

Commentary > Opinion  
from the September 24, 2001 edition

## War could make the terrorist threat worse

By Greg Hansen

**VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA** - This is truly an uncommon moment. America's friends and most of its foes are unified in outrage over the attacks of Sept. 11. North Korea, China, Iran, Cuba, Libya, and Lebanon's Hizbullah all have joined in solidarity with the victims. The usual apologists for terror have conceded that the attacks were unjustifiable. But the moment of solidarity could easily prove fleeting.

The decisions now being taken by Washington will determine whether the moment persists, and whether America's new international political capital will be used to realize something good. But already it appears that tragedy is about to be compounded by folly.

The United States and some of its allies are talking themselves into a corner. They are preparing their publics for a reflexive, costly, and wrathful "war" that will fail to ensure long-term security for anyone.

Lashing out might slake an apparent American thirst for blood, but it will also make the threat of terror worse over the long term by helping, once again, to replicate the conditions under which terrorism flourishes. It will broaden the large constituency of everyday folks around the world who are tolerant of, and even sympathetic to, the use of terror.

There will also be immense opportunity costs. Renewed, militarized preoccupation with security will suck resources from humanitarian programs. It will eclipse and negate many constructive elements of international help in troubled regions. All of this will be in keeping with the goals of the attackers, including the post-attack overreaction they hoped to incite.

Urgent action is necessary. New security measures will improve the safety of air travel. Aggressive international police work will ensure that the remaining culprits are brought to justice. Improved intelligence will warn of future threats. But war?

Amid the inflamed emotions and bombast, it is easy to imagine that the attacks of Sept. 11 were not an event so much as the first horrific volley in what could be a lengthy exchange. Most worrisome, perhaps, is the tenuous position of the government of nuclear-armed Pakistan in a region already known for volatility.

The US military is now preparing to engage a diffuse and nebulous enemy for an indefinite time on an unknown battlefield. Congress quickly earmarked an initial \$40 billion for recovery and response. To put that in perspective, compare it with the yearly expenditures of the world's aid agencies. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had \$784 million last year to assist, protect, and repatriate refugees. UNICEF in 1999 had \$1.1 billion. CARE USA had \$420 million.

No use of military force could undermine terrorists and their constituents as effectively as a demonstration of restraint and a redoubling of American goodwill abroad to match the outpouring of solidarity with America's own victims. This - and not military action - is the best way for the US to communicate its values to the dispossessed in a way that has to date not been done effectively.

For millions of people around the world, it is business as usual after Sept. 11: deprivation, political estrangement, indignity without relief, and injustice without redress.

The US and its coalition of revulsion should bring the remaining terrorists to justice. As for doing battle, America's new "war" ought to be waged by the State Department and the US Agency for International Development, not the Defense Department.

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