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The Monster in the Mirror

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We've forfeited the rights to our own tragedies. As the carnage in Mumbai raged on, day after horrible day, our 24-hour news channels informed us that we were watching "India's 9/11." And like actors in a Bollywood rip-off of an old Hollywood film, we're expected to play our parts and say our lines, even though we know it's all been said and done before.

As tension in the region builds, U.S. Senator John McCain has warned Pakistan that, if it didn't act fast to arrest the "bad guys," he had personal information that India would launch air strikes on "terrorist camps" in Pakistan and that Washington could do nothing because Mumbai was India's 9/11.

But November isn't September, 2008 isn't 2001, Pakistan isn't Afghanistan, and India isn't America. So perhaps we should reclaim our tragedy and pick through the debris with our own brains and our own broken hearts so that we can arrive at our own conclusions.

It's odd how, in the last week of November, thousands of people in Kashmir supervised by thousands of Indian troops lined up to cast their vote, while the richest quarters of India's richest city ended up looking like war-torn Kupwara — one of Kashmir's most ravaged districts.

The Mumbai attacks are only the most recent of a spate of terrorist attacks on Indian towns and cities this year. Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Delhi, Guwahati, Jaipur, and Malegaon have all seen serial bomb blasts in which hundreds of ordinary people have been killed and wounded. If the police are right about the people they have arrested as suspects in these previous attacks, both Hindu and Muslim, all Indian nationals, it obviously indicates that something's going very badly wrong in this country.

If you were watching television you might not have heard that ordinary people, too, died in Mumbai. They were mowed down in a busy railway station and a public hospital. The terrorists did not distinguish between poor and rich. They killed both with equal cold-bloodedness.

The Indian media, however, was transfixed by the rising tide of horror that breached the glittering barricades of "India shining" and spread its stench in the marbled lobbies and crystal ballrooms of two incredibly luxurious hotels and a small Jewish center.

We're told that one of these hotels is an icon of the city of Mumbai. That's absolutely true. It's an icon of the easy, obscene injustice that ordinary Indians endure every day. On a day when the newspapers were full of moving obituaries by beautiful people about the hotel rooms they had stayed in, the gourmet restaurants they loved (ironically one was called Kandahar), and the staff who served them, a small box on the top left-hand corner in the inner pages of a national newspaper (sponsored by a pizza company, I think) said, "Hungry, kya?" ("Hungry eh?"). It, then, with the best of intentions I'm sure, informed its readers that, on the international hunger index, India ranked below Sudan and Somalia.

But of course this isn't that war. That one's still being fought in the Dalit bastis (settlements) of our villages; on the

banks of the Narmada and the Koel Karo rivers; in the rubber estate in Chengara; in the villages of Nandigram, Singur, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Lalgarh in West Bengal; and the slums and shantytowns of our gigantic cities.

That war isn't on TV. Yet.

So maybe, like everyone else, we should deal with the one that is.

Terrorism and the Need for Context

There is a fierce, unforgiving fault line that runs through the contemporary discourse on terrorism. On one side (let's call it Side A) are those who see terrorism, especially "Islamist" terrorism, as a hateful, insane scourge that spins on its own axis, in its own orbit, and has nothing to do with the world around it, nothing to do with history, geography, or economics. Therefore, Side A says, to try to place it in a political context, or even to try to understand it, amounts to justifying it and is a crime in itself.

Side B believes that, though nothing can ever excuse or justify it, terrorism exists in a particular time, place, and political context, and to refuse to see that will only aggravate the problem and put more and more people in harm's way. Which is a crime in itself.

The sayings of Hafiz Saeed who founded the Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Pure) in 1990 and who belongs to the hard-line Salafi tradition of Islam, certainly bolsters the case of Side A. Hafiz Saeed approves of suicide bombing, hates Jews, Shias, and Democracy, and believes that jihad should be waged until Islam, his Islam, rules the world.

Among the things he said are:

"There cannot be any peace while India remains intact. Cut them, cut them so much that they kneel before you and ask for mercy."

And: "India has shown us this path. We would like to give India a tit-for-tat response and reciprocate in the same way by killing the Hindus, just like it is killing the Muslims in Kashmir."

But where would Side A accommodate the sayings of Babu Bajrangji of Ahmedabad, India, who sees himself as a democrat, not a terrorist? He was one of the major lynchpins of the 2002 Gujarat genocide and has said (on camera):

"We didn't spare a single Muslim shop, we set everything on fire... we hacked, burned, set on fire... we believe in setting them on fire because these bastards don't want to be cremated, they're afraid of it... I have just one last wish... let me be sentenced to death... I don't care if I'm hanged... just give me two days before my hanging and I will go and have a field day in Juhapura where seven or eight lakhs [seven or eight hundred thousand] of these people stay... I will finish them off... let a few more of them die... at least twenty-five thousand to fifty thousand should die."

And where in Side A's scheme of things would we place the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh bible, *We, or, Our Nationhood Defined* by M. S. Golwalkar, who became head of the RSS in 1944. (The RSS is the ideological heart, the holding company of the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party, BJP, and its militias. The RSS was founded in 1925. By the 1930s, its founder, Dr. K. B. Hedgewar, a fan of Benito Mussolini's, had begun to model it overtly along the lines of Italian fascism.)

It says:

"Ever since that evil day, when Moslems first landed in Hindustan, right up to the present moment, the Hindu Nation has been gallantly fighting on to take on these despoilers. The Race Spirit has been awakening."

Or:

"To keep up the purity of its race and culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the Semitic races — the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here... a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by."

Of course Muslims are not the only people in the gun sights of the Hindu Right. Dalits have been consistently targeted. Recently, in Kandhamal in Orissa, Christians were the target of two and a half months of violence that left more than 40 dead. Forty thousand people have been driven from their homes, half of whom now live in refugee camps.

All these years Hafiz Saeed has lived the life of a respectable man in Lahore as the head of the Jamaat-ud Daawa, which many believe is a front organization for the Lashkar-e-Taiba. He continues to recruit young boys for his own bigoted jihad with his twisted, fiery sermons. On December 11, the United Nations imposed sanctions on the Jamaat-ud-Daawa. The Pakistani government succumbed to international pressure and put Hafiz Saeed under house arrest.

Babu Bajrangi, however, is out on bail and lives the life of a respectable man in Gujarat. A couple of years after the genocide, he left the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, a militia of the RSS) to join the Shiv Sena (another rightwing nationalist party). Narendra Modi, Bajrangi's former mentor, is still the Chief Minister of Gujarat.

So the man who presided over the Gujarat genocide was reelected twice, and is deeply respected by India's biggest corporate houses, Reliance and Tata. Suhel Seth, a TV impresario and corporate spokesperson, recently said, "Modi is God." The policemen who supervised and sometimes even assisted the rampaging Hindu mobs in Gujarat have been rewarded and promoted.

The RSS has 45,000 branches and seven million volunteers preaching its doctrine of hate across India. They include Narendra Modi, but also former Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee, current leader of the opposition L. K. Advani, and a host of other senior politicians, bureaucrats, and police and intelligence officers.

And if that's not enough to complicate our picture of secular democracy, we should place on record that there are plenty of Muslim organizations within India preaching their own narrow bigotry.

So, on balance, if I had to choose between Side A and Side B, I'd pick Side B. We need context. Always.

A Close Embrace of Hatred, Terrifying Familiarity, and Love

On this nuclear subcontinent, that context is Partition. The Radcliffe Line, which separated India and Pakistan and tore through states, districts, villages, fields, communities, water systems, homes, and families, was drawn virtually overnight. It was Britain's final, parting kick to us.

Partition triggered the massacre of more than a million people and the largest migration of a human population in contemporary history. Eight million people, Hindus fleeing the new Pakistan, Muslims fleeing the new kind of India, left their homes with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

Each of those people carries, and passes down, a story of unimaginable pain, hate, horror, but yearning too. That wound, those torn but still unsevered muscles, that blood and those splintered bones still lock us together in a close embrace of hatred, terrifying familiarity, but also love. It has left Kashmir trapped in a nightmare from which it can't seem to emerge, a nightmare that has claimed more than 60,000 lives.

Pakistan, the Land of the Pure, became an Islamic Republic, and then very quickly a corrupt, violent military state, openly intolerant of other faiths.

India on the other hand declared herself an inclusive, secular democracy. It was a magnificent undertaking, but Babu Bajrangi's predecessors had been hard at work since the 1920s, dripping poison into India's bloodstream, undermining that idea of India even before it was born.

By 1990, they were ready to make a bid for power. In 1992 Hindu mobs exhorted by L. K. Advani stormed the Babri Masjid and demolished it.

By 1998, the BJP was in power at the center. The U.S. War on Terror put the wind in their sails. It allowed them to do exactly as they pleased, even to commit genocide and then present their fascism as a legitimate form of chaotic democracy.

This happened at a time when India had opened its huge market to international finance and it was in the interests of international corporations and the media houses they owned to project it as a country that could do no wrong. That gave Hindu nationalists all the impetus and the impunity they needed.

This, then, is the larger historical context of terrorism on the subcontinent and of the Mumbai attacks. It shouldn't surprise us that Hafiz Saeed of the Lashkar-e-Taiba is from Shimla (India) and L. K. Advani of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is from Sindh (Pakistan).

In much the same way as it did after the 2001 Parliament attack, the 2002 burning of the Sabarmati Express, and the 2007 bombing of the Samjhauta Express, the government of India announced that it has "incontrovertible" evidence that the Lashkar-e-Taiba, backed by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), was behind the Mumbai strikes.

The Lashkar has denied involvement, but remains the prime accused. According to the police and intelligence agencies, the Lashkar operates in India through an organization called the "Indian Mujahideen." Two Indian nationals, Sheikh Mukhtar Ahmed, a Special Police Officer working for the Jammu and Kashmir Police, and Tausif Rehman, a resident of Kolkata in West Bengal, have been arrested in connection with the Mumbai attacks.

So already the neat accusation against Pakistan is getting a little messy.

Almost always, when these stories unspool, they reveal a complicated global network of foot soldiers, trainers, recruiters, middlemen, and undercover intelligence and counter-intelligence operatives working not just on both sides of the India-Pakistan border, but in several countries simultaneously.

In today's world, trying to pin down the provenance of a terrorist strike and isolate it within the borders of a single nation state, is very much like trying to pin down the provenance of corporate money. It's almost impossible.

In circumstances like these, air strikes to "take out" terrorist camps may take out the camps, but certainly will not "take out" the terrorists. And neither will war.

Also, in our bid for the moral high ground, let's try not to forget that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the LTTE of neighboring Sri Lanka, one of the world's most deadly terrorist groups, were trained by the Indian Army.

Releasing Frankensteins

Thanks largely to the part it was forced to play as America's ally, first in its war in support of the Afghan Islamists and then in its war against them, Pakistan, whose territory is reeling under these contradictions, is careening toward civil war.

As recruiting agents for America's jihad against the Soviet Union, it was the job of the Pakistani Army and the ISI to nurture and channel funds to Islamic fundamentalist organizations. Having wired up these Frankensteins and released them into the world, the U.S. expected it could rein them in like pet mastiffs whenever it wanted to. Certainly it did not expect them to come calling in the heart of the homeland on September 11. So once again, Afghanistan had to be violently remade.

Now the debris of a re-ravaged Afghanistan has washed up on Pakistan's borders.

Nobody, least of all the Pakistani government, denies that it is presiding over a country that is threatening to implode. The terrorist training camps, the fire-breathing mullahs, and the maniacs who believe that Islam will, or should, rule the world are mostly the detritus of two Afghan wars. Their ire rains down on the Pakistani government and Pakistani civilians as much, if not more, than it does on India.

If, at this point, India decides to go to war, perhaps the descent of the whole region into chaos will be complete. The debris of a bankrupt, destroyed Pakistan will wash up on India's shores, endangering us as never before.

If Pakistan collapses, we can look forward to having millions of "non-state actors" with an arsenal of nuclear weapons at their disposal as neighbors.

It's hard to understand why those who steer India's ship are so keen to replicate Pakistan's mistakes and call damnation upon this country by inviting the United States to further meddle clumsily and dangerously in our extremely complicated affairs. A superpower never has allies. It only has agents.

On the plus side, the advantage of going to war is that it's the best way for India to avoid facing up to the serious trouble building on our home front.

The Mumbai attacks were broadcast live (and exclusive!) on all or most of our 67 24-hour news channels and god knows how many international ones. TV anchors in their studios and journalists at "ground zero" kept up an endless stream of excited commentary.

Over three days and three nights we watched in disbelief as a small group of very young men, armed with guns and

gadgets, exposed the powerlessness of the police, the elite National Security Guard, and the marine commandos of this supposedly mighty, nuclear-powered nation.

While they did this, they indiscriminately massacred unarmed people, in railway stations, hospitals, and luxury hotels, unmindful of their class, caste, religion, or nationality.

(Part of the helplessness of the security forces had to do with having to worry about hostages. In other situations, in Kashmir for example, their tactics are not so sensitive. Whole buildings are blown up. Human shields are used. The U.S. and Israeli armies don't hesitate to send cruise missiles into buildings and drop daisy cutters on wedding parties in Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan.)

But this was different. And it was on TV.

The boy-terrorists' nonchalant willingness to kill "and be killed" mesmerized their international audience. They delivered something different from the usual diet of suicide bombings and missile attacks that people have grown inured to on the news.

Here was something new. Die Hard 25. The gruesome performance went on and on. TV ratings soared. Ask any television magnate or corporate advertiser who measures broadcast time in seconds, not minutes, what that's worth.

Eventually the killers died and died hard, all but one. (Perhaps, in the chaos, some escaped. We may never know.)

Throughout the standoff the terrorists made no demands and expressed no desire to negotiate. Their purpose was to kill people, and inflict as much damage as they could, before they were killed themselves. They left us completely bewildered.

Collateral Damage

When we say, "Nothing can justify terrorism," what most of us mean is that nothing can justify the taking of human life. We say this because we respect life, because we think it's precious.

So what are we to make of those who care nothing for life, not even their own? The truth is that we have no idea what to make of them, because we can sense that even before they've died, they've journeyed to another world where we cannot reach them.

One TV channel (India TV) broadcast a phone conversation with one of the attackers, who called himself "Imran Babar." I cannot vouch for the veracity of the conversation, but the things he talked about were the things contained in the "terror emails" that were sent out before several other bomb attacks in India. Things we don't want to talk about any more: the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992, the genocidal slaughter of Muslims in Gujarat in 2002, the brutal repression in Kashmir.

"You're surrounded," the anchor told him. "You are definitely going to die. Why don't you surrender?"

"We die every day," he replied in a strange, mechanical way. "It's better to live one day as a lion and then die this way." He didn't seem to want to change the world. He just seemed to want to take it down with him.

If the men were indeed members of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, why didn't it matter to them that a large number of their victims were Muslim, or that their action was likely to result in a severe backlash against the Muslim community in India whose rights they claim to be fighting for?

Terrorism is a heartless ideology, and like most ideologies that have their eye on the Big Picture, individuals don't figure in their calculations except as collateral damage.

It has always been a part of, and often even the aim of, terrorist strategy to exacerbate a bad situation in order to expose hidden fault lines. The blood of "martyrs" irrigates terrorism. Hindu terrorists need dead Hindus, Communist terrorists need dead proletarians, Islamist terrorists need dead Muslims. The dead become the demonstration, the proof of victimhood, which is central to the project.

A single act of terrorism is not in itself meant to achieve military victory; at best it is meant to be a catalyst that triggers something else, something much larger than itself, a tectonic shift, a realignment. The act itself is theater, spectacle, and symbolism, and today the stage on which it pirouettes and performs its acts of bestiality is Live TV. Even as the Mumbai attacks were being condemned by TV anchors, the effectiveness of the terror strikes was being magnified a thousand-fold by the TV broadcasts.

Through the endless hours of analysis and the endless op-ed essays, in India at least, there has been very little mention of the elephants in the room: Kashmir, Gujarat, and the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

Instead, we had retired diplomats and strategic experts debate the pros and cons of a war against Pakistan. We had the rich threatening not to pay their taxes unless their security was guaranteed. (Is it alright for the poor to remain unprotected?) We had people suggest that the government step down and each state in India be handed over to a separate corporation.

We had the death of former Prime Minister V. P. Singh, the hero of Dalits and lower castes, and the villain of upper caste Hindus pass without a mention.

We had Suketu Mehta, author of *Maximum City* and co-writer of the Bollywood film *Mission Kashmir* give us his version of George Bush's famous "Why They Hate Us" speech. His analysis of why religious bigots, both Hindu and Muslim, hate Mumbai: "Perhaps because Mumbai stands for lucre, profane dreams and an indiscriminate openness."

His prescription: "The best answer to the terrorists is to dream bigger, make even more money, and visit Mumbai more than ever."

Didn't George Bush ask Americans to go out and shop after 9/11? Ah yes. 9/11, the day we can't seem to get away from.

A Shadowy History of Suspicious Terror Attacks

Though one chapter of horror in Mumbai has ended, another might have just begun. Day after day, a powerful, vociferous section of the Indian elite, goaded by marauding TV anchors who make Fox News look almost radical and left-wing, have taken to mindlessly attacking politicians, all politicians, glorifying the police and the army, and virtually asking for a police state.

It isn't surprising that those who have grown plump on the pickings of democracy (such as it is) should now be calling for a police state. The era of "pickings" is long gone. We're now in the era of Grabbing by Force, and democracy has a terrible habit of getting in the way.

Dangerous, stupid oversimplifications like the Police are Good/Politicians are Bad, Chief Executives are Good/Chief Ministers are Bad, Army is Good/Government is Bad, India is Good/Pakistan is Bad are being bandied about by TV channels that have already whipped their viewers into a state of almost uncontrollable hysteria.

Tragically this regression into intellectual infancy comes at a time when people in India were beginning to see that, in the business of terrorism, victims and perpetrators sometimes exchange roles.

It's an understanding that the people of Kashmir, given their dreadful experiences of the last 20 years, have honed to an exquisite art. On the mainland we're still learning. (If Kashmir won't willingly integrate into India, it's beginning to look as though India will integrate/disintegrate into Kashmir.)

It was after the 2001 Parliament attack that the first serious questions began to be raised. A campaign by a group of lawyers and activists exposed how innocent people had been framed by the police and the press, how evidence was fabricated, how witnesses lied, how due process had been criminally violated at every stage of the investigation.

Eventually, the courts acquitted two out of the four accused, including S. A. R. Geelani, the man whom the police claimed was the mastermind of the operation. A third, Showkat Guru, was acquitted of all the charges brought against him, but was then convicted for a fresh, comparatively minor offense.

The Supreme Court upheld the death sentence of another of the accused, Mohammad Afzal. In its judgment the court acknowledged that there was no proof that Mohammed Afzal belonged to any terrorist group, but went on to say, quite shockingly, "The collective conscience of the society will only be satisfied if capital punishment is awarded to the offender."

Even today we don't really know who the terrorists that attacked the Indian Parliament were and who they worked for.

More recently, on September 19th of this year, we had the controversial "encounter" at Batla House in Jamia Nagar, Delhi, where the Special Cell of the Delhi police gunned down two Muslim students in their rented flat under seriously questionable circumstances, claiming that they were responsible for serial bombings in Delhi, Jaipur, and Ahmedabad in 2008. An assistant commissioner of police, Mohan Chand Sharma, who played a key role in the Parliament attack investigation, lost his life as well. He was one of India's many "encounter specialists," known and rewarded for having summarily executed several "terrorists."

There was an outcry against the Special Cell from a spectrum of people, ranging from eyewitnesses in the local community to senior Congress Party leaders, students, journalists, lawyers, academics, and activists, all of whom demanded a judicial inquiry into the incident.

In response, the BJP and L. K. Advani lauded Mohan Chand Sharma as a "Braveheart" and launched a concerted campaign in which they targeted those who had dared to question the integrity of the police, saying to do so was "suicidal" and calling them "anti-national." Of course, there has been no enquiry.

Only days after the Batla House event, another story about "terrorists" surfaced in the news. In a report submitted to a Sessions Court, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said that a team from Delhi's Special Cell (the same

team that led the Batla House encounter, including Mohan Chand Sharma) had abducted two innocent men, Irshad Ali and Moarif Qamar, in December 2005, planted two kilograms of RDX (explosives) and two pistols on them, and then arrested them as "terrorists" who belonged to Al Badr (which operates out of Kashmir).

Ali and Qamar, who have spent years in jail, are only two examples out of hundreds of Muslims who have been similarly jailed, tortured, and even killed on false charges.

This pattern changed in October 2008 when Maharashtra's Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS), which was investigating the September 2008 Malegaon blasts, arrested a Hindu preacher Sadhvi Pragya, a self-styled God man, Swami Dayanand Pande, and Lt. Col. Purohit, a serving officer of the Indian Army. All the arrested belong to Hindu nationalist organizations, including a Hindu supremacist group called Abhinav Bharat.

The Shiv Sena, the BJP, and the RSS condemned the Maharashtra ATS, and vilified its chief, Hemant Karkare, claiming he was part of a political conspiracy and declaring that "Hindus could not be terrorists." L. K. Advani changed his mind about his policy on the police and made rabble rousing speeches to huge gatherings in which he denounced the ATS for daring to cast aspersions on holy men and women.

On November 25th, newspapers reported that the ATS was investigating the high profile VHP chief Pravin Togadia's possible role in the blasts in Malegaon (a predominantly Muslim town). The next day, in an extraordinary twist of fate, Hemant Karkare was killed in the Mumbai attacks. The chances are that the new chief, whoever he is, will find it hard to withstand the political pressure that is bound to be brought on him over the Malegaon investigation.

While the Sangh Parivar does not seem to have come to a final decision over whether or not it is anti-national and suicidal to question the police, Arnab Goswami, anchorperson of Times Now television, has stepped up to the plate. He has taken to naming, demonizing, and openly heckling people who have dared to question the integrity of the police and armed forces.

My name and the name of the well-known lawyer Prashant Bhushan have come up several times. At one point, while interviewing a former police officer, Arnab Goswami turned to the camera: "Arundhati Roy and Prashant Bhushan," he said. "I hope you are watching this. We think you are disgusting."

For a TV anchor to do this in an atmosphere as charged and as frenzied as the one that prevails today amounts to incitement, as well as threat, and would probably in different circumstances have cost a journalist his or her job.

So, according to a man aspiring to be the next prime minister of India, and another who is the public face of a mainstream TV channel, citizens have no right to raise questions about the police.

This in a country with a shadowy history of suspicious terror attacks, murky investigations, and fake "encounters." This in a country that boasts of the highest number of custodial deaths in the world, and yet refuses to ratify the international covenant on torture. A country where the ones who make it to torture chambers are the lucky ones because at least they've escaped being "encountered" by our Encounter Specialists. A country where the line between the underworld and the Encounter Specialists virtually does not exist.

The Monster in the Mirror

How should those of us whose hearts have been sickened by the knowledge of all of this view the Mumbai attacks, and what are we to do about them?

There are those who point out that U.S. strategy has been successful inasmuch as the United States has not suffered a major attack on its home ground since 9/11. However, some would say that what America is suffering now is far worse.

If the idea behind the 9/11 terror attacks was to goad America into showing its true colors, what greater success could the terrorists have asked for? The U.S. military is bogged down in two unwinnable wars, which have made the United States the most hated country in the world. Those wars have contributed greatly to the unraveling of the American economy and who knows, perhaps eventually the American empire.

(Could it be that battered, bombed Afghanistan, the graveyard of the Soviet Union, will be the undoing of this one too?)

Hundreds of thousands of people, including thousands of American soldiers, have lost their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan. The frequency of terrorist strikes on U.S. allies/agents (including India) and U.S. interests in the rest of the world has increased dramatically since 9/11.

George W. Bush, the man who led the U.S. response to 9/11, is a despised figure not just internationally, but also by his own people.

Who can possibly claim that the United States is winning the War on Terror?

Homeland Security has cost the U.S. government billions of dollars. Few countries, certainly not India, can afford that sort of price tag. But even if we could, the fact is that this vast homeland of ours cannot be secured or policed in the way the United States has been. It's not that kind of homeland.

We have a hostile nuclear-weapons state that is slowly spinning out of control as a neighbor; we have a military occupation in Kashmir and a shamefully persecuted, impoverished minority of more than 150 million Muslims who are being targeted as a community and pushed to the wall, whose young see no justice on the horizon, and who, were they to totally lose hope and radicalize, will end up as a threat not just to India, but to the whole world.

If 10 men can hold off the NSG commandos and the police for three days, and if it takes half a million soldiers to hold down the Kashmir valley, do the math. What kind of Homeland Security can secure India?

Nor for that matter will any other quick fix.

Anti-terrorism laws are not meant for terrorists; they're for people that governments don't like. That's why they have a conviction rate of less than 2%. They're just a means of putting inconvenient people away without bail for a long time and eventually letting them go.

Terrorists like those who attacked Mumbai are hardly likely to be deterred by the prospect of being refused bail or being sentenced to death. It's what they want.

What we're experiencing now is blowback, the cumulative result of decades of quick fixes and dirty deeds. The carpet's squelching under our feet.

The only way to contain it would be naïve to say end terrorism is to look at the monster in the mirror. We're

standing at a fork in the road. One sign says "Justice," the other "Civil War." There's no third sign and there's no going back. Choose.

Arundhati Roy was born in 1959 in Shillong, India. She studied architecture in New Delhi, where she now lives, and has worked as a film designer, actor, and screenplay writer in India. A tenth anniversary edition of her novel, *The God of Small Things* (Random House), for which she received the 1997 Booker Prize, will be officially published within days. She is also the author of numerous nonfiction titles, including *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*. This piece was published by Outlook India

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