

THE WORLD SITUATION AFTER  
SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

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## CHAPTER 24

# The World Situation After September 11, 2001

Khursid Ahmad

The events of September 11 and October 7, 2001 have qualitatively changed the global scenario for the Muslim *ummah*. It is not as if these changes have come as a bolt from the blue. Things have been moving in this direction ever since the end of the Cold War, the demise of the socialist bloc, and the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989). The Western world needed a new enemy to keep its guns in good repair. An imaginary green specter was meticulously woven into global politics. Now the specter has blown up into a Frankenstein's monster: the name of the game is "terrorism"! Yet the Muslims must not react with rage or fury. It is our duty to face this challenge with faith, composure, and dignity. Every challenge is also an opportunity. We must seize the moment and use it to open up a meaningful dialogue.

I think we should try to make it clear that Islam and terrorism are worlds apart. We should spell out clearly and forcefully what terrorism is. We have to differentiate between the role of force in society, personal, domestic, national, and global. Every use of force is not terrorism. The use of force and the *illegitimate* use of force, a disproportionate use of force, and a use of force for unjust causes are not the same things. Had it been so, there would have been no legal system, or criminal law in civilized society. And the whole concept of a just war would have to be thrown out of the window. So we have to differentiate between the two. The legitimate use of coercive power in a civilized society and a just war are universally accepted as elements of any legal system and international law. We must not then be overwhelmed by the media war on alleged and real terrorisms. The world is being subjected to a gruesome and multidimensional psychological indictment. It is high time that saner counsels were allowed to prevail, and it is important that the world realizes what is at stake: Terrorism must be checked but not by means that contribute to terrorism, nor should we confuse terrorism with genuine movements for liberation against foreign/alien occupation or the struggle of the oppressed against injustice.

Terrorism stands for the *illegitimate use of force for political purposes*, whether by individuals or groups and states. In particular it involves the *indiscriminate use of violence*

against *innocent civilians*. There are many other elements or nuances such as surprise attack, political mileage etc. that characterize terrorism but these are not the focus here. Nonetheless, we must make it very clear what terrorism is and we must condemn it unequivocally. What happened on September 11, 2001 in New York and Washington was terrorism and has rightly been condemned as such by all, including the Islamic *ummah*.

Islam stands for peace and justice. It can never condone terrorism, which is a human aberration. It has no religion. It has no color. It is monstrous in any context. As against this *jihād* is a comprehensive and positive concept, one that is basically a moral concept. It means to struggle for a just cause. First and foremost, it is a struggle against one's own evil self. Then it means striving at all levels towards promoting good, virtue, and justice. This is done by word of mouth and by one's own good example. It is done by pen and all other means of communication. It also means to struggle against injustice and tyranny. Essentially it covers the whole span of individual and collective effort and it is reformative in its nature and purport. However, in certain situations it can become confrontational. As such armed conflict can also be a part of it but it can never be a war of aggression. It is always a just struggle. Even in war there is a strict code of ethics. The use of force is permitted only for certain purposes, which are subject to certain legal and ethical conditions. We must not shy away from stating the truth and it should always be the whole truth. *Jihād* is a part of an overall framework for human life and endeavor. It is a process of reform with its own discipline and strong moral foundations. As such *jihād* and terrorism are poles apart.

As to what happened on September 11, we have condemned it and must continue to condemn it honestly and forcefully. It was an act of terrorism against civilian people. Such senseless destruction of life and property is totally unjustified in Islam, just as it is by all civilized behavioral norms. While it is correct that through these acts a super-power was humiliated, its invincibility exposed, and its symbols of military, economic, and financial power attacked and humbled, there can *never* be a justification for such acts of terrorism and wanton destruction. Such acts are crimes against humanity and Islam and the Muslim people condemn them unreservedly. It is a global fact that the Muslims, among others, are the victims of American highhandedness, and hegemonic policies. We are at the suffering end. Yet there are moral limits within which efforts to redress grievances should take place. Human responses must always be informed, rational, and moral. We must not be swept away on waves of emotion. It must be clearly stated that the indiscriminate use of force leading to the destruction and assassination of innocent human beings, wherever they are and whatever their faith may be, is against Islam's principled position. The Qur'an makes every human being sacrosanct. Allah says: *laqad karramna bani Adam* (al-Isrā', 17:70), i.e. "We have honored all progeny of Adam, that then, refers to all human beings, not just to Muslims." The Qur'anic injunction prohibits taking the life of any human being, without a just right in law (al-Ma'idah, 5:35). This too is for all human beings and not just for Muslims.

We are obliged to enforce *'adil* – justice for all, which means commitment to the rule of law. Even retribution is allowed only according to law, in keeping with Islamic values and principles. No one can take the law into his own hands and inflict death or injury upon others arbitrarily. This is so for all Muslims and non-Muslims, for friends and foes

alike. Islam lays down rules and regulations for different areas of human behavior and spells out values and principles to deal fairly with all, including our enemies. These laws are applicable in peace and in war. So this is the Islamic framework. As such whatever happened on September 11 was not correct. The Islamic view is that if anyone kills a human being, an innocent person, without just cause, then that is like killing the whole human race. And if one saves one life, it is like saving the whole of humanity (al-Ma'idah, 5:35).

Let me also make it clear that any encouragement or promotion of terrorism in any society and particularly in the context of Islam and Muslims is going to generate extremism and violence. If it fails it is a loss of human beings, if it succeeds it is against the whole methodology of Islam and the *modus operandi* of the Islamic movement. Any encouragement of such methodologies would move the *ummah* away from the *manhaj* of *da'wah*; the prophetic way. Islam neither adopted nor condoned the *manhaj* of terrorism. So it is not merely from Islam's principled position, but also from the perspective of strategy that Islamic movements should be careful and deeply concerned about it. This should be clear in our minds and we should also make it very clear to others. Islam aims at repelling evil by good and does not want to replace one evil by another evil. The Qur'an lays down the principle that "good and evil are not equal. Replace evil with what is good and better (*ahsan*). If you pursue this path then one who may have enmity for you may become your friend" (al-Fussilat, 41:34).

We condemn terrorism in *all its forms*. We condemn terrorism against *all people*. The equality of human beings is a cardinal principle and a universal value. There must be one standard for us all. We abhor and condemn duplicity, double talk, and double standards. To condemn terrorism against one country or people and condone or even patronize it, if those who are at the suffering end belong to a different nation, country, or faith, is the height of hypocrisy. Terrorism by individuals or groups is as abominable as terrorism by states or government agencies. If it is atrocious and abominable in America it is equally atrocious and abominable in Palestine and Kashmir, in Rwanda and Bosnia, in Sri Lanka and Chechnya. To condemn terrorism in one place and protect, finance, or condone it in others is outrageous. We must have the same standard for all. Human life and honor are precious and inviolable in the East as in the West. Humans must be treated as humans wherever they are. Rights must be sacrosanct in the Arab world, in Africa, in Kashmir and Central Asia as in Europe and America. This then is the time to convey this message.

The condemnation of terrorism is one thing, but the elimination of terrorism is another. Terrorism cannot be fought by terror. A "war against terrorism" is a misnomer. By use of brute force it may be suppressed for a while but there can never be a military solution to real social, political, ethical, economic, and cultural problems. Terrorism has been described even by people like Huntington as "the weapon of the weak against the strong."<sup>1</sup> The cruel logic of political retaliation has to be understood bluntly. If the strong are not ready to accept the supremacy of law and refuse to follow the rules of the game, if they try to impose their will through brute force, if they exploit the weak beyond endurance, then many an untoward reaction, even violent ones, are bound to appear. If injustice persists, revolts are bound to occur. If you close all avenues for peaceful change and reform, then untoward aberrations are bound to take place. If the doors



of dialogue are closed, then violent outbursts are the result. So terrorism cannot be eliminated through counter-terrorism. Violence cannot be stopped by greater violence. It is only through the removal of the causes of violence and terrorism that peace and justice can come to society. Moreover, even acts of terrorism must be dealt with through the power of law and judicial processes. Whether it is individuals or groups, resorting to unabashed terrorism to suppress terrorism, real or alleged, cannot but be counter-productive and futile. We must also make it very clear that the political, ideological, and economic grievances of a people suffering from the unjust policies of the powerful must be addressed and resolved. It is only when the causes of violence and terrorism in society are removed that terrorism can be eliminated. So, in our dialogue we should also make this very clear.

It should be clearly stated that efforts at branding and stereotyping terrorisms along religious or ethnic lines are an offence against humanity. Terrorism is terrorism. It has no religion. Violence in Ireland cannot be presented as Catholic and Protestant terrorisms: nor can violence and blood baths in Sri Lanka be projected as Hindu and Buddhist terrorisms. If any act of terrorism is committed by any Muslim, there is no justification for presenting it as "Islamic terrorism." If Timothy McVeigh's act of terrorism in Oklahoma was not terrorism of the Christian right, why are other acts of terrorism given a religious color? It is significant that when Muslims resisted such media outrage, President Bush and Prime Minister Blair had to come out with an explanation that the so-called war against terrorism was not a war against Islam or Muslims. I am not going into their intentions or actual consequences on the ground, but at least in response to the Muslim protest they had to change their tone and language, even though not their targets!

I am also informed that in the United States, a convention of writers, i.e. the Religious Writers' Association (RWA) was held on September 21, 2001, which adopted a resolution saying that, "we must stop the expression of Islamic terrorism and Islamic terrorists in news coverage of events covering the recent bombing." So if we resist, it *will* have its influence.

We should say very frankly and boldly, that while we are condemning the September 11 terrorism, the Western reaction, particularly the current and outrageous American bombing of the innocent peoples of Afghanistan, is also not condonable. This war against Afghanistan is unjust and unjustifiable. No country, powerful or otherwise, has the right to take the law into its own hands and terrorize nations, kill innocent people, destroy societies, their institutions, and infrastructures. It is all the more outrageous that the target is a poor country already devastated by 23 years of superpower aggression and internal strife. International law does not allow this. The UN Charter does not allow this. The UN Charter's definition of "self-defense" cannot be extended to these brazen acts of state terrorism.<sup>2</sup> The UN Charter makes it very clear that if there has to be an action on behalf of the world community against any aggressor, it has to be under a Security Council resolution and also under the UN Military Staff Committee (Articles 44, 46, and 47). The United States has thus violated the UN. This has been its attitude all along. In Korea despite a UN Resolution, the United States insisted on American command. American leadership has made it very clear that US forces cannot fight or participate in any war or peace process unless it is under US command. There

has also been a violation of Article 33 of the UN Charter, which lays down a clear framework for negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and adjudication for resolving interstate disputes. The United States has refused to follow this procedure and has arbitrarily imposed a war on a poor country, merely on the basis of suspicion. It has no right to do this. So we have to make it very clear and with arguments that have weight that this war is totally unjust and unjustifiable.

We should also try to make it very clear that even the guilt of those alleged to be responsible for the crimes of September 11, is yet to be established through the due process of law. What to say of Afghanistan or of the Taliban, even the guilt of Al-Qaeda and of Osama bin Laden has not been established so far. The use of indiscriminate force and the perpetration of violence on an innocent people on the basis of suspicion only is a heinous crime and a sordid act of terrorism. As for the so-called evidence, the document that Mr. Blair has released to the Parliament, you will find that the first sentence states that whatever information is being given cannot lead to any conviction in a court of law. Out of the 70 odd items that are listed in the document 61 are totally irrelevant and the remaining nine only give fourth-degree circumstantial evidence, which cannot stand careful scrutiny in any court of law.<sup>3</sup> On this basis nobody could be convicted, and even less executed! The fact is that the US President has acted as prosecutor, judge, and executioner. This is a travesty of justice. We must ask the world to face facts, ask for concrete evidence and the establishment of guilt through the proper judicial process and not mere suspicion.

Whatever be their other failings, no case has been established against Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. The entire story seems to be inspired. Within half an hour of the collapse of the Twin Towers CNN was using Bin Laden's name. On what basis? Nobody cares to examine the evidence. Claims are heaped over claims and the world is asked to accept this! Thus far they have arrested over 1100 people and interrogated all of them in depth, but so far only one has been charged, not convicted, and that too on violation of immigration laws. Even after seven weeks the American authorities have not been able to provide any worthwhile evidence or even a proper confession from any collaborator. While they accept that this could not have been done without the collaboration and active participation of at least 50–60 people in the United States and must have taken two to three years in its planning, training, and command over sophisticated technology, no linkage has been established. Indeed the type of evidence that is being paraded is laughable.

Someone who has undertaken training at an aviation school, in a light aircraft, would not have sufficient knowledge to operate computerized jet airplane systems, replace pilots without incident, change the direction of the plane without notice on radars, or pilot it with such precision that it strikes a premeditated point so as to cause the greatest harm to the building. Yet not just one plane, but four planes are hijacked all within a span of an hour, routes diverted, and the planes crashed at their targets to wreak the utmost havoc. Yet nothing was done to avert the tragedy. No one raised the alarm when the planes changed their course, made U-turns, lost contact with their control towers. There is no reaction to this at national level. Hence there are so many question marks. The entire tragedy is shrouded in mystery. The guilty are not being identified. Indeed there seems to be something of a cover-up. Evidence is not only

lacking, but no serious effort is being made to investigate and find out the causes, to explain what happened and how and who were responsible. No national or international commission has been formed to find out how such a disaster took place and who were responsible for that catastrophe. No effort is being made to arrive at some worthwhile understanding of the whole scandal. It is a failure of the intelligence system of the only superpower. One that is spending annually some \$260 billion on its defense budget, some \$30 billion on its budget for the CIA, around \$3 billion every year on the FBI budget, \$6.5 billion on its National Security Authority, and another \$11 billion on nine intelligence agencies attached to different departments of the federal government. This intelligence budget comes to over \$50 billion every year. And another \$27 billion goes to the budget of non-intelligence information agencies. It is hard to believe that these \$77 billion spent a year on intelligence and information agencies do not even afford the United States a whiff of what was happening, over a period of years, that culminated in the events of September 11.<sup>4</sup> Even after the events have occurred, the United States seems unable to investigate and establish a complete picture of what went wrong and how. Can there be any doubt then that the United States is covering up the failure of its own security system, its intelligence network? No head has rolled. The CIA's chief has not been dismissed. The FBI's chief has not been dismissed. No inquiry has been initiated about the whole intelligence system and yet they have found Osama bin Laden. They have found the Taliban. They have found Al-Qaeda. And now the United States is bombarding them and killing them without establishing their guilt. Need I remind readers that even after all the atrocities committed by the Nazi warlords, it was the US President who insisted in 1945 that those responsible could not be executed without the establishment of guilt through judicial process? So the Nuremberg Trials were held and the Nazi leadership was executed after a fair trial.<sup>5</sup> Where have all these principles gone? It seems as if the whole so-called civilized world has stooped to gangsterism and terrorism. Innocent people in Afghanistan are being killed. Even "Daisy Cutter" bombs are now being dropped (*The Guardian*, November 7, 2001), which are described as being the equivalent of tactical nuclear weapons. Each bomb carries 15,000 pounds of slurry explosives in a steel casing that when exploded produces a nuclear mushroom cloud of aluminum powder, which burns at 5500 degrees Celsius (10,000 degrees Fahrenheit) and destroys everything covering a mile wide area. After all this the United States remains civilized, humanitarian and the protector of human rights while the poor Afghans are reduced to "terrorists." The irony is that there are no military installations worth the name in Afghanistan. They had no air defense system or military infrastructure. The United States is destroying a devastated country. It is hitting its villages, hospitals, mosques, and even Red Cross warehouses. This is a tragic situation, nay it is a scandalous situation and it has to be challenged. But the United States is openly refusing any judicial process. President Bush has said "No question of evidence. No question of any judicial investigation. We know he is guilty. You hand him over or we will destroy you." Even Attorney General Ashcroft has stated openly on CNN that "it is not a question of justice. It is a question of punishment." These are his words. And what is America's own record with regards to norms of justice? In the case of Nicaragua in 1985, the International Court of Justice, the Hague, gave a judgment against the United States for financing and supporting terrorist activity in that country. But the



United States simply refused to accept the judgment of the International Court of Justice. Not only that, but because of US resistance, there was a Resolution passed in the Security Council which said that all member states of the United Nations must accept all decisions of the International Court of Justice. Needless to say, the United States vetoed that resolution.<sup>6</sup>

And now there is a treaty signed by some 140 countries of the world to establish an International Criminal Court. Forty-three countries including the UK, Russia, and France have ratified the Treaty but the United States thus far has refused to do so. So this is America's attitude towards the international judicial process. The United States wants to be the accuser, the prosecutor, the judge, and the executioner. This is not an acceptable position.

There are some very critical questions that remain unanswered. A number of retired senior officers formerly attached to the US Army and Air Force have stated openly that the type of hijackers that are being accused could not have accomplished this sophisticated act of terrorism. Indeed it is difficult to believe that amateur pilots could have taken control of planes in such a smooth manner and piloted them through the jungle of New York skyscrapers to hit their targets with such precision. This remains a riddle, one shrouded in mystery. Similarly, the lifestyle of the so-called hijackers, if they belonged to the mujahid group of Al-Qaeda, as is alleged, does not fit into the culture of the suspected group. Even Karen Armstrong has expressed her astonishment at this anomaly.<sup>7</sup> On the one hand, they are being presented as mujahids, and on the other they are drinking, womanizing, and spending nights in clubs. How do we reconcile these extremes?

The whole question of the hijackers' identity and the matter of forging passports remains problematic. It is also intriguing that apart from one case, they have so far not been able to find the black boxes of the destroyed airplanes. After seven weeks there was still no clue. But what they have found intact is a passport belonging to one of the hijackers! To establish how this happened, one has to decipher the miracle!

One can go on commenting on the unending series of mysteries that envelop this case. The fact is that there is no concrete and consistent evidence, nor is there any intention of recourse to the judicial process. The United States is not prepared to respect any law. No one knows who the real terrorists were. But who supported them on US territory? Who is covering for them still? We condemn the happenings of September 11, but we equally condemn whatever is being done in the name of that tragedy. It seems that September 11 is being used to achieve certain pre-set objectives. There is much suspicion and indication that Afghanistan is being used as a scapegoat. Indeed vendetta and not justice is the hallmark of the US reaction; a wounded ego inflicting wounds on others and a show of force masking humiliation. Instead of opting for the bold step of self-examination and searching for their own failures, the United States is trying to find scapegoats and easy targets. Instead of pursuing the path of justice, terrorism has been the choice. This tragedy is as colossal as that of September 11, if not more.

Furthermore, there is some very eye-opening information about stock-exchange dealings prior to September 11. From September 6-10 the shares and stocks of some 32 companies including both major airlines involved and a number of financial companies that collapsed with the World Trade Center were sold and the amount of these

sales is mind boggling. One airline sale, for example, was over 250 times the average movement, whereas for the other over 100 times. So was the case of other companies. One investment house defaulted to the tune of \$100 million and after the collapse of the towers it has declared itself bankrupt. Many other stories are in circulation. All these things are being bypassed. No thorough investigation in respect of all the clues to the disaster is being undertaken. Why? All attention is only on one target, a poor country, 10,000 miles away, lacking all access to the world, particularly the United States. All blame is on a group, which was already under investigation and which had been monitored for four years, and yet there is still no evidence against them to prove their guilt.

There is also evidence that before September 11, America was planning, in collaboration with Uzbekistan, action against Afghanistan. The *New York Times* has published reports in this respect. Similarly some diplomats have stated publicly that several months before this event there were discussions and deliberations about a planned action against Afghanistan in the near future. All this information is not from any secret source, it is all published information from American and the world press. So the questions arise: Why is the United States ignoring all other leads and pursuing, exclusively, only one suspicion? Why is the United States not investigating the whole colossal phenomena properly?

There could be many forces and factors responsible for this disaster even from within the United States itself. There are dozens of terrorist groups in the United States. The Oklahoma case is a classic example. Originally it was also attributed to the Arabs and then Timothy McVeigh was found out. McVeigh targeted a government establishment and wanted to inflict the largest amount of injury and damage on the United States and its people. He took the lives of 268 people and injured another 1000. He saved two other people who were accused of being in his group and during that investigation, it was found that between 50 and 500 people could have belonged to that Christian Right terrorist group. There are dozens of similar terrorist and separatist groups operating in the United States.<sup>8</sup> So why are all these leads not being followed?

During the last 10 years, some 167 incidents of terrorism have taken place on American soil of which only three have been attributed to Muslims. Why, then, have other terrorist groups now been ignored? Outside the United States, the country where the largest number of terrorist acts against America and Americans has been committed is Greece. And yet no action has ever been taken against Greece, a NATO member. The September 17 Movement openly claimed responsibility for some of the acts of terrorism against the United States. Why has no action been taken against them? Why has their Al-Qaeda equivalent not been destroyed? Israel's state terror is beyond any shadow of a doubt. It is the last occupying power in the Middle East. Why is there no word against Israel's crimes against humanity, its genocide of the Palestinians? Similar is the record of the Indian government in Kashmir. Why then this discrimination? These facts need to be kept in mind and presented to the people in a cool, calculated, and informed manner. We should address the central issues and not get bogged down with fringe matters or react violently in a confrontational manner. This is not the Islamic way.

Now, I would like to submit that in all fairness we should also be self-critical. The role of the Muslim countries and particularly of Muslim political leaderships and of the

Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) deserves to be condemned. They are guilty of acquiescence, complicity, and surrender. It was a shame to read the proceedings of the Qatar Muslim Foreign Ministers Conference (October 10, 2001). It seems they had no conscience, no vision, no courage, no understanding of Islam as well as of the global issues and the grand game of which they are the target. They were only saying, "please, please don't bomb us. Please, please do not go after any Arab country after destroying Afghanistan." It was a pitiable spectacle. Furthermore, the way Pakistan's military junta has surrendered to US pressure is shameful and outrageous. So is the role of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. They all deserve to be condemned. However, there is a message in this, a very bold message: *that the political leadership in the Muslim countries and the political conscience of the ummah are at variance*. This leadership does not represent the Muslim people and their aspirations. There is a vast gulf between the two. The Muslim people look upon their rulers as stooges of the West and as collaborators in a superpower's war against a weak and poor Muslim country. These rulers, by and large, are imposed leaders, not freely chosen by the people. They rule by fiat and force. They are a major obstacle in the *ummah's* search for its destiny.

A critical question then confronts us. Why has the United States chosen to attack Afghanistan and establish a foothold in Uzbekistan and Pakistan? I have thought about it and analyzed it as carefully as I can. The first and foremost reason appears to be an effort to camouflage their own failures, both in intelligence and politically. Secondly they are using it to achieve certain geo-strategic objectives in Central Asia. The United States had been planning for its presence in this area for the last 10 years. It made many political and economic overtures. Even the Taliban were offered a finger in the pie. A leading Texas oil company offered a \$5 billion bait. But this did not work. The Bush Administration with its strong links with America's energy industry has definite plans for an energy-rich Central Asia. Access to these resources seems to be a major target, and Afghanistan and Pakistan provide the natural access vehicles. Any pipeline that is economic can come through this route only. There is much at stake, not only the barren mountains and caves of Afghanistan.<sup>9</sup> Thirdly, Israel and India have their own game plans in this context. They want to use this hyperbole about terrorism to promote their own terrorist activities in lands under their occupation. The Russian game is no different for Chechnya. Each of these wants to crush the struggle against their occupation in Palestine, Kashmir, and Chechnya, respectively. They want to change the context of the liberation movements and equate them with terrorism. Their countries have their own agenda. All this fits into the mosaic of the game plan of *Pax Americana*. The so-called first war of the twenty-first century is a war to further US hegemonistic objectives, targets, and strategies. And again there are no secrets. Zbigniew Brzezinski's recent book, *The Grand Chessboard*, is very explicit when it says that America is the only superpower and a major objective of US military and foreign policy should be that no rival power emerges at least for the next 25 years. As those rival powers could be Europe, China, Japan, and the Muslim world, the United States is trying to ensure that no challenger will emerge from these directions.

So these seem to be the four major objectives. But in my view, there are also three side objectives, or byproducts of this crusade. These may not necessarily be the direct targets of the government involved, although that too cannot be ruled out, but defi-



nately these are what the vested interests and specific groups including certain people in government circles are seeking to achieve, viz.:

1. containing Islamic resurgence;
2. driving the world towards some sort of "clash of civilizations" scenario; and
3. financial control, not only of the world, but particularly of financial institutions in a manner that Islamic organizations and movements are dried of financial resources and as such put into a weak and defensive position.

These then appear to be the three side objectives. So what should be the response of Muslims in general and of Islamic movements in particular to this challenge? The major elements of that strategy, in my view, should be as follows:

1. There is no room for a strategy of retreat and withdrawal. Our strategy must be based on *engagement* and *dialogue*. We have to face the challenge. There should be no emotional confrontation. There should be no simplistic retaliation. There should not be any encouragement or condoning of violence, as meeting violence with violence is a trap and a recipe for disaster.
2. We should be firm. We should be clear and uncompromising as to our *objectives*. But we should also be polite, balanced, rational, cool, and considerate in all our responses. Our identity is to be the mid-most nation, a people who adopt a balanced approach (*ummat-e- wasat*). This should be the basis of our strategy.
3. The way that Islam and the Muslims have been targeted provides us with a very important opportunity for the articulation and projection of the Islamic position on major issues including *jihād* and terrorism. I emphasize though that we should not merely address *jihād* and terrorism, but rather that we should address *all* issues and human concerns. This opportunity must be used to inform the people of Islam and others what Islam stands for. Islam is for the good of all human beings, not merely Muslims. So the Islamic concept of peace, justice, humanity, and the idea of a better life for all human beings should be brought into sharp focus. The need for rediscovering God, of man's linkage with the transcendent and of the rethronement of the moral criterion in human affairs is to be explained. This is the time to present Islam's message to humanity. Here I want to remind you of an instance from history. Let us recall the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when the Muslims were totally shattered by the onslaught of the Mongols and Tartars. Things had degenerated to an extent unknown to our history. The Muslims were so weak and desperate that they had lost all hope. If the Tartars wanted to line up 100 Muslims to be killed they would simply wait for their turn to be crucified. This was the situation then but there were still those who had vision and faith, who faced the challenge coolly and boldly. Such was the behavior of a great scholar Sheikh Jamaluddin of Bukhara when involved in an incident with Prince Taimur Khan, the grandson of Halaku Khan. The period was the beginning of the second quarter of the fourteenth century. Taimur was



Prince of Kashghar. Tartar terror was at its zenith. This great 'ālim Sheikh Jamaluddin had walked into Taimur's game reserve and was sitting there with a disciple. Taimur learned of this. He was furious. He asked his guards to bring the Sheikh to him handcuffed. When he was brought before the prince he was abused, beaten, and humiliated. But the Sheikh kept calm. Amazed by the Sheikh's fortitude and serenity, Taimur asked him in utter humiliation, "Tell me are you better or is my dog better than you?" The Sheikh answered "If I am true to my *Imān* and live according to the *dīn* and die in *Imān* then I am better, otherwise this dog is definitely better." This one sentence so moved Taimur that he released the Sheikh and asked his staff to bring the Sheikh for an audience after the hunt. When the Sheikh was brought before the Prince, he treated the Sheikh with respect and showed keen interest in Islam. He asked: "What is this *Imān*? And what does it have to do with my dog?" So the Sheikh explained that "this dog is your pet and is loyal to you. But as human beings we have all been created by God. *Imān* means belief in Allah and His prophets. Islam is a religion of peace and justice. There are rights which belong to Allah and rights which belong to human beings. As a Muslim, if I live by this *Imān* and remain loyal to my Creator till I breathe my last, then I am better because I would have succeeded through my loyalty to my Creator, otherwise as this dog is loyal to its master, it would win over me." T.W. Arnold writes in *The Preaching of Islam*, that that dialogue was so effective that the Prince whose heart was like stone then became like wax and after that a very interesting thing took place. Thereafter the Prince said to the Sheikh that he was moved by his message. "What you have said appeals to me but I cannot accept it now. So you can go, I free you but if I inherit power and become king then you come to me and I promise I will accept your *Imān*." This opportunity did not come in the Sheikh's lifetime. But before his death he told his son, Sheikh Arshaduddin, about the whole incident. He asked that when Taimur became king the son should go to him and remind him of his commitment and promise to Sheikh Jamaluddin. And it happened that in 1347 AD that Taimur became king. When hearing this, Sheikh Arshaduddin went to Kashghar and made every effort to meet him. For several months he tried many avenues but could not gain access to him. So he established in what part of the palace Taimur slept. He erected a small hut in the jungle outside the palace and started giving the *Adhan* for *fajr* every morning. After a few days Taimur became aware of this and asked what was going on. So he sent his guards to the Sheikh to inquire and the Sheikh said "Yes I make *Adhan* and please tell Taimur that there is someone who wants to remind him of something. I could not get access to the king, so that is why I am doing this." When this message was relayed to Taimur, he agreed to see him. Sheikh Arshaduddin met him and reminded him of his encounter with his father so many years back. He recited the dialogue that had taken place between the two. The king acknowledged that he recalled the event and confirmed that he had been waiting for the Sheikh. Sheikh Arshaduddin then told him of his father's death and his *wasiyyah*. He

repeated the invitation to Islam to the king and the latter fulfilled his promise. This is how he came to Islam and this is how history changed its course. Of the episode Iqbal beautifully states, "It is clear from the terrible episode of the Tartars, that those who were the worshippers of idols became the protectors of the Ka'bah." Not just central Asia but the whole Ottoman era owes itself to this new wave. Although I apologize for the detail of this story, the psychology behind it is no different than the situation we now find ourselves in. I am inviting you to give a similar response.

4. The next element of our strategy should be personal contact, one to one and particularly reaching out to our neighbors. My definition of neighbor is not just the one who lives next door, but whoever is in contact with you. And in the age of the Internet the neighborhood has stretched far and wide. I want then a strategy for our neighbors, so that we reach them all.
5. The media, the Internet, and communications technology are the next elements of our strategy. All these are extremely important. For the last 30 years I have been in the United States on and off and after September 11 I have noted a sea change in people's interest and inquisitiveness about Islam. So too the participation of Muslims on media networks. The Muslim community, particularly our youth, have tried to appear on different radio and TV programs. I must say that our ISB and MCB colleagues have done very well. I commend them and pray for them but we need to do much more. The media channels are very important and today they can make or break a war. *Al-Jazeera* is an important medium and is doing a wonderful job. May Allah protect that. But we must reach all platforms. So the media, the Internet, and all forms of information communication technologies have to be harnessed in the service of Islamic *da'wah*. If we can establish an effective presence in these channels and convey correct information about Islam in a sober and calculated manner with proper argumentation I am sure we can achieve a breakthrough.
6. Some Muslims in America have come up with a very good suggestion that I liked very much: the idea of an *open house* program. This is a golden opportunity for every mosque, Muslim school and home to invite non-Muslims to find out about Islam and Muslims. Give them an opportunity to open up, listen to them, even if they criticize you. Welcome them and also give them your viewpoint, the viewpoint of Islam. So through these open house programs we can reach the community in which we live.
7. Islamic literature, conferences, and get-togethers are also important instruments for communication and outreach to the community. I understand the demand for Islamic literature in general and for the Qur'an in particular has increased manifold. Let us seize this opportunity.
8. My next submission relates to the use of political platforms. I think this is very important. I am one of those who believe that when any of your brothers, colleagues, and organizations does a good job it must be appreciated. We are mostly critical of each other but we should also encourage, strengthen, and support each other. The Muslim participation in the political process is

a need of the hour. We must become active at all levels – local, national, international. We are living in the midst of all these people. Our future is tied to the future of all these societies. We cannot remain aloof. The ghetto approach has no future. We must actively participate in all spheres of social and political activity and present our viewpoint boldly, firmly, and politically. We must carve out a place for ourselves. This is important for the sake of *da'wah* and the future role of the Muslim community.

9. Finally, I would suggest that we must reach out to all those individuals, organizations, platforms, Muslim or non-Muslim, where we can share some common ideas and concerns. Whoever is against injustice, against capitalist exploitation, against war, against terrorism, against discrimination, we should try to join hands and make a common cause with them. We should reach every people of the left and right, Muslims and non-Muslims, organized or non-organized. I seek a better way of life for all human beings together.

My main goal behind offering these thoughts is to reflect on the state of Islam and Muslims in the twenty-first century and find ways to develop a comprehensive and multidimensional strategy for the Islamic movements and Muslim communities in Europe and North America.

## Notes

1. See Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 187.
2. Geoffrey Robertson QC, the author of an important work, *Crimes Against Humanity: The Struggle for Global Justice*, writes in a recent article in *The Times* (November 7, 2001): "The US relied on its right to self-defence (Article 51 of the UN Charter) as a warrant for bombing, initially (and justifiably) to destroy the terrorist training camps. But self-defence is a primitive doctrine, severely limited by its basis in a necessity which is 'instant and overwhelming'. It cannot sensibly be asserted that invading Afghanistan is necessary, in this sense, to protect America."
3. "This document does not purport to provide a prosecutable case against Osama bin Laden in a court of law. Intelligence often cannot be used evidentially, due to the strict rules of admissibility and for the need to protect the safety of sources. As regards the British Government document presented to Parliament," *The Independent*, London, October 5, 2001. "The Americans are finding it hard to sell in the Middle East the British Government's document 'proving' Osama bin Laden's responsibility for the 11th September atrocities and is unlikely to rally the Arab world to the West's 'war on terrorism'. Only nine of the 70 points in the document relate to the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and they often rely on conjectures rather than evidence". Robert Fisk, "This Loose Conjecture is Unlikely to Cut Much Ice with the Arab World," *The Independent*, London, October 5, 2001.
4. After seven weeks of silence *The New York Times* raises a meek voice in its editorial entitled "The CIA Needs Fixing." "The need for radical change was evident on Sept. 11. The failure of the CIA and other spy agencies to anticipate the attacks on New York and Washington was not the fault of a single institution. It was the failure of the government's entire \$30



billion, 30-year intelligence apparatus," (editorial of *New York Times* "The CIA Needs Fixing," *International Herald Tribune*, November 6, 2001).

5. Geoffrey Robertson QC raises this issue in his article in *The Times*, November 7, 2001, "But justice as others understand that word, is not America's objective. Its leaders talk of 'justice' when what is really meant is summary execution: bin Laden's head is wanted 'on a plate' and there is deep regret at the missed opportunity to wipe out Mullah Omar by a rocket attack as his car sped from Kabul. Quite apart from the short-sightedness of the CIA's assassination plans, which will only create martyrs and lose the intelligence benefits of interrogation, the murder of enemy leaders cannot be a legitimate objective of any modern war. . . . Truman insisted on their trial at Nuremberg because 'undiscriminating executions or punishments without definite findings of guilt, fairly arrived at, would not sit easily on the American conscience or be remembered by our children with pride."
6. See Noam Chomsky, *Rogue States: The Rise of Force in World Affairs* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 3–4.
7. "This is by far the most wicked and vicious act ever undertaken by fundamentalists of any faith. I must confess, however, that I am puzzled by the terrorist of September 11, because they are like no other fundamentalist that I have studied. It appears that Muhammad Atta was drinking vodka before boarding the airplane. Alcohol is, of course, forbidden by the Koran, and it seems incredible that an avowed martyr of Islam would attempt to enter paradise with vodka on his breath. Again, Ziad Jarrahi, the alleged Lebanese hijacker of the plane that crashed in Pennsylvania, seems to have frequented nightclubs in Hamburg. Muslim fundamentalists lead highly disciplined orthodox lives, and would regard drinking and clubbing as elements of the *jahili*, Godless society that they are fighting to overcome. I have no theory to offer, but would just like to note that these seem to be very unusual fundamentalists indeed." Karen Armstrong, "September Apocalypse," *The Guardian*, October 13, 2001. Karen Armstrong is author of several works on fundamentalism in major world faiths.
8. See Christopher Hewitt and Tom Cheetham, *Encyclopaedia of Modern Separatist Movements* (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2000).
9. John Pilger, an award-winning journalist and author of *Hidden Agendas* (Vintage, 1999), in an article in *The Mirror*, October 29, 2001 writes: "The war against terrorism is a fraud. After three weeks of bombing, not a single terrorist implicated in the attacks on America has been caught or killed in Afghanistan. Instead, one of the poorest, most stricken nation has been terrorised by the most powerful – the point where American pilots have run out of dubious 'military' targets and are now destroying mud houses, a hospital, Red Cross warehouses, lorries carrying refugees. None of those directly involved in the September 11 atrocity was Afghani. Most were Saudis, who apparently did their planning and training in Germany and the United States. The camps which the Taliban allowed bin Laden to use were emptied weeks ago. Moreover, the Taliban itself is a creation of the Americans and the British. In the 1980s the tribal army that produced them was funded by the CIA and trained by the BAB to fight the Russians. The hypocrisy does not stop there. When the Taliban took Kabul in 1996, Washington said nothing. Why? Because Taliban leaders were soon on their way to Houston, Texas, to be entertained by executives of the oil company Unocal. With secret US government approval, the company offered them a generous cut of the profits of the oil and gas pumped through a pipeline that the Americans wanted to build from Soviet central Asia through Afghanistan. A US diplomat said: 'The Taliban will probably develop like the Saudis did'. He explained that Afghanistan would become an American oil colony, there would be huge profits for the West, no democracy and the legal persecution of women. 'We can live with that,' he said. Although the deal fell through it remains an urgent priority of the



administration of George W. Bush, which is steeped in the oil industry. Bush's concealed agenda is to exploit the oil and gas reserves in the Caspian Basin, the greatest source of untapped fossil fuel on earth and enough according to one estimate to meet America's voracious energy needs for a generation. Only if the pipeline runs through Afghanistan can the Americans hope to control it." George Monbiot in an article published in *The Guardian*, October 23, 2001, points out a similar game plan: " 'Is there any man, is there any woman, let me say any child here,' Woodrow Wilson asked a year after the First World War ended, 'that does not know that the seed of war in the modern world is industrial and commercial rivalry?' . . . The invasion of Afghanistan is certainly a campaign against terrorism, but it may also be a late colonial adventure. Afghanistan is as indispensable to the regional control and transport of oil in central Asia as Egypt was in the Middle East . . . In 1998, Dick Cheney, US Vice President, remarked 'I cannot think of a time when we have had a region emerge as suddenly to become as strategically significant as the Caspian Sea' . . . Piping (the oil) through Iran would enrich a regime which the US has been seeking to isolate . . . Through China . . . would be prohibitively expensive. But pipelines through Afghanistan would allow the US to both pursue its aim of 'diversifying energy supply' and to penetrate the world's most lucrative markets."

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