Foreword

The chilling cadences of the rhetoric of the man who has become the most iconic among the terrorists of our age ring out once again, shattering the world of the wishful thinkers who had hoped that Osama bin Laden had been killed at Torah Borah (or had later succumbed to his kidney ailment):

> For how long will fear, massacres, destruction, exile, orphanhood and widowhood be our lot, while security, stability and joy remain your domain alone? It is high time that equality be established to this effect… As you kill, so will you be killed, and as you bomb so will you likewise be bombed.[1]

Bin Laden's new declaration of war against what he now describes as "the White House gangsters",[2] and against those who ally with America, comes at an important time, when many in the world had already begun to grow complacent about terror once again. The old apologists – the 'limp liberals'[3] – who seek to purchase peace by offering concessions to those who

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[1]   David R. Sands and Bill Gertz, "US says tape shows bin Laden alive," *The Washington Times*, November 13, 2002, http://www.washtimes.com/world/20021113-2474169.htm.

[2]   JoannaMcGeary and Douglas Waller, "Why can't we find bin Laden?" *Time*, November 17, 2002, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1101021125-389601,00.html.

[3]   Polly Toynbee, "Limp liberals fail to protect their most profound values," *The Guardian*, Manchester, October 10, 2001, http://ontology.buffalo.edu/smith//courses01/rrtw/toynbee.html.

systematically use the murder of civilians to secure their political or 'celestial' ends, were once again trotting out their arguments about addressing the 'root causes' of terrorism instead of fighting it on the ground. There are, however, realities outside the comforting world of moral relativism that cannot be ignored, and these have delivered reminder after brutal reminder since 9/11, but have succeeded in barely and briefly irritating the crust of our indifference – scarcely as long as the body bags of the last terrorist outrage can be kept on our television screens.

This is the character of terrorism that needs most to be understood. Its danger is not the number of people it kills, but the confusion and paralysis it induces, the manner in which it divides its victim or target communities, the complacence it encourages in such communities during the intervals between attacks, and the moral ambivalence it preys on to go beyond and to violate all morality.

There is, perhaps, no power that is innocent of evil, and America is certainly no exception. It is true that an examination of the histories of nations that, today, protest and ally against terrorism would produce evidence of great wrongdoing, of colonial oppression, of racial, ethnic and even, occasionally, genocidal violence, at some point in their past. Many of these complex injuries and injustices seep into the present structure of the world as well, and there is no community or nation that has not been both oppressor and victim at some stage, and that is not so, in some sense, even today. These are the moral interstices that the terrorist enters, exploits and expands.

In meeting the argument that we must redress these 'historical wrongs' – both real and imagined – to 'solve' the problem of terrorism, it is, consequently, necessary to remind ourselves that terrorism, in explicitly targeting non-combatants, itself compounds such wrongs and commits, again and again, the evils it finds unforgivable in others.

Significantly, moreover, the terrorist does not base his campaigns on any accurate, objective or valid reading of history, but rather on a fictional past (as well as a falsified present and future) that is substantially invented to confirm his ideological posture and his campaigns of undiscriminating violence. Zbigniew Brzezinski notes that,

> The specifics of the region's political history need not be dissected too closely because terrorists presumably do not delve deeply into archival research before embarking on a terrorist career. Rather, it is the emotional context of felt, observed or historically recounted political grievances that shapes the fanatical pathology of terrorists and eventually triggers their murderous actions.[4]

Crucially, again, there is no set of correctives that can, within the structures of the existing world order, really fulfil the escalating and contradictory aspirations of the many and diverse peoples of the world. To take a random example, the 'fulfilment' of the 'Islamist' aspirations of Muslim radicals would certainly militate against the rights and hopes of a preponderance of women in the 'Muslim world'. Equally, it is necessary to understand that the current and common aspirations of the 'liberal democratic' world – often projected as 'universal' and applied even to the unwilling in more 'traditional' communities – are also substantially beyond the scope of fulfilment within the global resources available to man. These aspirations are overwhelmingly shaped by the excessive consumption patterns of the American middle class – patterns that simply cannot be sustained for even a very brief period for the current (and growing) global population of 6.3 billion people,[5] without utterly devastating the earth. In sum, it is clear that inequalities, and hence injustices and grievances, will persist in one part of the world or the other, well into the foreseeable future. While sympathy and correctives need to be directed towards those who lose out in this structure and in the processes of modernisation and globalisation, these cannot be accepted as justifications for terrorism. We must, of course, understand the causes and the motives of terrorism in order to bring this evil to an end, but "the intellectual enquiry into the causes of terrorism ought never to be allowed to be used to

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[4] Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Confronting Anti-American Grievances", *The New York Times*, September 1, 2002.
[5] "Human Population," http://math.berkeley.edu/~galen/popclk.html.

condone terrorism, to become an excuse, a justification, for terrorism."[6]

A successful counter-terrorism strategy demands an extraordinarily high degree of clarity, consistency and continuity. And these, regrettably, are far from evident in the current global response, and will so remain unless a more comprehensive integrating vision evolves. The political, intelligence, military and policing responses, which presently dominate our counter-terrorism perspectives, have to be reframed within clearly articulated ideological contexts, not the inchoate rhetoric of 'ridding the world of evil-doers',[7] or of the emotive imagery of freedom versus enslavement – which create entirely different ideas in the minds of different peoples around the world, depending on their collective 'historical' memories and subjective or cultural inclinations and affiliations. Such contexts will have to address the nature of globalisation and its impact on marginalized communities, the necessity, character and limits of legitimate violence, and, crucially, the advantages of even imperfect democracies – and democratic methods of grievance redressal and transformation – over the autocracies that the extremist vision seeks to impose.

The war against terrorism is, at present, insufficiently seen and addressed as an intellectual war, a war of minds and of ideologies. It is a war, moreover, that is still dominated by paradigms that have outlived their utility – including the Cold War mindset. While the terrorists have truly globalised their operations and ideological vision, counter-terrorism perspectives remain trapped in rigidly nationalistic positions, and in a high degree of a lack of awareness of terrorist movements and activities that are not seen to impinge upon the 'interests of state' of the dominant world powers, or that are thought to lie outside their spheres of influence.

An enormous effort of will is now required to focus on creating the necessary integration in research, intelligence-

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[6]   L.M. Singhvi, "Global Terror: The Challenge of Ideologies," in K.P.S. Gill and Ajai Sahni eds., *The Global Threat of Terror: Ideological, Material and Political Linkages*, New Delhi: ICM-Bulwark Books, 2002, p. 29.

[7]   "Bush vows to rid the world of 'evil-doers'", cnn.com, September 16, 2001, http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/09/16/gen.bush.terrorism/.

gathering and information generation, coordination between nations and agencies, and, eventually, the dominant vision that is to guide the global war against terrorism. If anything, such an integrated vision and effort has been continuously diluted after an initial crystallisation in the wake of the 9/11 tragedy, and has been entirely vitiated since the US decided to aggressively advocate war against Iraq on grounds that were regarded by many of its allies as uncertain and unconvincing.

The crucial decisions of the global war against terror must be taken by security professionals who are fully apprised of the contours and consequences of their actions, and who operate within paradigms and information systems that are meaningful within the current world context. These decisions cannot be left to politicians with axes to grind, or to individuals so far distanced from the events and circumstances on the ground that their judgements can simply not be relied upon to define effective and appropriate responses. These decisions must, moreover, be taken within the context of a clearly articulated and widely accepted global strategy of counter-terrorism that recognises the necessity of securing a clear and demonstrable victory over those who adopt this reprehensible method to secure their ends. There are far too many advocates of compromise with terror today, who would like us to believe that it is possible to bribe mass murderers away from their totalitarian goals with economic and political concessions. It is useful, indeed necessary, in this context, to recollect that, "the longest periods of peace usually follow from decisive victories which prove aggression to be suicidal."[8]

Ajai Sahni
New Delhi
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[8] Victor Davis Hanson, "Wishing War Away?", *National Review Online*, April 5, 2002, http://www.nationalreview.com/hanson/hanson-archive.asp.