

And Hate Begat Hate

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By Ahmed Rashid

IN their shock after Sept. 11, 2001, Americans frequently asked, “Why do they hate us so much?” It wasn’t clear just who “they” were – Muslims, Arabs or simply anyone who was not American. The easy answer that many Americans found comforting was equally vague: that “they” were jealous of America’s wealth, opportunities, democracy and what have you.

But in this part of the world – in Pakistan, where I live, and in Afghanistan next door, from which the Sept. 11 attacks were directed – those who detested America were much more identifiable, and so were their reasons. They were a small group of Islamic extremists who supported Al Qaeda; a larger group of students studying at madrasas, which had expanded rapidly since the 1980s; and young militants who had been empowered by years of support from Pakistan’s military intelligence services to fight against India in Kashmir. They were a tiny minority of Pakistan’s 150 million people at the time. In their eyes, America was an imperial, oppressive, heathen power just like the Soviet Union, which they had defeated in Afghanistan.

Now, with the United States about to enter the 11th year of the longest war it has ever fought, far more of my neighbors in Pakistan have joined the list of America’s detractors. The wave of anti-Americanism is rising in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, even among many who once admired the United States, and the short reason for that is plain: the common resentment is that American plans to bring peace and development to Afghanistan have failed, the killing is still going on, and to excuse their failures Americans have now expanded the war into Pakistan, evoking what they did in the 1960s when the Vietnam war moved into Laos and Cambodia. Moreover, while Pakistanis die for an American war, Washington has given favored deals to Pakistan’s archenemy, India. So goes the argument.

The more belligerent detractors of America will tell you that Americans are imperialists who hate Islam, and that Americans’ so-called civilizing instincts have nothing to do with democracy or human rights. A more politically attuned attitude is that the detractor doesn’t hate Americans, just the policies that American leaders pursue.

But both groups feel trapped: Afghanistan is still caught up in war, and my country is on the brink of meltdown. And so now there is something beyond just disliking America. We have begun to ask the question of 9/11 in reverse: why do Americans hate us so much ?

Ten years is a long time to be at war, and to be faced with a daily threat of terrorist attacks. It is a long time spent in an unequal alliance in which the battle gets only more arduous and divisive, especially for the weaker partner on whose soil the battle is playing out. Under such long strain, resentments about intrusions, miscalculations and feckless performance make a leap to an assumption: that Americans must hate Pakistanis because they would otherwise never treat them so carelessly, speak so badly of them, or distrust them so much.

Americans should not be particularly surprised by this. War diminishes everyone and all states, even the victors, and that is especially true if the war is characterized by broken promises and dashed hopes, perceptions of betrayal, and disappointment in an ally. For the people living in this theater of war, the litany of such disappointments is long.

PERHAPS the greatest promise made after Sept. 11 by President George W. Bush and the British prime minister, Tony Blair, was that the West would no longer tolerate failed and failing states or extremism. Today there are more failed states than ever; Al Qaeda’s message has spread to Europe, Africa and the American mainland; and every religion and culture is producing its own extremists, whether in sympathy with Islamism or in reaction to it (witness the recent massacre in Norway).

Famine, hunger, poverty and economic failure have increased beyond measure, at least in this corner of the world, where the Sept. 11 plans were hatched, while climate change has set off enormous floods and drought brings untold misery to millions in unexpected places. The latter is not the fault of Sept. 11, but in the minds of many the catastrophes we face stem from America's wars and the diversion of America's attention from truly universal problems. In this, America, too, is a victim of its wars and the global changes it has not addressed.

Of the two invasions – Iraq and Afghanistan – and the one state-salvaging operation, in Pakistan, that Americans embarked on in the past decade, America's most glaring failure has been its inability to help rebuild the states and the nations where it has gone to war. State-building is about setting up institutions and governance that may not have existed before, as in Afghanistan, or that have been in the hands of ruthless dictators, as in Iraq. Nation-building is all about helping countries develop national cohesion, as Iraq still struggles to do and as Pakistan has failed to do since its creation. That is done not by blunt force, but by developing the economy, civil society, education and skills.

Both state- and nation-building were dirty words in the Bush administration. They are less so in the Obama administration, but they are also no longer used to describe the Obama strategy in Afghanistan or Pakistan. Still, the much vaunted counterinsurgency strategy framed by Gen. David H. Petraeus for defeating Al Qaeda depends enormously on improving governance, rebuilding institutions like the local army and police force, and empowering people with a future – in other words, state- and nation-building.

Yet despite the billions of dollars spent on this strategy, America's social agenda has been pared down and the overall policy left in the hands of the United States military and the C.I.A., for which counterinsurgency is essentially a military tool. In Afghanistan, night raids and targeted killings by American Special Operations forces and drone attacks by the C.I.A. have replaced the B-52 bombers of post-Sept. 11 as the favored tools to deplete the Taliban. The targeting is more precise, but the cost in civilian deaths is still too high for the local population to bear.

Afghans now demonstrate in the streets every time a civilian is killed. In Pakistan, drone attacks have infuriated the entire population because nobody can quantify how successful they are in eliminating Al Qaeda or the Taliban. John O. Brennan, President Obama's counterterrorism adviser, said in June that for a year "there hasn't been a single collateral death" as a result of drone attacks. So the C.I.A. may claim that the drones have killed 600 militants and not a single civilian, but what Afghan or Pakistani can possibly believe that? Pakistan has asked for all drone strikes to cease, and the Afghans have asked for an end to night raids. But so far the Americans have not obliged. And anti-Americanism flourishes.

The United States invaded both Afghanistan and Iraq without even a plan as to how it would govern these countries. In both countries, policy was made on the hoof, and much of it was initially implemented in secret – a sure way to forsake civilian empowerment. The former Afghan warlords, whom the Taliban got rid of in the 1990s, were re-employed by the C.I.A. They underwent metamorphoses, like caterpillars to butterflies, from warlords into businessmen, drug dealers, transport contractors, property magnates. But underneath the new Armani suit was the same warlord hated by the people. So Afghans blame the Americans for reviving their dormant tormentors.

Corruption is rampant, but not just because the rulers are kleptomaniacs. The United States must share a major part of the blame in giving huge contracts to the wrong people, forsaking accountability and transparency, and enriching only a few rather than building an economy. All of these failings – warlords, corruption, civilian casualties – have helped breed the new and vicious strain of anti-Americanism.

Meanwhile, American aid and economic development in Pakistan and Afghanistan have aimed at "quick impact projects," which are intended to win hearts and minds, but which, like instant oatmeal, dissolve quickly. The real business of helping these states build an indigenous economy and creating jobs to replace opium growing and smuggling in the rural lands, where government authority is weakest, was left to chance. Yes, the American military became an employer, but Afghanistan is about to enter an acute economic downturn when 100,000 American troops leave and tens of thousands of Afghans who work for them become jobless.

A recent Congressional report says the United States has wasted at least \$31 billion in the awarding of contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan. And in Pakistan, people see no lasting economic benefit from the \$20 billion Washington has spent there since 2001. It has bought a lot of military equipment, but no dam or university or

electric power plant.

The Pakistani military benefited from those purchases, but it thought it was never consulted sufficiently by the United States and was not considered a true ally. Acting on those assumptions, it created its own safeguards by backing both President Bush and the resurgent Taliban insurgency, and it continued in that vein after President Obama took over. Throughout the war, it has feared that the United States was treating India as the real ally, so it maintained the extremists it had trained in the 1990s to fight its larger neighbor. But nothing stands still, and the military lost control as the extremists morphed into the Pakistani Taliban and began focusing on the state itself.

Pakistan, which is now the fourth largest nuclear armed state in the world, has been gravely destabilized by its involvement in wars in Afghanistan. This, at least, did not begin 10 years ago. It has spanned three decades. The 1980s war against the Soviet Union was fueled by C.I.A. operatives, Saudi money and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence. Kalashnikovs, drugs, madrasas and sectarian divisions proliferated then, while Pakistan was ruled by an American-backed military dictatorship. Since Sept. 11, Pakistan has again been destabilized by the insurgency in Afghanistan, and for most of that time it was again being ruled by an American-backed military dictatorship.

There is a flip side to this coin of anti-Americanism, of course. The leaders of both Afghanistan and Pakistan have found it convenient to play it for political survival or to explain away their own lapses. Afghanistan's president, Hamid Karzai, has become a master at spilling tears to describe the latest American perfidy, while failing to fight corruption or provide a modicum of good governance. Similarly, Pakistan's army and intelligence directorate regularly brief the media and politicians on the long sequences of American betrayals, Washington's love for India and how Pakistan was trapped in this relationship. These are false narratives – dry tinder for the question “Why do Americans hate us?” – but they have now seeped into the national psyche, the media and the political debate, and countering them is not easy.

That is because the army's national security objectives, which many Pakistanis still accept as a matter of national identity, are rooted in the last century, rather than in what is needed today. They decree that the army must maintain a permanent state of enmity with India; a controlling influence in Afghanistan and the deployment of Islamic extremists or non-state actors as a tool of foreign policy in the region; and that it must command a lion's share of the national budget alongside its control of Pakistan's nuclear weapons.

AMERICAN attempts to change this course with either carrots or sticks are rebuffed, while the civilian government cowers in the background, not wanting to get trampled by the two bull elephants of American and Pakistani military will. Meanwhile the voices of extremism translate anti-Americanism into denunciations of Americans' own treasured ideals: democracy, liberalism, tolerance and women's rights. These days, all are pronounced Western or American concepts, and dismissed.

Pakistanis desperately need a new narrative – one that is honest about the mistakes their leaders have made and continue to make. But where is the leadership to tell this story as it should be told? The military gets away with its antiquated thinking because nobody is offering an alternative. And without one, nothing will improve for a long time, because the American and Pakistani governments are in a sense mirror images of each other. The Americans have allowed their military and C.I.A. to dominate Washington's policy-making on Afghanistan and Pakistan, just as the Pakistani military and ISI dominate decision making in Islamabad.

Since the death last year of Richard C. Holbrooke, who was devoted to creating a political strategy to underpin American policy-making, but whom President Obama seemed to ignore, there has been no American political strategy for Pakistan or Afghanistan. After 10 years, it should be clear that the wars in this region cannot be won purely by military force, nor should policy making be left to the generals. The questions about who hates whom will become only more difficult to resolve until the warfare ends and national healing begins.

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