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**“Invading, not investigating, has led to a decade of violence “**

**Noam Chomsky**

**Precis of 2011 City of Sydney Peace Prize Lecture**

As we all know, the United Nations was founded "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". The words can elicit only deep regret when we consider how we have acted to fulfil that aspiration, though there have been a few significant successes, notably in Europe.

Can we proceed to at least limit the scourge of war? A persuasive stand, I think, is that of the pacifist thinker and social activist A.J. Muste: what he called "revolutionary pacifism". Muste disdained the search for peace without justice. He urged that "one must be a revolutionary before one can be a pacifist", by which he meant that we must deal "honestly and adequately with this 90 per cent of our problem" - "the violence on which the present system is based, and all the evil - material and spiritual - this entails for the masses of men throughout the world".

If we ever hope to live up to the high ideals we passionately proclaim, and to bring the initial dream of the UN closer to fulfilment, we should think carefully about crucial choices that have been made, and continue to be made, every day.

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The West has just commemorated the 10th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and what was called at the time, but no longer, "the glorious invasion" of Afghanistan. Partial closure was reached with the assassination of the prime suspect, Osama bin Laden, by US commandos who invaded Pakistan, apprehended him and then murdered him, disposing of the corpse without autopsy.

Pakistan's leading daily recently published a study of the effect of drone attacks and other US terror. It found that "about 80 per cent [of] residents of [the tribal regions] South and North Waziristan agencies have been affected mentally while 60 per cent people of Peshawar are nearing to become psychological patients if these problems are not addressed immediately". In part for these reasons, hatred of America had already risen to phenomenal heights. One consequence was firing across the border at the bases of the US occupying army in Afghanistan - which provoked sharp condemnation of Pakistan for its failure to co-operate in an American war that Pakistanis overwhelmingly oppose, taking the same stand they did when the Russians occupied Afghanistan. A stand then lauded, now condemned.

The specialist literature and even the US embassy in Islamabad warn that the pressures on Pakistan to take part in the US invasion, as well as US attacks in Pakistan, are "destabilising and radicalising Pakistan, risking a geopolitical catastrophe for the United States - and the world - which would dwarf anything that could possibly occur in Afghanistan", quoting a British military/Pakistan analyst, Anatol Lieven.

The assassination of bin Laden greatly heightened this risk in ways that were ignored in the general enthusiasm for assassination of suspects. The US commandos were under orders to fight their way out if necessary, in which case there might have been a major confrontation with the Pakistani army. Pakistan has a huge nuclear arsenal and the system is laced with radical Islamists, products of strong US-Saudi support for the worst of Pakistan's dictators, Zia ul-Haq, and his program of radical Islamisation. The US President, Barack Obama, has added the risk of nuclear explosions in London and New York, if the confrontation had led to leakage of nuclear material to jihadis.

The invasion of Afghanistan was not aimed at overthrowing the brutal Taliban regime, as later claimed. That was an afterthought, brought up three weeks after the bombing began. Its explicit reason was that the Taliban were unwilling to extradite bin Laden without evidence, which the US refused to provide - as later learnt, because it had virtually none, and in fact still has little that could stand up in an independent court of law, though his responsibility is hardly in doubt. The Taliban did in fact make some gestures towards extradition and we since have learnt that there were other such options, but they were all dismissed in favour of violence, which has since torn the country to shreds. It has reached its highest level in a decade this year according to the UN, with no diminution in sight.

A very serious question, rarely asked then or since, is whether there was an alternative to violence. There is strong evidence that there was. The September 11 attack was sharply condemned within the jihadi movement, and there were good opportunities to split it and isolate al-Qaeda. Instead, Washington and London chose to follow the script provided by bin Laden, helping to establish his claim that the West is attacking Islam, and thus provoking new waves of terrorism. The senior CIA analyst responsible for tracking Osama bin Laden from 1996, Michael Scheuer, warned right away and has repeated since that "the United States of America remains bin Laden's only indispensable ally".

These are among the natural consequences of rejecting Muste's warning, and the main thrust of his revolutionary pacifism, which should direct us to investigating the grievances that lead to violence, and when they are legitimate, as they often are, to address them.

When that advice is taken, it can succeed very well. Britain's experience in Northern Ireland is a good illustration. For years, London responded to IRA terrorism with greater violence, escalating the cycle, which reached a bitter peak. When the government began instead to attend to the grievances, violence subsided and terrorism has effectively disappeared.

**This is an edited extract from the Sydney Peace Prize lecture, delivered last night.**