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KILLING BIN LADEN

by Michael Dennin

On May 1st, the valiant members of U.S. Navy SEAL Team 6 caught up with Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad, Pakistan, ending one of the greatest manhunts in history. What does bin Laden's death mean, and where do we go from here?

In many respects, the death of Osama bin Laden is a fitting metaphor for the declining fortunes of the paramilitary jihadist organization that bin Laden founded with his Palestinian mentor Abdullah Azzam at the end of the Soviet-Afghan War. The photos of OBL huddled in a shabby compound watching dated footage of himself from an old al Qaeda recruitment video are an apt illustration of the state of a terrorist outfit that met its Waterloo in Iraq in 2007 and lost the vast material resources of its formerly wealthy and well-connected leader long ago. Thanks to the men and women who have dedicated their lives and their careers to defending our lives and our liberty, al Qaeda is a shattered and bankrupt force on every conceivable level.

In light of these accomplishments and the revelation that bin Laden was located under the noses (or protective wings) of the Pakistani military, it is high time to reassess our strategy in the wars against al Qaeda and the Taliban, as well as our relationships with Pakistan and the other countries in the region. For decades, the United States' primary ally in Central Asia has been Pakistan, but after ten years of combatting Islamabad's proxies in Afghanistan and the jihadists who find sanctuary within Pakistan's borders, it is clear that our strategic interests are in direct conflict with those of our old Cold War ally. On the other hand, America's strategic interests in the region dovetail neatly with those of India, an emerging democratic power that is also confronting Pakistan's support of Islamist terror groups as well as an increasingly assertive China. This confluence of vital interests, as well as our similar backgrounds, makes India a more natural and reliable ally than Pakistan, and America should be vigorously pursuing a forward-thinking foreign policy that conforms to that reality and the evolving political and geostrategic dynamics in Asia.

As for Afghanistan, Americans would do well to heed the words of war correspondent Michael Yon, who has been embedded with our troops in Afghanistan for many years:

Afghanistan is a gaunt, thorny bush, growing amid rocks and dust on dry windswept plains, sweltering deserts, and man-crushing mountains. Its neighbors are treacherous. The Afghan people are mostly living relics, only more advanced than hidden tribes in the Amazon, but centuries behind the least advanced European nations.

Afghanistan is a gaunt, thorny bush, subsisting on little more than sips of humidity from the dry air. We imagined that we could make the bush into a tree, as if straw could be spun into gold or rocks transmuted to flowers. If we continue to imagine that we can turn the thorny bush into a tree, eventually we will realize the truth, but only after much toil, blood and gold are laid under the bush, as if such fertilizer would turn a bush into a tree. We did not make Afghanistan what it is. Afghanistan has existed for thousands of years. It grows the way it grows because the bush drops seeds that make more bushes, never trees.

We must alter our expectations for Afghanistan. There are bigger problems afoot. The ice is melting, banks are melting, and the prestige of great nations that do great things is melting, because they thought they could transform a thorny bush into a tree.

This is not a call to abandon Afghanistan as the "anti-war" crowd would have had America and its allies abandon Iraq, but it is a call for Americans to abandon their unrealistic expectations for the gaunt, thorny bush that is Afghanistan. We should give the current surge strategy in Afghanistan time to work as we prepare the Afghan military to stand on its own two feet, but we cannot permit ourselves to get sucked into an exhausting, open-ended commitment to that country. As the leaders of al Qaeda stated many years ago, the central battleground in the Global Jihad was Iraq - the heart of the Middle East - and we have already won that war. It makes absolutely no sense for us to get bogged down in the remote hinterlands of the Hindu Kush when we need to be more nimble and capable of responding to emerging threats in areas that are central to our vital national security and economic interests, such as the Gulf of Aden region.

The death of Osama bin Laden is an important political and symbolic victory, but, more importantly, it is indicative of America's wider and deeper strategic victory in the so-called "War on Terror". Now it is time to acknowledge the progress we have made, adjust to meet new conditions and future challenges, and move on...

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENTS

By Robert Williams

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

Government during most of human history prior to a thousand years after Christ was typified by the absolute authority of some strong man equivalent to a tribal chief. A significant break in this pattern occurred in 1100 and again in 1215.

In 1215 Magna Carta was the first document forced onto an English King by a group of his subjects, the feudal barons, in an attempt to limit his powers and protect their privileges. It was preceded and directly influenced by the 1100 Charter of Liberties, when King Henry The First himself specified particular areas where his own powers would be limited.

By the second half of the 19th century nearly all of the Magna Carta had been repealed in the original form. Yet it is still recognized as a foundation for the freedom of the individual against the arbitrary authority of a despot or a despotic form of governing. In a 2005 speech, Lord Woolf described it as "first of a series of instruments that now are recognized as having a special constitutional status", --- two important others being the Habeas Corpus Act and the Bill of Rights.

According to Wikipedia, the Magna Carta was an important part of the extensive historical process that led to the

rule of constitutional law in the English speaking world and the Magna Carta remains an important symbol for those who wish to show that even a powerful authority such as a King should be bound by the law. Historians assure us that it heavily influenced and inspired later constitutional documents, including the United States Constitution.

THE AMERICAN SITUATION

The United States Constitution carefully defines a representative form of government and clearly delineates which powers shall be exercised by elected representatives of the people for the time they are in office, what the balances of powers in the federal government shall be, and what powers shall be reserved for the States and for the people themselves, including people's right to periodically change their representatives by vote and the people's right of redress at any time.

Since the English language is not as rigidly defined as the world of mathematics, the wording of English documents can be more generally disputed than the credibility of mathematical formulas. Theoretically the U.S. Supreme Court is the final authority in deciding disputes over the practical application of our Constitutional phrasing. The Constitution was born in argument, ratified in argument, and has been argued vehemently ever since. Nevertheless the core disputes that are splitting our nation so severely today are generally centered around but one major theme. What should the role of our government really be in the functioning of our modern society?

SPLIT PHILOSOPHIES

From both the blaring of the media and the blaring of our so-called "representatives" it appears that Americans are at present philosophically divided into two major groups. Those who believe that one of the major reasons that government exists at all is that most "ordinary" folks are incapable of sufficient "wisdom" to completely govern themselves and therefor have to have an authority with power to intimately guide their lives, and those who agree that government should exist but with limited power over individual freedom and individual judgment concerning individual affairs. In the first case it is considered "necessary" for the "good of all" to set up large bureaucracies of supposed "experts" with the power to regulate every imaginable aspect of modern individual lives including charity and health care, whereas in the second case such agencies are to be limited to the much more restricted functions of government specified in the Constitution.

EMOTIONAL HEAT

These two basic differences carry with them a great deal of emotional heat that is the cause of "gridlock" in Congress and the cause of considerable genuine hatred between the two groups of our society. For quite a few recent decades it seemed as if the bureaucracies proponents were gaining superiority, for indeed some facets of their lore became genuinely popular, such as Social Security and Medicare.

BETRAYALS

But Social Security was originally set up to be a voluntary government savings program separate from the general fund and tapped by each participant at age 65 to assist with their retirement. Then those savings were dumped into the general fund and spent along with taxes on political pet projects. This was a clear betrayal of public trust. Other betrayals of public trust involved the complicated systems of medicaid and medicare and welfare. Medicaid and welfare were supposedly tax-funded charity under government sponsorship but they both got out of control with heavy bureaucratic expenses and too much fraud and ever increasing demands on the public pocketbook.

GARGANTUAN NATIONAL DEBT

Recently our Secretary of the Treasury announced that our total National Debt would reach 14.3 trillion dollars by June 2011. This has resulted in furious finger-pointing but little wisdom. It does not take an economic genius however, to see the simple logic that if more and more money is spent than is generated, both debt and the interest on it will compound to uncontrollable proportions if nothing is done. This is not opinion. It is an inexorable fact of human life. Neither does it take a genius to see that there are only two solutions. 1- Outright bailout by richer countries at the expense of their people (a very unlikely solution for the size of our country and our debt). 2- Paydown of the debt by sufficient decreases in spending or sufficient increases in revenue or both. Nothing complicated about that. A ten-year-old with a bankrupt newspaper route or an over-indebted lemonade stand would readily understand that.

WAKING UP

Unfortunately the blame-game has been taking precedence over common sense and the American public is left with the same debt monster plus inflation and a steady decrease in the dollar value. One thing can be said for sure, the bulk of the American populace is heartily disgruntled and we are all looking for blood. Why are we angry? For the simple reason that we the people are not the originators of all this. Congress was --- and is, and Congress managed to sneak up on the public with grandiose promises of lollipops before the lollipops melted in the sun. Are enough people now finally awake to realize that the only real solution is to throw out congressional incumbents and start all over with a careful eye on the newbies? Maybe, but there is every indication that the philosophical split will remain and will express itself politically as an intensified battle between our two major parties.

HARDENING OF OUTLOOK

I believe the intensifying of the political battle is due to encrustation of the Republican old-guard with excessive and unrealistic emphasis on some moral attitudes like abortion and stem-cell research that should be left to private individuals, and a decades-long hardening of the Democrats in the direction of denial. Denial of abundant historical evidence against the supposed benefits of excessive bureaucratic socialism and the unrealism of believing that all cultures and religions are deserving of equal recognition regardless of what those cultures and religions promote.

Until the unlikely event that all earthly humans transform into angels, the only realistic approach is to recognize that some cultures and religions are destructive enough to require our maintenance of a strong military for keeping the thugs of the world at bay or stopping their onslaught of trying to enslave populations. That I believe, is a far more "civilized" approach than excessive tolerance for undeniable evil.

THE END OF POSTMODERN NIHILISM IN AMERICA?

By Michael Dennin

Looking back at the past year in politics, the big news has been the rise of the TEA Party movement, which was the driving popular force behind the 2010 electoral tsunami that produced the biggest partisan shift in Congress since 1948. Yet, when one looks beyond this headline-grabbing accomplishment, there appears to be something much deeper and more profound going on here. Could we be witnessing the beginning of the end of Postmodern Nihilism in America?

First, a little background and context. With the rise of the radical New Left in the 1960's, our body politic has been poisoned by the venom of America-hating nihilists who are incapable of seeing the good in our country. In its most extreme form, this nihilism has been most fully articulated in the virulently negative and destructive attitudes and actions expressed by the Communists/Socialists, Anarchists and Islamists that constitute lunatic fringe political groups such as the ANSWER Coalition. These individuals and groups harbor a deep animus towards the United States, its socio-economic system and core values, most notably individual freedom, and they seek to destroy or "transform" (the current Leftist euphemism) our country and replace it with a totalitarian society that conforms to their own utopian fantasies. For fifty years, these nihilists have been tearing down our country and everything associated with it, and today they have succeeded in penetrating and co-opting our educational institutions, media and government. On January 20, 2009, one of their own - an Alinskyite who campaigned on the pledge to "transform America" - became the 44th president of the United States. Is it any wonder that these people, embittered by their long-frustrated will to power, would view Barack Obama as a messianic Deliverer-Redeemer whose election would be greeted with unbridled rapture?

However, while the New Left reached the zenith of its political power and influence during the last decade, something wonderful and unexpected happened. Tired of seeing their country torn down by the self-destructive behavior and vicious rhetoric of the nihilistic Left, millions of Americans across the country stood up and said "Enough!" and took to our streets and state houses in defense of our nation and its core values. What began with a handful of Patriot groups rallying in support of our country and our troops fighting the War on Terror grew into a massive grassroots movement that moved beyond defending our country against its mortal foes and on to defending our country against an arrogant, corrupt and unresponsive government that had grown far too large, far too

expensive and far too intrusive. Unlike the nihilistic New Left cancer sucking the life out of America, this movement would breathe the vital energy of love of country back into our diseased body politic. Instead of burning the American flag, this movement would wear and fly it with both pride and respect.

This is an exciting time. A time to break with the past, summon our confidence and untapped potential, and set our nation on a bold new course for the 21st Century. If the Patriot and Tea Party movements can maintain their initiative and build upon their successes in 2011 and beyond, we could be witnessing the beginning of a great new era in America that will produce the reinvigoration of our society and its institutions. This will be an era that will be noted for its vitality, optimism and strength - the antidotes to the nihilism that has poisoned and enfeebled our nation during the Postmodern era.

JOBS THROUGH INNOVATION AND REFORM

by Robert Williams

In the midst of gloom about our fall from greatness, the December 13, 2010 issue of Time Magazine depicted a precision multi-armed endoscopic robot that guided by a human surgeon is able to perform prostate surgery and other surgeries with better outcomes and shorter hospital stays than the traditional completely manual methods. Thus saving medical costs and patient crowding. It is hardly surprising this new surgical aid has burgeoned in popularity during recent years.

If American-invented and produced robotic aids are precision enough for human surgery then it seems reasonable to expect that the already existing robotic aids to auto production and electronic chip-circuit manufacturing can be improved and modified for making more common and widely needed objects such as household gadgets now almost entirely made with poor quality in foreign low-labor-cost nationalities. If we were able to sufficiently lower our own labor costs with more automation and produce innovative very high-quality products at or near competitive prices we could bring back a significant amount of our lost manufacturing and reduce or reverse our trade deficit.

Unions have traditionally opposed such advanced automation because it makes less humans more efficient and may result in overall job losses. But an increase in efficiency plus quality plus salable quantity, could result in an actual job gain. Voluntarily smaller American families and stricter immigration control could also ease the pressure for jobs. Other countries are sure to eventually realize that quality-control and innovation are key to competitive success. In the past when we were a major supplier of goods to the world we became that way not just because we were a manufacturing giant, but because the liberties we enjoyed allowed a fresh approach concerning the innovation necessary to feed manufacturing and produce advanced products. This innovation has not yet died, and it can still be utilized to make us competitive --- **BUT ONLY IF WE DON'T DEGRADE IT WITH THE DUMBING-DOWN OF OUR SCHOOLS AND CHOKING ENTREPRENEURSHIP WITH OVER-REGULATION AND OVER-TAXATION.** Reforming our schools and our government is the task of an aware public, the rest can be accomplished by our innovators. It's time "we the people" got serious about reform.

GOOD AND EVIL REVISITED

By Robert Williams

There is no getting around it. From the beginning of civilization the basis for arguments about just about anything boils down to opposing opinions concerning the definition of good and evil. That is not so strange considering the variety of thinking that has always existed between human beings. But there is a concomitant factor which seems strange at first glance. Very few debates include definitions of good and evil by either side. The modern trend is to avoid the topic entirely because concepts of good and evil are considered the exclusive realm of religion and therefore not to be mixed with "secular" concerns. Separation of Church and State and all that.

In the past 50 years we have even gone so far as to pretty much eliminate the teaching of "morals" in our schools --- leaving that entirely up to parents and religious institutions. Morals, and moral codes, it appears, are another topic considered taboo in secular circles due to a misinterpretation of the Church and State separation clause in our

Constitution. That clause says, "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ---". Congress cannot make any law that establishes (sets up) a religion, nor can Congress create a law eradicating any religion already established. In short, religion and the practice of it are left up to the people. There is no reference to moral codes whatsoever. Neither is there reference to religious symbols in public places, nor reference to prayer in public places, nor reference to what is taught in public schools, nor does it say that the concept of moral behavior is taboo in public because moral codes are strictly the province of religion. It is especially noteworthy that the separation clause does not in any way prohibit free choice of opinion about religion.

We are free to like one religion and hate another if we want to. We are free to tolerate all religions or be more selective --- and we are also free as individuals to reject all concepts of any spiritualism if we want to, --- (atheism).

The separation clause is strictly about Congress making laws entailing the establishment of religion and not at all about individual tastes or public display.

It is significant to note that the separation clause of the Constitution attempts no definition of good and evil. That is left to the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration of Independence carefully distinguishes the evil of arbitrary enforced autocracy from the good of individual liberty and representative self-rule. Under this fundamental moral umbrella the Constitution and the Bill of Rights explicitly defines the practical execution of representative self-rule. The key throughout is the insistence on power being invested in the people as an ultimate "good". The founders were realistic enough to recognize that neither the populace as an aggregate nor their representatives would ever have perfect judgment and therefor provided for periodic mandatory elections and mandatory balance of powers within the government. I think we can safely say then, that at least one important aspect of evil to Americans is any erosion of people power or of our defined individual liberties and the defined balance of powers. It follows then that vigilance in protecting these constitutional concepts is also a good even if it means war as a last resort.

That does not say that war is good of itself, but it is obvious that if the evil of autocracy is to be avoided and good defended, then at times war becomes unfortunately necessary. That was the conclusion in 1776 and in world wars one and two. Wars such as Korea and Vietnam were more debatable because it was not always crystal clear that battling the spread of communism justified our entrance into those conflicts. Understandably, most Americans saw the spread of totalitarian communism as a threat to our own liberties because we consider the spread of any autocratic system as completely contrary to our cherished forms of freedom. At first that got approval from our public. As those two wars dragged on and on from one mismanagement to another, Americans became increasingly disenchanted and impatient. Americans began to see more evil in extending the wars indefinitely than they thought was justified by the good of the original intent. I believe mostly this is because after WWII our political philosophy stopped going to war to win and instead attempted to treat war as a "limited police action". A similar phenomena regarding the Iraq and Afghanistan adventures has caused the same dilemma regarding the current Middle East rebellions. Currently the trend is to put even the so-called police actions into the hands of international tower-of-babel political committees rather than generals.

It is reported that over 80 percent of Americans are Christians. It is common knowledge that the Christian religion defines good and evil and encourages doing good and fighting evil. It is also common knowledge that the founders of our nation were heavily influenced by these Christian moral codes. It is what troubled them greatly when they were unable to abolish black slavery in our founding documents. That would come only later and only after a horrendous civil war. In studying the American civil war it is interesting to note that the Southerners almost to a man were sincere in their claim that they were fighting for the very same principles of free self-rule as we fought the British for. The irreconcilable difference was the South did not consider slavery as evil but instead as a good because they did not consider the black slaves as human enough to deserve freedom. This was a philosophical difference about the definition of good and evil --- and so too are the philosophical differences in our America of today where a significant portion of our population see nothing autocratic or evil about a single-party system as long as that party is the one they personally favor.

Yet claiming the "moral high ground" is a favorite ploy of our politicians. When they run out of whatever sparse logic any of them have, they frequently resort to calling the opposition "insensitive", or "favoring the rich over the poor", or "being against education, health-care, and all else that is good" etc. etc. Note that they always carefully

avoid any hint of defining "good" because they want to imply that whatever they favor is automatically good and whatever the opposition favors is automatically bad. All purely for political effect. They make their arguments strictly on emotion, never logical progression from basic definitions. They seldom even use the definitions of good and evil in our founding documents --- or if they do, they often manage to twist the meaning.

So it appears that we the people have to both admonish our politicians and give them the moral education and formal debating education they were denied in our public schools.

EDUCATION AND ATTITUDE

By Robert Williams

As a teenager during World War two my parents often invited away-from-home servicemen to our meals and family atmosphere. To a man they expressed their desire to protect their own families from the horrors of war and cruelty. When the war ended most veterans and civilians alike were eager to get back to raising families and providing them with the best home-life in the world. These commendable and natural desires combined with a war-induced sensitivity to cruelty --- led many young parents to embrace the new theories of leniency espoused by the burgeoning child-care "experts" of the era.

Soon public school discipline fell to an all-time low and so did the quality of education. It was considered "cruel" to reprimand a child for ignoring lessons, or to punish a child for disrupting class. Some went so far as to advocate that children themselves should be allowed to choose their school-time activities even if this meant mostly "play" and little study. There was a trend to make everything "fun" and to excuse students from whatever they said was "hard". Teachers unions began to make it nearly impossible to weed out poor performance teachers.

One of my three daughters was in public high school during the 1970's and when her mother and I found out she had been frequently truant because of an "open campus" we could not get the local truant officer to do anything about it. This daughter thought it would be fun to wear night gowns to school and paint her face. We tried to stop that but she hid a night gown in her book bag and her locker so she could change at school. The school did nothing because dress-codes had been abandoned. That daughter was bright in some things but failed basic geometry. The school ignored our pleas that she take it over again and let her graduate ignorant of basic geometry.

Meanwhile more and more taxpayer money was poured into public education. According to a 2011 spending versus achievement report by the Center For Educational Freedom the taxpayer cost for a K-12 education went from \$45,000 per pupil in 1970 to \$145,000 in 2010. Yet science scores actually decreased and reading and math showed no overall improvement. In short the cost more than tripled and we got nothing for it.

To make my next point credible, I need to relate another personal experience. I lived my first 17 years outside America because my American educational missionary parents spent 40 years in Korea and India and Japan. In each of those countries my parents founded and taught in schools for the underprivileged (mostly the children of very poor peasant farmers). In addition to the usual academic curricula --- those primary and high schools provided shops for woodworking, tinsmithing, silkmaking, ropemaking, and a dairy farm with pasteurizing and bottling facilities. It was in the woodworking shop I myself learned enough to build my own dwelling twice in my lifetime. Once when I was first married and once more when we retired.

To earn their academic education, those Oriental students spent after school hours making and selling products produced by them in the shops and on the farm. These students and their parents were so eager for education they had no complaints about working for it. They were proud of the school uniforms they all wore. That sort of attitude persists until today in the Orient and partly explains why Asia and parts of Europe now exceed the U.S. in test scores and numbers of science graduates.

America's attitude on the other hand is exemplified by Obama's recent speech urging that we throw even more money at public education. No mention of the attitude problem.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The following article was written by Cyril Almeida, a columnist at the Pakistani online publication Dawn.com. It was written in the aftermath of the US Navy SEAL raid that ended the long bloody career of the world's most infamous jihadist, Osama bin Laden. We are publishing this article because the author raises some important questions and observations concerning the disturbing revelation that the leader and co-founder of al Qaeda was found "wrapped in the bosom of the Pakistani security establishment" in Abbottabad, Pakistan. The views of the author are his own.

THE EMPEROR'S CLOTHES

by Cyril Almeida

May 6, 2011

Dawn.com

Pakistan this week has been confronted with a deeply unsettling question. Could the self-appointed custodians of the national interest themselves be the greatest threat to national security?

There is no joy in asking this. Pakistan exists in a tough neighbourhood. A strong and vibrant army is necessary and desirable.

But as the initial shock and disbelief wears off, there is a deep, deep sense of unease here.

Did they know he was here? Surely, they knew he was here?

Nobody has come out and said it openly yet. It's too early, the story still unfolding. Ask the question in private, though, and with hand on heart, no one will say anything but, yes, they knew he was there.

Some do try and clutch at straws. Maybe they didn't know. Maybe they're so daft they didn't really take this whole business of pursuing Al Qaeda seriously. Maybe they just didn't think it was their problem.

But those voices, unconvinced by their own words, quickly trail off ... They knew. They knew he was there.

It's too frightening to make sense of. The world's most-wanted terrorist. A man who triggered the longest war in American history. The terrorist mastermind the world's only superpower has moved heaven and earth to track down. A decade of hunting. Hundreds of billions of dollars spent. The blood of countless Americans and others spilled.

And when he was finally found, he was found wrapped in the bosom of the Pakistani security establishment.

Away from the bleatings of the ghairat brigade — the paranoid schizophrenics marching this country into the abyss — the shock is profound. Grim questions are etched on anxious faces, but so is fear of the answers.

Proud men and women, people who love and serve their country, have cried as they connect yet another dot in the horrifying trajectory this country is on. If we didn't know, we are a failed state; if we did know, we are a rogue state. But does anybody really believe they didn't know?

Why would they do it? What did they hope to gain? Pakistan has nothing in common with Al Qaeda. They serve no purpose to us; there is no confluence of interests that can be imagined.

Did we think we could produce him like a rabbit out of the hat when we needed to? Did we think if we turned him over, the American attention span would lapse and they'd move on, leaving us unable to suckle at the teats of the superpower?

Or, assured in our assumptions about the world around us, did we simply think we could get away with it?

It makes no sense. And yet, perhaps there was an inevitability to this. Did the 1965 war make any sense? It was hard to find any sense to it then, even less so today.

Did Kargil make any sense? Not then, not today.

Did hawking nuclear paraphernalia on the international market make any sense? Buying did perhaps, but selling? And now we have the world's most-wanted terrorist recovered from the bosom of the Pakistani security establishment.

So maybe it does make sense after all. The establishment has flirted with irrationality in the past. Now it appears to have perfected it.

Where do we go from here as a country?

As long as national security and foreign policy remain in the hands of a cabal of generals — unaccountable and untouchable, a lay unto themselves, and in thrall to their own irrational logic — what future can this country have? Surely, not much of a future.

Is self-correction an option? Good luck trying to find anyone in the homeland or beyond with even a modicum of knowledge and understanding of the institution who believes it is capable of reforming itself.

What you will find are retired officers who will tell you what it feels like to be the masters of the universe, part of the inner core of the establishment. How your feet leave the ground as the world gathers beneath you, bowing and scraping for crumbs thrown their way. The view from the inside, the inner core, is of limitless power. The view from the outside is of a perch almost designed to abjure humility and rationality.

What you will find are bureaucrats with decades of experience who ultimately concede that peace with India is unacceptable to the army on any terms. What you will find are diplomats who scoff at the possibility of Musharraf being able to seal a deal on Kashmir with India. Being Numero Uno at home requires having Enemy No 1 across the border.

Zia's army, Musharraf's army, Kakar and Karamat's army — it may seem difficult to reconcile the differences. But while they were very different men, the strategic orientation of the army has more or less been the same. Some addressed the strategic imperatives from a religious angle, others from a more secular angle, but it has always been the army's angle.

Can anything be done?

The outside world can't fix us. In fact, even now the US is probably a better friend of the Pakistan Army than of the Pakistani people. Soldiers and intelligence networks are more useful than an under-educated and impoverished population. Double-gamers and duplicitous allies at least have something to offer; what can the wretched Pakistani people offer myopic Americans?

Can we fix ourselves? Take a look around. Does anyone think Asif Zardari has what it takes? Nawaz Sharif may have the chutzpah, but does he have the nous? Beyond them, what is there but a fetid pool of opportunists and political mercenaries?

So maybe that's the answer after all. They knew. They knew he was there. And they knew they could get away with it.