

Nine Eleven

Beta

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Abstract

Well, finally everyone seems to have started settling down after what they have infamously called 9/11. What really happened on this day? I've been devoting a little thinking to this for a while and thanks to a spark, here's a collection of my thoughts on the event.

1 ism

For starters, I remember *9-11-1989*, a day of little consequence for me, a not so good day for the Berlin wall itself (as the bricks had to part from each other), thankfully for a greater cause. And then with towering bangs literally, *11-9-2001* skyrockets into history as a day that will not be forgotten hereon.

Being used to dd-mm-yy dates, I call that November-9: 9-11, and always felt happy something like the berlin wall came down that day. Strangely though, no one seemed to remember this on 11-9-2001 and started flooding news channels soon after with the 9-11 (mm-dd). Add to that, my country uses a different emergency phone numbering scheme.

2 Emergency phone number Standards

Emergency numbers all over the world are **not** standardised! De facto, the emergency numbers that can be dialled from different states in the United States aren't standardised. To add to the confusion, emergency numbers that can be dialled from your mobile phone are more cryptic (start thinking #HELP, *77, #77, *HP inside the United States).

The United States of America and Canada are the only two countries in the world to adopt 911 supposedly for dialing ease. (There are smaller republics which claim to use 911, but this is usually only on mobile phones and newly installed POTS-like systems.) Jamaica uses 119, Thailand has 191 and therein stops the similarity. The EU (European Union) issued a directive in 1999, to use "Three Digit" numbers for emergency services and maintains a map of these services. This directive, of course is applicable only to countries who are members of the European Union. If you're anywhere in the EU, 112 would probably work as many countries are beginning to adopt it as their standard.

In some countries (that should read many - numerically), there are different numbers for Fire, Ambulance and Police. Forget the Highway patrol. If you have a mobile phone that supports international roaming, well you're on your own, you'll probably reach the emergency services of your hometown and need

to get routed to the relevant place. Each time you take up traveling, you'll most likely have to note down the emergency numbers usable en route, and emergency numbers available at your destination. As each cellular service provider makes this more complicated (than simple as it is supposed to get), you'll have to spend a bit more time finding out what services you'd be roaming into and what service requests are permitted for emergency.

3 Emergency Response - in India

This is just a listing of the kind of emergencies that "India" faces, and how it responds to it. It's in the wake of the recent Tsunami hit, that we are trying to reinforce that India does indeed have good response systems so long as it knows what kind of disaster or emergency. Traditionally, India uses a 100/101/102 emergency response phone numbers (probably because the old POTS systems are dutch in origin). It also responds to 121.5MHz - civil distress and 243MHz - military distress frequencies. I am unsure about 500MHz maritime distress support. It does need an upgrade, quicker response times, better zone coverage and increasing micro coverage in remote areas. When the Tsunami hit India, everyone looked here and said India needs to be prepared (an echo of Baden Powell) for disasters as developed countries are supposedly very good at it (and we are the "third world").

There seems to have been a global weather system change that has not been predicted and modelled. (I haven't seen a terrorist group claim responsibility for this yet.) Many of the EU countries are facing weather patterns that are straight out of a fantasy movie, tropical weather where it used to snow and they are "un"prepared for it.

3.1 Cyclones

The cyclone has a huge target radius. The devastation, though takes longer and it's usually the wind that causes the blow after a few weeks of rain. It's like multiple weapons used in sequence, after the soil is loosened, wet and everything planted in it ready to fall down, and then there is a gale (when all it would take is a gentle breeze to push things down) that rips everything apart. However, human beings respond faster and better to what is expected and we know this sequence pretty well. We cut of electrical supply as a first step (to prevent live wires from dangling, starting fires and killing people.) and can predict the gale hit, so storm warnings and coastguard warnings are issued and the damage is responded to. We have satellite imagery to know where the storm system is moving and whether it has collapsed.

3.2 Tropical Rain

This, over a period of a month can cause flooding and complex damage. However has a larger target radius, longer devastation time and hence more predictable. This lets emergency response possible. Faster storm drainage systems, rainwater harvesting systems, Larger dams controlling water flow into a delta.

3.3 Earthquakes

India has had several earthquakes, quite contrary to popular theory these have never happened on any earthquake belt like the Pan-Pacific belt. These have all happened on unpredictable locations on the plateau that covers the midsection of the sub-continent. Most places hit by an earthquake have had to turn to the military for assistance and hence most of the large scale disaster response is done by military engineering groups. The civilians manage to land there only much later.

3.4 Landslides

This too happens quite often in hill stations, in most cases due to heavy tropical rain. Thankfully most of the hillstations have manned military outposts, and in some cases full fledged commands. Hence the military quickly substitute breached sections of road, bridges and assist in removing any civilian damage. The lack of a nation wide disaster agency is quite apparent, so systems have evolved to adapt to this.

3.5 Train Accidents

India's railroad network was setup largely by the British. It's the second largest network in the world and is quite well managed considering the "obsoleted" technology behind it. However, this creates the possibility of accidents including derailment, bridge breaches (commonly due to flash flooding - an effect of tropical rain) and head-to-head collision of trains (which has happened once.) The present response system is maintained by the Indian Railways (and the relevant zonal subsidiary agency.) Usually due to higher population density, even in remote areas, civilians get to the accident zone first. Most civilians in India (if not all) are not aware of first aid techniques and responses to spinal injuries, so the quality of response is location specific. The number of train accidents have been significantly reduced by slow system upgradation and better management.

3.6 Tsunami

The coastline near the town I stay was recently hit by a Tsunami, something that hasn't happened for at least a millennium here. The worst that has happened near here in the recent past are extremely powerful tropical cyclone systems hitting the coast. The tsunami has a lesser radius of damage as compared to a tropical cyclone if you try to focus on multiple coastline towns, but a relatively very high effect of damage with the damage radius (simply put, nothing exists after a few seconds of the hit within the damage radius.) On later research, it was found that Tsunamis did occur in ancient times, however more than 2000 years ago. There have been references in literature (ref:*Manimeghalai*/serial epic/language:Tamil[ancient]) and geological evidence to suit this claim. However, because of the quick damage inflicted and the slow response time of emergency response systems the apparent lack of response of agencies is highlighted. The large scale effect of damage confuses the military as to which zonal body or part of the military should respond to help the civilians in which part.

4 Apocalypse Now

The world's weather system, geological behavior and just about everything seems to be taking a major turn. This perhaps is the first time in a few centuries that such a major change is happening. Many environmentalists claim that this is most likely due to human intervention. They talk about Freons that erupted the ozone layer, more effective greenhouse gases like Methane (far more effective than Carbon Dioxide). However it is still widely agreed that humanity's involvement in this change in climate could be anywhere between 5% and 75%. The true impact is still undecided. Further still, the Holocene extinction (extinction of most plant and animal species known in the "Holocene" period [roughly across the extent of human civilization in time]) is known to have been helped by us, however the extent of our effect is still not known accurately.

Irrespective of causality, these changes undoubtedly do affect our life and our evolution. Many of these changes have already touched humanity. It seems humanity itself is at its crossroads. It is upto us to decide whether we can throw down our differences, think globally and move forward. Positively speaking, cooperative levels in the world have increased. Communications networks have helped in levelling the world to a good extent. If things do not go that well for humanity we might join the list of species being wiped out in the holocene period. Sadly, most of humanity is bothered about far too many apparent affairs.

5 Conclusion

Among the ways to fight terrorism, there are several measures suggested by theorists. The chief observation made by many of the 20th century political scientists is that terrorism is extremely difficult to contain and fight with a legacy military force [originally built for national defence.] Tom Clancy has several suggestions on building and training a global anti-terrorist force which is reminiscent of surgical teams. The other measures include, promotion of cultural sways, promotion of spiritual thinking, consumer-market building [as a quick economic boost] (and many more that would require a book in its own merit.) Over-reaction is not among them.

There seem to be other serious problems like our inability to predict climatic changes quickly and accurately. We are also faced with similar problems in fine tuning global economy, communication links and international politics. We need to strive to provide better solutions for nations with epidemic manifestations of terminal diseases (henceforth crippling their economy). Terrorism seems to be a symptomatic manifestation of several other problems working together. Unless we can break complete causal chains, It is hardly likely that we will be able to curb rebel uprisings of people and its manifestations like international terrorism. Our world seems to need to go a long way to get closer to international standardisation (other than just communication links, AWACS, etc.)