



## Introspection on 9/11

By  
Areeba Malik

Have we understood that there is no national security without human security as measured by the threats and dangers posed to citizens by poverty, food scarcity, health, internal political violence and repression? For an event that triggered the longest war in American history and arguably changed the face of the world as we know it, this year the 11th anniversary of the attacks on September 11, 2001 was markedly sedate.

Even in the US, arguably the country most directly affected by this fateful day, relatively low-key ceremonies were held and President Obama and his wife simply observed the anniversary with a moment of silence outside the White House, unlike last year when the president led a long list of VIP guests at Ground Zero. Does this reflect a gradual dampening of passions around the emotional day? Has the passage of time cooled public attention to September 11?

The killing by American troops of Osama bin Laden in May 2011 may have helped draw a line under 9/11, as has the Ground Zero memorial, which opened for last year's ceremonies. However, while some catharsis may have been achieved and even though 9/11 is long past, the shadow it has cast on the world will haunt it for decades to come.

The fight against Al-Qaeda and Taliban militants is far from over, not only for the US, but for Afghanistan and Pakistan. In an advertisement published in the Wall Street Journal this September 11, Pakistan has asked the Americans: "Which country can do more for your peace?"

Indeed, there is no doubt that Pakistan has lost more since 9/11 than any statistics can reflect. Around 2,795 soldiers are dead while 8,671 soldiers have been wounded. There have been 3,486 bomb blasts and 283 major suicide attacks, while more than 3.5 million have been displaced in a country that has lost \$68 billion in economic terms. The list of martyrs includes a former prime minister. In essence, Pakistan has relived 9/11 everyday.

But has it learnt the right lessons from the cataclysmic event? Has our security establishment resolved never again to patronise rogue elements or use them as policy instruments? Have we understood that there is no national security without human security as measured by the threats and dangers posed to citizens by poverty, food scarcity, health, internal political violence and repression?

Are we ready to dismantle the old ways of exerting influence in Afghanistan? Is the political establishment here ready to work to correct the country's civil-military imbalance? Has Washington realised that it needs to build a friendship with Pakistan's people and not merely with its military leaders?

If the answer to all of the above is 'yes,' then we have learnt the right lessons. But ambiguity on any of these existential queries will only sound trouble ahead.

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