



## Challenges in a Non-Utopian World

The unspeakable events of September 11 have exacted a considerable toll in human suffering. But the true significance of "9-11" will only clarify with the hindsight of history. The victims were young and old, men and women, millionaires and the not so rich, military men and civilians. Among the dead (and missing) were not only Americans, but people from countries around the world (including many from my country of birth, India), and from an equally broad swath of religious beliefs. While America and the world will forever mourn these victims, they will also be equally thankful for the many who miraculously survived this tragedy.

Those who attempt to rationalize (or even somehow validate) these atrocious acts, by apportioning the blame to the failed foreign policies of the U.S. government (past and present) or its national hubris, disregard a very simple fact. Human life is sacred no matter what the religion or the belief system. All religions around the world are in accord in striving for an environment of non-violence, peace, and tolerance, in which people can live in harmony. Interpretation of the prescribed means to attain this sublime goal, however, is another matter and this appears to be the root of most problems. Terrorists, along with their sponsors and sympathizers, attempt to validate their beliefs and heinous acts under the misguided guise of religious righteousness.

History continues to provide us with rather harsh reminders that we live in an imperfect world. Leaders (most of them unfortunately charismatic to boot) have periodically come out of the woodwork, carrying evil agendas and egregious schemes designed to manipulate and mobilize the (largely) unwitting masses. Equally ambitious and ruthless lieutenants, willing to do the dirty work, complete the system to perpetuate the myth and develop the propaganda machine. Bolstering security in our homes, offices, roadways, waters, and the skies is surely an easier proposition than countering these forces of evil. A major challenge in the years ahead will lie in ensuring that nations and peoples around the world have unfettered opportunities for individual and collective growth such that they don't fall prey to these "bad guys." Poverty, illiteracy, and oppressive political regimes complicate this challenge.

A world of sustained peace, political stability, and individual freedom—containing societies that afford all basic amenities of life for young and old alike regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or religion—is clearly Utopian. However, the human race and the imperfect world that houses it, have faced countless challenges in the past and have overcome them. This new battle will not be easy but the good always overcomes the evil in the end. Each one of us can do our small part in this struggle. Stay tuned.

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