

OPINIONS ON 9/11

Simon Jenkins: 'The response to 9/11 was as Bin Laden must have dreamed'

No single figure since the second world war has made so profound an impact on world events as Osama bin Laden. Had the world responded to his 9/11 attack on America with moderation he would probably have disappeared, expelled from Afghanistan or killed by his Tajik enemies. Even the Taliban were known to have been shocked by 9/11, when almost the entire Muslim world came out in sympathy with America (including the PLO in Palestine).

It was a brief moment of American moral supremacy. Yet by launching armed aggression, first against Afghanistan and then against Iraq, America wholly squandered this gain. The aggression led to a tide of anti-Americanism and surge of support for fanatical Islamism across the Muslim world. The wars cost tens of thousands of lives and caused mass destruction. The billions of dollars expended on them was financed largely from borrowing, which in turn has destabilised the world economy.

All this was out of all proportion to the attacks on 9/11. Indeed the response to 9/11 was as Bin Laden must have dreamed. He saw widespread hostility towards the west and its aggressive behaviour in the Muslim world. Civil liberties were curbed and governments reverted to cold war paranoia. America was again the great Satan. The peace dividend so eagerly awaited at the end of the 20th century evaporated as the security industry exploited counter-terrorism and seized every chance of profit and risk aversion. Bin Laden became a role model for fanatics everywhere. The decade since 9/11 must rank among the most inept and counterproductive eras in the story of modern statesmanship.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/sep/05/9-11-impact-world-al-qaida>

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Mohammed Hanif: 'Pakistanis realise that the trauma is far from over'

"Why do you attack innocent children," a failed suicide bomber in Pakistan was asked in an interview last year. "Who says children are innocent?" he replied. American drones hovering over Pakistan's northern areas are programmed to work with the same logic: guilty until proven dead.

When United States decided to outsource part of its "war of terror" to Pakistan's military establishment, it effectively sealed the fate of democracy in the country for a decade. When George W Bush embraced General Pervez Musharraf he was doing exactly what his predecessors had done when they propped up another military dictator, General Zia-ul-Haq, to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. We all know how that turned out. Taliban fighters are mujahideen's orphaned children, and they believe that American innocence is nothing but a well-rehearsed pose. Even the Taliban's victims concur.

In the days after 9/11 some Pakistanis had hoped that the American bombs would fall on Saudi Arabia from where the attackers came. But those bombs fell on Pakistan. And when they didn't fall from the sky, they blew up in mosques and bazaars.

Pakistanis are too poor to go and seek treatment for post traumatic stress disorder. They also realise that the trauma is far from over. When army generals and their cheerleaders talk about Afghanistan's end game people see a series of random slaughters across their land. There is no dearth of western academic sneering at bewildered Pakistanis and telling them that they brought it upon themselves. Try saying that to survivors of the 9/11 attacks.

- Mohammed Hanif is a novelist and special correspondent for BBC Urdu

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Orzala Ashraf Nemat: 'The war has done great harm to our people for all sorts of reasons'

The twin towers collapsed oceans and miles away from Afghanistan – at that time a country that looked like a graveyard, whose people were still suffering from war, discrimination and humiliation. In 2001, a small battery-run radio was the only means of communication in most of the country. Many Afghans felt that the US attack may mark the beginning of the end of the horror we were experiencing. Many felt good may come from what the United States had experienced, not because they are sadistic, or take pleasure in the death of others, but simply because they thought that the world powers will only understand our suffering if they experience it themselves.

It took the US only one month to react militarily, attacking the "source" of where the 9/11 attacks were planned. Hundreds and thousands of Afghan once again had to flee their homes, as they feared being hit by US bombs. As terrorists and all who collaborated with them were targeted, the fear of B52 war planes persuaded many warlord commanders to shave or shorten their beards and dress like democrats in black suits – but as we have subsequently seen, many of them remained the same on the inside.

First bombs and then political settlements followed the events. In Bonn, Germany, most of the active Afghan actors gathered to agree on power sharing and the only two groups who felt unrepresented there later became the ones who cause most of the troubles.

Ten years on, it would be unrealistic to ignore the tremendous level of progress that Afghanistan has made thanks partly to the international community and partly to the determination of Afghans themselves, who chose to work rebuilding and recreating Afghanistan again. From paved roads to girls going to school, to historical record-breaking media development, there have been positive developments.

However, the war – never the choice of the Afghan people – has done great harm to our people for all sorts of different local, national, regional and international reasons. Widespread corruption, the massive arming of militias, the fuelling of war by neighbouring countries, the civilian losses and night raids and deterioration of security have all undermined our children's education, our women's ability to work, our ability to provide basic social services to the neediest part of population. Overwhelming dependency on foreign aid is still a challenge for Afghan people who would like to make their country stand on its own feet and live life peacefully.

• Orzala Ashraf Nemat is an independent human rights and civil society activist/researcher from Afghanistan

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OPINIONS ON 9/11

Inayat Bunglawala: 'The turmoil of the past 10 years emphasises the need to be vigilant about the power exercised by our governments'

The 9/11 attacks represented a patent attempt by al-Qaida to goad the United States into open warfare. All the better, after all, to convince young Muslims across the world that America was really at war with Islam and that they should heed al-Qaida's call to come to the defence of their faith.

Osama bin Laden must have been thrilled by the wars launched against Afghanistan and Iraq, and the opportunities this presented to them. He and his recruiters were now able to point out how the world's most vocal proponents of freedom, dignity and human rights were actually behaving towards Muslims in Guantánamo Bay, through extraordinary rendition, the copious use of waterboarding, and routine torture in Abu Ghraib and elsewhere.

What the turmoil of the past 10 years have served to emphasise is the need to be vigilant about the power exercised by our governments, and to work to ensure that the human rights of all people – Muslim or otherwise – are properly safeguarded.

• Inayat Bunglawala is the founder and chair of Muslims4UK

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