

A Global Coalition against International Terrorism

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The September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were a watershed in strategic development and international relations, marking the end of the post-Cold War era. It was an era in which there was only one superpower and much uncertainty about the direction of global developments because the superpower had no agenda.

The new international order may prove to be a mixed system. The overwhelming material capabilities of the United States suggest that U.S. dominance in the military realm will continue. The September 11 attacks and global reactions to them, however, show that neither isolationism nor unilateralism will suffice in the fight against terrorism. Thus even in military matters, the United States will need the assistance of various allies when taking specific actions. In the policymaking field, different coalitions have already begun to emerge—with impetus from the United States—to tackle a variety of political, intelligence, law enforcement, and financial issues. Whether a concert of great powers built around the Group of Eight will develop is unknown. What is clear is that the United Nations plays an important role in providing legitimacy for U.S. actions, and that it will continue to be involved in, for example, such activities as peace building in Afghanistan.

For the United States, the September 11 strikes were incredibly traumatic. The largest such attacks ever on U.S. soil, they targeted two of the greatest symbols of American power, killing thousands. Thus the pressure on the Bush administration to respond forcefully was understandable, as were its early efforts to develop a strategy and create a broad-based coalition to deal with the consequences of the attacks. Overall the United States has performed well since September 11. It has displayed a willingness to lead, a critical factor in maintaining the stability of the international system. (It is worth remembering that during the post-Cold War period, some questioned U.S. resolve to stay engaged in world affairs, let alone assume the role of global leader.) In addition, the United States appears willing to lead within a multilateral mode. This does not mean that American decisionmakers will seek consultation on every policy they adopt or action they take. It does mean, however, that Washington will need to consider the views of potential coalition partners when deciding on the

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direction of U.S. foreign policy. Of course, not everyone in the coalition can be expected to agree with every tactical or strategic decision the United States makes in the fight against global terrorism. Indeed regional and even national antiterrorist initiatives should be welcomed as long as there is some degree of coordination.

Coalition partners ought to encourage public support for one another's efforts to combat global, regional, and, most important, domestic terrorism. In addition to freezing the banks accounts and closing the training centers of terrorist networks, especially those of al-Qaeda, coalition members should develop reliable information and public education programs. They should also share intelligence and foster police cooperation both regionally and internationally.

The first phase of the struggle against terrorism is over. The Taliban no longer rules in Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden is on the run, and a provisional government has been created in Kabul to begin the process of peace building. There is concern, however, over whether the antiterror coalition can endure beyond these early successes. Some members worry that bipartisan and popular support at home for President Bush's policies may weaken following the destruction of the Taliban and the eventual capture or killing of Osama bin Laden. Bush and his administration must therefore continue to stress that the fight against terrorism will be long and all encompassing, involving diplomatic, economic, legal, intelligence, and military resources. They must also take steps to assure their coalition partners that U.S. policies will remain multilateral.

As the coalition against terrorism evolves, its mission cannot be determined solely by the United States. Indeed smaller coalitions have already begun to emerge. NATO and U.S. allies such as Japan have specific tasks to perform. For the first time since World War II, Japan and Germany have mobilized their armed forces for an out-of-area operation. (This could pave the way for Japan to become a "normal" country in the years ahead.) Meanwhile the United Kingdom, France, Australia, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey, and others have troops on the ground in Afghanistan. Recent counterterrorism efforts by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other East Asian countries, especially those designed to improve coordination among police and intelligence agencies, have also been helpful. The November 2002 meeting in Manila of army chiefs from ASEAN countries to coordinate their activities is but one example of countries working together to counter terrorism.

Pakistan, and to some extent Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan, provided the United States with intelligence support and bases to stage its attacks against the Taliban. In addition, U.S. relations with Russia have improved substantially, with President Vladimir Putin's decision to line up with the United States in the "war" against terrorism putting his country squarely on the side of the West. India has also begun to develop closer relations with the United States and now sees an opportunity to quicken and deepen the process. Although Pakistan's critical role in the coalition has somewhat hindered New Delhi's efforts, in the long term, India will be strategically important to the United States. China too seems willing to cooperate because of worries about its own domestic terrorists, some of whom are linked to al-Qaeda. The U.S.-China relationship has improved because both countries are committed to defeating global terrorism. How long this honeymoon will last, and whether this cooperation will spill over to help solve other problems, is unclear.

Governments of Muslim countries besides Pakistan, particularly those in the Middle East, have been asked to lend political support to the antiterrorist coalition and to root out al-Qaeda cells operating in their countries. In this context the United States must assume a more balanced position on the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. U.S. policy toward this conflict is perhaps the predominant foreign policy issue for Muslims around the world. It feeds their deep feelings of injustice and buttresses the sense that the United States adheres to a double standard in its dealings with Israelis and Palestinians. In its most extreme form, this sense of hopelessness fuels Muslim hatred of the United States. For this reason, Muslim leaders and their governments must emphasize to their people Islam's peaceful teachings and the dangers of sanctioning terrorism.

Following the end of the Cold War, the United States entered into a decade of lost opportunities. Becoming more inward looking, it increasingly ignored the plight of others, especially those at the bottom of the economic ladder. It paid insufficient attention to many regional conflicts and did almost nothing to curb the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, refusing to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention. Nor did Washington really try to explain U.S. foreign policy as it took such steps as closing down USIS, folding the Agency for International Development into the State Department, and cutting the budgets of the Voice of America and the State Department. And for years Congress withheld payment of U.S. dues to the United Nations.

In the wake of September 11, friends and allies must remind the United States of the importance of adopting a more multilateralist approach, and offer assistance whenever possible. The fight against international terrorism requires a global coalition. Getting rid of the Taliban was only the first step. Much more needs to be done to create a peaceful and stable world order; the major powers must not only cooperate in the fight against terrorism but also deal with its root causes. Military efforts will continue to be necessary, but the fight must go beyond displays of sheer military power. We are locked in a struggle for ideas and beliefs that demands greater attention be paid to such issues as poverty, transnational crime, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the spread of regional conflict. A robust global economy is a *conditio sine qua non* in the battle against terrorism. By destroying a root cause of frustration—namely, grinding poverty—a healthy economy denies terrorists a fresh source of recruits.

As the world grows more complex, finding a balance between the post-modern states of the West—fueled by the information revolution and a globalizing economy—and those of modern East Asia—where full sovereignty and a balance of power are the norm—remains a challenge. Even more challenging will be the integration into the new order of the premodern world, where ethnic and religious fanaticism continue to spread.

The September 11 attacks were carried out by a group of individuals, not an organized state, with support from Afghanistan's ruling Taliban. Al-Qaeda's success seems to nourish the notion that the nation-state is in decline, a trend spurred by globalization, regionalism, and local aspirations, as well as the increasing influence of nonstate actors such as nongovernmental organizations. Paradoxically, the attacks have generated reactions that signal the growing power of states as they come together to combat global terrorism. The danger is that as the role of the state increases, adherence to the rule of law, respect for civil liberties, and support for human rights may weaken. It could even delegitimize the fight against terrorism itself.

A balance must be struck. In certain circumstances there may be good reason to limit civil liberties, but such restrictions should not be permanent. Wiretapping, opening of mail, preventive detention, and other measures may be acceptable in the fight against terrorism, but they too should be temporary and always justifiable. To help prevent abuses, the differences between local conflicts and international terrorism must be distinguished. Local conflicts usually have local roots. They cannot be tackled in the same way as interna-

tional terrorism, but at the same time, they should not be ignored. Interestingly, it was the evil genius of Osama bin Laden that allowed him to link his campaign against the United States to local and regional grievances, including U.S. support for Israel.

One of the most important elements in al-Qaeda's strategy has been the use, or abuse, of Islam for its own evil ends. Thus, in seeking to destroy al-Qaeda, the United States in particular and the West in general must not only be careful to avoid condemnation of a religion claimed by one-sixth of humankind but, more important, seek to understand why some Islamist movements harbor such profound resentment and hatred toward them. Many Muslims believe that they have left been behind in the march toward progress and that the West refuses to recognize the numerous injustices they suffered beginning with the Crusades.

Muslim leaders face a major challenge: They must decide how they want the rest of the world to perceive Islam—as a religion of peace and cooperation or as a source of extremism, fanaticism, and even terrorism. They cannot allow Islam to be “hijacked” by terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda. Mainstream Muslim leaders have to assume control of the leadership of Islamist movements and establish modern, open Islamic societies on a par with societies in the West.

The development of Islam in Indonesia is particularly inspirational. A new generation of leaders, immersed in Islamic teachings at religious schools (*pesantrens* and *madrasas*) but also trained in the West (the Sorbonne, McGill, Chicago, Columbia New York, Leiden, and Melbourne, among others), believe that Islam is not a sociopolitical movement but rather a sociocultural one in which the individual, not the state, should choose what religion (if any) to follow. These leaders realize that the responsibility for helping to change the international community's perception of Islam in Indonesia falls to them: Islam can be open, democratic, and moderate; it can even facilitate economic development.

In the weeks immediately after September 11, Indonesia's reaction to the horrific destruction and loss of life was unduly influenced by several small, extremist Muslim groups. Unfortunately, the government was not prepared to counter their rhetoric. By late October, however, as mainstream Muslim groups—especially Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, which represent more than 70 million Muslims—were able to explain that Islam is a religion of peace, the tone began to change. But even then, these groups strongly opposed

the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan, arguing that because the target was not clear, civilians would be put in grave danger.

The antiterrorism coalition has thus far met with success, but this is just the beginning of a long, difficult struggle. If other states are found to be supportive of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, the evidence against them must be made public. In the case of Iraq, the United States should consult with its major allies and friends before taking any action. Iraq poses a serious challenge that could compromise the unity of the coalition if the case against it is not handled carefully. Most probably, surgical strikes against sites thought to house weapons of mass destruction, rather than an all-out invasion, will be the best course of action. Regardless, patience and a nuanced approach will be needed.