

9/11

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PROF. KHURSHID AHMAD



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Prof. khurshid Ahmad

Around 18.00 (Pakistan Time) as I switched on CNN the screen was clouded by smoke and the South Tower was crumbling. 'War on America' was the cry behind the falling debris. My initial reaction was shock, which soon sank into deep grief, anguish and sympathy - for the innocent victims of this outrage and for the people of America as such. As news unfolded I had forgotten, like many millions of Muslims the world over, all my complaints and grievances against America. I felt the pain of those who had suffered and of their near and dear ones.

Terrorism has no religion. It is not exclusive to any particular country, people or community. "Timowthy", "McWin" or "Bin Laden" represents a class of their own - who are prepared to inflict violence on others to pursue their own political causes or highlight their grievances.

Terrorism didn't begin on 9/11 and would not end with that. But on 9/11 we all were sharing the pain of the American people. But alas! This sharing was short lived. American leadership chose to unleash an undefined and indefinable war against elusive and ever-changing targets: Bin Laden, al-Qaida, Taliban, Muslim fundamentalists, religious educational institutions, Afghanistan, Iraq, 'axis of evil', 'kernel of evil', political suspects and non-war combatants, so on and so forth. Terrorism must be fought; it cannot be fought by terrorizing others and decimating civilians and countries in revengeful fury. Terrorism is not merely a 'tactic' that can be defeated by armed might. It is only by addressing the causes that lie at the discontent of nations and peoples that peace and security can be ensured. Justice and not uncontrolled use of power is the answer. Proportionality and commitment to fairness and rule of law are the very breath of justice.

The sympathy for and commonality with America was the first genuine reaction for 9/11 and during the year after, its hapless victim. American unilateralism and brinkmanship have only produced widespread disappointment, discord, rage and hatred. Many a norms of civilized behaviour are being re-written. Equally of all human beings has been changed into eternal superiority of the Americans. Due process of law has been discarded in favour of arbitrary detention, denial of right to defence and defence through lawyers of one's choice, punishment with proof and judicially acceptable evidence, all are becoming things of the past, for at least some of the humans. Even right to privacy is in danger. Sovereignty of other nations is becoming irrelevant as far as the outreach of the only super power is concerned. United Nations and the values on which its Charter is based have been marginalized and side-lined. Like the Roman Empire, right of intervention is

being claimed, including the right to impose on different countries political leadership of its choice.

'Covering up' of alarming failures of intelligence and of the security establishments has become an act of policy. No effort worth the name has been made to establish impartially and judiciously the responsibility of all relevant persons, agencies and institutions for this tragic catastrophe. This is forcing the people to ask as to who are the real beneficiaries of the 'veritable hell' of 9/11 - 'Muslims in America and all over the world' or 'vested interests in politics, economy and military'. The minds of the people cannot be shut, despite all the smoke-screen of propaganda!

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