and its so-called coalition partners as 'occupying powers'. Unfortunately, American leadership seems to have no perception of what it has lost and how little it has gained, if any.

Secondly, international law is being re-written under duress. Whatever was achieved in the form of UN and its charter is in tatters. The universally accepted principles of justice and due process of law, the concept that no one is guilty till proved so judiciously, the belief that every individual has a right to defend oneself, seek legal advice without interference or surveillance and have fair trial - all these are becoming things of the past.

Thirdly, whether one likes it or not, there is a perception all over the world, shared even by the people of a number of European countries, that 9/11 has been used as an excuse to impose American hegemony over the world, to have access to and control over the energy resources of mankind, particularly in the Middle East and the Central Asia, and to terrorize and bulldoze weaker governments all over the world to toe the American line.

Fourthly, it is all the more intriguing that while humanity, including American people, are paying a heavy price for what happened on 9/11, the death toll of people subjected to new American aggressions in Afghanistan and Iraq has become more than ten times the loss of innocent people in New York, Washington and Pittsburgh on that black September.

The American leadership, it is conspicuous, has not taken any serious steps to find out in a manner that is judicious, objective and credible what caused the disaster of 9/11?, who were responsible for it?, who collaborated in that heinous act?, and above all, whose negligence, connivance or collaboration led to that hellish outrage?

Even small incidents are thoroughly inquired into under public search light; not so the disaster of 9/11. A country, which is spending over US \$ 70 billion a year on over a dozen intelligence agencies, has failed to institute an independent inquiry to find out what really happened and why?

Some very important and eye opening investigative studies by independent journalists have been published from France, UK and America, pointing figures not only towards serious lapses, but much more deliberate cover-up and misinformation.

Finally, the most disturbing feature of the post-9/11 scenario relates to the attitude towards Islam and the Muslims. Some of the powerful forces that fashion policies of the superpower and the media that controls and manipulates peoples' thoughts are engaged in a vicious campaign against one religion and its adherents.

Islam and the Muslim countries are being singled out as the source and abode of all terrorism. Muslims in America and abroad are at the suffering end. The fair name of Islam is being maligned in a systematic manner. The fact that every country, every culture and every people belonging to every faith have their problems, including extremist fringes is ignored. Terrorism has no religion or ethnicity.

Terrorism let loose in our own times by different groups and states, including Americans, Greeks, Germans, Italians, Indians and others are simply connived. How Israel was established as a result of naked terrorism, destruction of thousands of houses, killing of hundreds of thousands people and forced migration of over a million Arabs by half a dozen Zionist organizations over a period of almost 70 years, is just not mentioned. State terrorism in Palestine, Kashmir, Chechnya, Philippines, and Indonesia is nobody's concern.

Looking to the balance sheet, one is constrained to say that so far the world has not learnt the true lesson of the tragedy of 9/11. No doubt it was a traumatic experience for the leadership of the United States. But the type of introspection, self-searching and self-criticism this should have initiated is nowhere in view. A country that has greatest power, opportunity and resources for self-reflection seems to be ignoring that altogether.

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