

Lost lessons of 9/11

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Eleventh September must be having different significance for different people. It could be one's birthday; somebody's wedding anniversary; for many, a day of remembrance of a dear one. For the people of Pakistan, since 1948, it has been the day when an infant nation lost its most precious asset — its founder and guide. But September 11, 2001 is the day when the world was shaken — nobody yet knows whether for good or bad. The destruction of the World Trade Centre, loss of life at the Pentagon and in the woods of Pennsylvania, even collectively, were not the biggest disasters that struck this planet. There were natural catastrophes like the Krakatau and Mount Pelee eruptions. There were earthquakes of Messina, Gansu, Agadir and Quetta. Cyclones hitting East Pakistan and Bangladesh in the 1970s onward alone were much bigger killers than any disaster striking the world in recent times. Even famines, droughts, floods and man-made wars were bigger destroyers of human lives and property.

What makes the 2001 World Trade Centre desecration a bigger and more unforgettable incident is the shock that it could happen in the most advanced country of the world, in the presence of the most sophisticated means of intelligence, safety arrangements and security. People, around the world, after witnessing the helplessness and cluelessness of sole superpower in the world thought; if it could happen to USA, what could lesser nations and poor countries of the world muster to challenge the forces which succeeded in perpetrating such a perfectly planned and synchronised crime in the most hallowed precincts of the most powerful nation on earth? Confusing rhetoric and rash actions only added to this insecurity.

The steps taken by the United States raised more questions in the mind of the people around the world than recognising their appropriateness and efficacy. One may not be very wrong to suggest that same could be true for citizens of the United States. There is no doubt that the entire episode was unbelievable for the Americans who considered their country to be the safest in the world and absolutely impenetrable by evil forces from outside. Disintegration of Russia had strengthened their perception about the invincibility and might of the USA. No amount of national fervour and spirit can hide the depression generated by feelings of humiliation, disappointment and insecurity. It will be naive to presume that the top brass in the District of Columbia had a different reaction. In fact, they would have been more discomposed over the incompetence of outfits presided over by them, than the common people. To add insult to injury there occurred the inability to identify the culprits, and identifying weak links in the system. Intense frustration in such circumstances is understandable; but renders one liable of mak-



Dr M S Jillani

The writer is an ex-Chief of Technical Cooperation Division of the United Nations ESCAP and a former secretary to the Federal Government
jillani2@comsats.net.pk

ing gross mistakes of judgement and taking wrong decisions. Washington fell victim to both!

Few events in history would have attracted the same attention that the September 11 episode did. People wrote and spoke about it. International forums debated its various aspects. The United States government instituted probes to find answers to myriad un-answered questions. Main concerns were six in number: First: Who were the perpetrators of the act? Second: What were the motives behind such a heinous crime? Third: Who funded the entire project and how? Fourth: Who planned the operations; recruited and trained the executors, and co-ordinated its implementation? Fifth: Why did not the intelligence agencies of the United States have even an inkling of the threat to life and property on the American soil? Sixth: What were the allies of the United States doing when the plot was being hatched and the act put up?

Each one of these basic questions raises a plethora of specific queries. One will not believe for a moment that their answers are not known even now. The sudden surge in activity in the United States and scores of other cities around the globe must have provided the American government with most of the inside information about the saga of September 11. But it will be revealed only when the American people are ready to tolerate red-faced officials in Washington and swallow their narrations of events. There was an astounding failure of intelligence at most levels of the United States government. There was an atmosphere of complacency all around the country. Security was being breached extensively due to over-confidence and a growing penchant for relaxation and pre-occupation with worldly pleasures. The bureaucratic bane of competition and non-cooperation among government departments, neglect of strategically important information, lax observance of rules and regulations, all contributed to the building of an ambience that was most suited to intrigue, conspiracy and ethnic conflict intensified by social and economic discrimination.

One's heart goes out to the families who lost their dear ones at the World Trade Centre and elsewhere. One also was greatly touched and impressed by the response of ordinary citizens in New York, Washington — in fact all over the United States, and the civilised world. It only proves that the common man in America is simple, warm-hearted and God-fearing. But the same cannot be said about the power elite. The perception of the US in the Third World is based on what the elite

has been doing around the globe, on behalf of the American people. The main component of hatred for the United States policies has been this heartless and highly self-centred attitude of the US governments, and display of hypocrisy. The governments, naturally, do not want to confess their games before the American public. This approach results in an invisible chasm between the policies of the US governments and the people. It has been fully exploited by the Zionist lobby in the US, Europe and the international organisations. The planting of a Zionist enclave in the heart of the Arab world and its persistent nurturing, and collaboration in atrocities against the Palestinians — the real inhabitants of the area — has not made the American administrations very dear to the Arabs and Muslims of the world; the American people are vaguely aware of it.

The US establishment took advantage of this perception and heaped the entire blame for September 11 incidents, on Arabs and the Muslims and incited a campaign of hatred and discrimination which would completely demoralise Muslims in the United States and apply a check to the growth of Islam. The US administration may dismiss this as an insinuation, but what should one make of the growing friendship with anti-Muslim forces in the world, active support for subjugation and humiliation of Muslims all around, devastation of Afghanistan in the name of eliminating a ragtag congregation of volunteers against communism and enemies of their faith.

This disposition has only increased polarisation in the world. The administration in Washington is now trying to unearth the causes of aversion for the United States in the Third World countries, as if they do not know them already: They are US establishment's traits of extreme selfishness, greed for economic gain, longing for domination, display of arrogance, unreliability in friendship, use of cunning, and hard-heartedness at crucial times, that outweigh the goodness and nobility of the people of America. Buckling under the Zionist lobby and the lack of meaningful action over atrocities in Palestine, and support for offensive regimes and people-antagonist policies has only added to the list of enemies of the United States.

One does not need a think tank to discover these factors. What the United States establishment requires, for correcting its image, is straight thinking and renouncing of the policy of acting as a global policeman supporting or opposing uncomprehended causes. What have been forgotten are the factors that precipitated the September 11 episodes and the steps needed to remove them? Instead, the postures have been hardened and rhetoric has become more offensive. We should know from experience that it is not a good omen for anybody, anywhere. Threats and arrogance, only add to grimness of the already precarious scenario.