Building International Defenses against Terrorism
A Comprehensive Strategy

Gareth Evans

It is not easy to grasp the appropriate response to September 11 in measured, analytical terms. On a single day, the United States suffered more casualties to terrorism than Israel and Ireland have suffered in fifty years. It would hardly be surprising if this had induced, in public and official reactions, either total paralysis or a blind, uncontrollable rage. It is a measure of the maturity of the United States that the reactions to date have overwhelmingly been of a different kind—gritty, determined, but controlled and, reassuringly for the rest of the world, multilateral rather than unilateral.

In both official and public responses, there has been a good grasp that terrorism involves an enemy harder to define than any previously fought, in a war unlike any other. Official and Public responses to the event have emphasized the need to engage in a war unlike any other in order to overcome an elusive and unconventional enemy. The computer-literate generations have understood quickly enough that what is involved here is not so much any clear-cut hierarchy, but multiple groups operating like the discrete but interconnected nodes of an electronic network. Those less computer literate have been able to grasp a more traditional metaphor, as enunciated by Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, among others. As Pervez

Gareth Evans is President of the International Crisis Group. He served as Foreign Minister of Australia from 1988 to 1996.

puts it, individual terrorists are like the leaves of a tree, and just as easily replaced, while terrorist organizations are like its branches, separate but connected to the larger organism—able to be chopped off, but likely to grow back again so long as the tree has roots. The virtue of this metaphor is that it conveys a sense of the complexity of the task and the need for patience over the long haul.

It is not so evident that a clear consensus exists on the question of just where, in responding to terrorism, conflict prevention and resolution fit in. There is some acknowledgement that terrorism has roots, and that at least one of them involves the conflicts and policy issues that generate grievance. But there is a considerable reluctance to follow the reasoning through, and squarely confront the implications of it for American foreign policy. Even to raise the issue of the relevance of the unresolved Israel-Palestinian conflict or the lingering grievances left over from the Gulf War—to suggest that addressing conflict issues more constructively and successfully might be at least part of an appropriate response strategy—is to walk on eggshells. "*You* want to reward the terrorists," you will be told; you are accepting that there was something defensible or legitimate about their actions. You are "blaming the victim."

The only way to move the debate forward in a rational fashion is to put the whole issue in its proper context, and to make crystal clear what is being argued or suggested and what is not. We do have to address the conflicts and policy issues that generate grievance, but only as one of five linked but conceptually distinct kinds of objectives that must be pursued simultaneously if the response to terrorism is to be effective.

Some of the objectives are in real tension with each other, and it is not easy for any government to get the balance right—steering a tight course between overreacting, in a way that is counter-productive, and under-reacting, in a way that is unresponsive to the public mood. For the most part, the right balance is being struck at the moment, and if U.S. anger and shock can continue to be channeled as productively as they have been so far, the terrorists' triumph will be short-lived. A massive attempt to expose America's vulnerabilities will have served only to prove its extraordinary strengths.

Strengthening Internal Security.

The first necessary element of any response is overwhelmingly internal in character. Some of the issues are practical: how can we physically protect ourselves? Airline and airport security are obviously crucial, but the sound we are hearing all over the United States right now is not only of cockpit doors but stable doors being comprehensively bolted. What we all really need to be worrying about is the next generation of attacks: chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons deployed city-wide—threats that we have barely begun to fathom.

There are also obviously important issues of principle involved in whichever course of action the U.S. government takes. Congress has started to wrestle with the question, "how much liberty can the government take away in the name of security without sacrificing the very character of the nation that the attackers have set out to destroy?"

Internal responses cannot be wholly insulated from external ones: some kinds of internal responses have a capacity to resonate beyond the country in a way that can either help or hinder the

larger cause. It is crucial in this context that policymakers remember (which to their credit they have done so far) that this must be a war against deeds, not beliefs; and that there are huge downside risks, in terms of winning the sustained cooperation of other countries, in engaging in any form of negative religious or racial profiling.

Bringing the Perpetrators to Justice.
There can be no doubt about America's moral and legal right to take immediate action—including robust military action—against the perpetrators of the September 11 crimes and those who aid, abet, or shelter them. In international law, the self-defense provision in Article 51 of the UN Charter is itself sufficient justification.

What is crucial, however, is that there be a continuing acknowledgement of the constraints that must apply in taking such action—not just as a matter of law and morality but of hardheaded national self-interest. There are two constraints in particular that United States' friends and allies, and a great many voices within the United States, have been properly emphasizing as necessary to ensure the effectiveness both of the short-term action against the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks and the long-term fight against further such acts.

First, the targets of the action must be credibly identified. The stronger the response, the stronger the evidentiary foundation has to be if the support of friends and allies is not to fall away, and even more importantly, if a generally cooperative international enforcement front against terrorism is to be maintainable in the future. The case against Osama bin Laden has been made strongly enough for these purposes: as presented

publicly so far, it may not be enough to convict him in a Western or international court, but it would certainly be enough to bring him before one. Although a considerably higher evidentiary hurdle has to be jumped before an all-out war is launched on a sovereign country, the case is also compelling for targeted action against those of Afghanistan's Taliban leadership who have clearly and unashamedly continued to protect Osama bin Laden and his followers.

The second constraint is that the action must be proportionate. In particular, killing and maiming the innocent has to be avoided at almost all costs. If it is not, not only will the present coalition of the willing—still extremely fragile at its Islamic edges—collapse, but the West will just create a whole new generation of people hating it.

It is impossible to overstate the point—which the Bush administration clearly perceives—that, above all else, neither the short-term response against the September 11 perpetrators nor the long-term war against terrorism generally can be characterized as a crusade against any particular brand of religion. Similarly, it is critical in the present context that any military action directed against the Taliban leadership be characterized as just that—and not as a war against Afghanistan and its people. The unprecedented delivery of food aid and humanitarian relief while the bombs are still dropping is a legitimate way of making that point.

The further precautionary note is that, with all the attention focused on destroying the Taliban, just as much should be devoted to how a new government can be constructed from the ground up—whether through the mechanism of a *loya jirga* convened by the former king or otherwise—that will be more credible and

successful in addressing the country's and region's problems than its predecessors. This point leads naturally to the third major objective, which addresses the crucial role of the frontline states.

Frontline Defenses for the Future.

The first line of international defense must be in the countries of origin of the terrorists themselves. The CIA, FBI, and U.S. military can never be as good as the Taliban (had it wanted to be), or Saudi Arabia or Sudan before it, in dealing with Osama bin Laden. The Mossad and the Israeli Defense Force—as tough and competent as they may be—can never be as effective as the Palestinian Authority in cracking down on the fanatics of Hamas and other extremist groups. Neither the Indians nor anyone else can possibly be as good as the Pakistani government and military in curbing, if they chose to, the terrorist fanaticism that continues to tear apart Kashmir.

To strengthen these international defenses, you have to build the capacity and, above all, the will for these countries and authorities to act. Intelligence has to be provided, financial supply lines broken, logistic support offered, and common strategies systematically pursued. Building networks to combat terrorism—through building the necessary capacity and will in all the relevant countries concerned—is a huge policy challenge for the West to meet by whatever combination of carrots and sticks required, taking into account the necessity for the response we are encouraging to be intelligent and measured, not counterproductive. An excellent start was made in this respect in the first weeks after September 11, not least in Pakistan; the challenge will be for the new international defenses to be sustainable.

There is one important negative constraint here, which the International Crisis Group has been emphasizing in the context of the Central Asian republics, and in particular Uzbekistan: whatever the short-term benefits of active cooperation, it is not wise to uncritically embrace regimes whose principles and methods are alien to the values we are trying to protect. There are plenty of governments and authorities only too happy to crack down on dissent of any kind for regime survival purposes, but it must be remembered that frustration with repressive local leaderships has fueled much of the terrorist problem. Some of the tough-minded leaders of the former Soviet republics of Central Asia have borne down heavily on moderate Islamic movements and political opposition generally, and are only too keen to have the support of the West in continuing to do so. But in the process they have produced a whole new movement that is becoming more and more genuinely extremist, and the danger is that the movement will become stronger still.

It is in the context of building sustainable international defenses against terrorism that tackling the so-called root causes of terrorism—including addressing unresolved conflicts and political grievances—has its most immediate and obvious relevance. The point is simply that if the United States wants strong local action against terrorism, it has to go all-out to create environments in the countries in question that foster more community support for cracking down on terrorism, and in which insecure governments like that of Pakistan, and many others in the region, will feel more confident in doing so. And that in turn means that the United States must adopt strategies designed to address the prob-

lem at the source—the policy issues that it knows generate grievance, and the social and economic conditions that it knows generate despair.

Conflicts and Policy Issues that Generate Grievance.
So far as the motives for terrorist action are concerned, it is obvious that no simplistic connection can be drawn between redress of political grievance and terrorist threat reduction. Clearly not all terrorist violence is based on this kind of grievance, and the Israel-Palestinian conflict in particular must not be seen as the root of all Islamist extremism: the World Trade

do this is not to reward terrorist behavior; it is to answer it.

My judgment is somewhat affected by my role as head of the International Crisis Group, an organization dedicated to preventing and containing deadly conflict. But our strong belief is that the task of fighting terrorism cannot be separated from the task of preventing, containing, and ending conflict. All too often the places that generate terrorism—along with drug trafficking, and health pandemics, and refugee outflows, and international environmental disasters—are shattered societies where grievance, greed, repression, poverty, and prejudice

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Center and Pentagon attacks were clearly being planned at a time when optimism about the Israel-Palestinian peace process was at its height.

But at the same time, there can be no doubt that backward steps in this and other peace processes do inflame sentiment in the streets, and make it that much harder for governments in these regions to crack down on domestic terrorism and cooperate with the West. To begin to drain the swamp in which terrorism breeds, there has to be a major effort made to address some of the avoidable sources of grievance: the unresolved conflicts and policy issues that help create the environment in which terrorism can flourish. There must be a renewed commitment to address the kind of conditions that help to create individuals able to believe that killing thousands of civilians is not only acceptable, but heroic. To

have, in various combinations, fed violence, despair, and extremism. Think not only of the Middle East and Central Asia, but also of Northern Ireland, Sudan, Colombia, and the Caucasus. In none of these conflicts, nor a dozen others, has the conflict stayed local.

It will not be easy to win domestic consensus on all of this. Many Americans already say, "this is what we get for sticking our noses into so many problems around the world that are not our business." Another variation on this theme has been spelled out in crystal clear—and, to my ears at least, extremely disconcerting—terms by Robert Kaplan in a recent interview:

These attacks mean the end of Wilsonian idealism. Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda are all off the charts, assigned to the sepia-toned 1990s.

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We can only afford to do good works abroad when security at home can be taken for granted.

The answer that Kaplan and people reacting like him must hear from their leaders is that, like it or not, what seem so often to be dirty little wars in faraway places are indeed America's business and that of the whole international community, because of their often global impact. To try and address these conflicts and crises is not a matter of Boy Scout good deeds, of doing good works abroad; it is a matter of hardheaded national and domestic security interest.

Social, Economic, and Cultural Issues that Generate Grievance.

Any comprehensive response to terrorism has to address the reality that not all the festering grievances that breed terrorism have a foundation in unresolved conflicts, or other policy issues of this kind. Clearly, a significant part of the story is a blind hatred of modernity; of the impact of globalization and the greater interaction and interdependence of countries; and of the new cultural currents associated with globalization, particularly those relating to greater freedom and opportunity for women—all of which are undermining old family, social, economic, and governmental values and institutions.

The unhappy reality is that the United States is the natural international target of this kind of resentment. Like a magnet, it attracts the hatred of those who feel deprived. The U.S. role in the global economy, its perceived political influence, and above all its perceived cultural influence everywhere mean that trouble is bound to hound it.

This is the hardest of all the underlying causes to address, not least because the phenomenon of globalization and everything that goes with it is so obviously irreversible, and because the cultural dimensions of it are so obviously attractive to so many people.

But even though there are no easy answers, part of the response must be to try to gradually diminish the envy and sense of both absolute and comparative economic disadvantage that are significant parts of the problem. There must be a sustained effort to improve social conditions, to reduce disparities of wealth, to create increasing economic opportunity, and above all to create more and more educational opportunity.

The United States needs to respond to social and economic deprivation in other countries with thoughtful and generous development assistance proposals, and the it has an enormous capacity to do so, even in economically stressful times: foreign aid is now down to an internationally embarrassing all-time low of 0.1 percent of GNP. Again, this is not a matter of good works appropriate for the good times when there is less to worry about internally. It is a matter of the hardheaded pursuit of national interest.

It is no coincidence that the countries from which most terror appears to have sprung have been those with collapsed or

faltering economies, where either most people have no wealth at all or there are great disparities of wealth, and the population at large feels left out, with no sense of being beneficiaries of the wealth-generating bonanza of globalization. There is no iron law that greater wealth or educa-tion will diminish hatred of the West—Osama bin Laden is himself living proof of that. But there is every reason to believe that, as one part of the kind of comprehensive response strategy sketched out here, they can only help create a safe and prosperous international community.