

Foreward

by Giandomenico Picco

Over the last decade much has been written about the weakening of the nation state, and for good reason. The perpetrators of the September 11th attacks have indeed given to the nation state a new breath of life.

Whether they knew it or not, the terrorists gave an injection of strength to the nation states, which nobody else had been able to give. Only the nation state has been seen as able to protect its citizens from terrorism. Only the nation state can rapidly execute operational activities called for to face a threat of such a magnitude. The globality of the network has further encouraged various nation states to unite in a coalition of the like minded, further strengthening the role of intergovernmental institutions that the phenomenon of globalization in communications had begun to undermine. Far from leading an attack at the heart of a state or a group of states, the terrorists have provided a new *raison d'être* to those very states. They have provided a sense of common purpose to the international community of states to the point of making possible the rapprochement between countries previously at odds, or not very friendly - with each other. Differences seem to have become smaller, disagreements may have been postponed or even overcome, priorities have changed and more unity at the international level has emerged.

The global terrorist networks have made full use of the concept of enemy in the most traditional sense: enemy as a tool to manage power. Can we imagine the unelected and unaccountable leadership of a terrorist group exercising such power over their soldiers and supporters without the existence of an enemy? Hardly, for that would require a leadership able to offer a vision of positive values which stand by themselves. In other words - would these groups exist without an enemy? Or, is the enemy an existential necessity? They could hardly claim as the old philosopher: "I am because I think". Rather "they are because they have an enemy."

The events of September 11th have not taken us one step closer to a clash of civilizations. They have shown however that some would like very much to provoke such a clash, for it would assure them with a "perpetual enemy". Those events seem to be even more important for the Islamic community at large. An extreme group has laid its claim for the heart and soul of that community. Will it be left unchallenged?

The mindset of dialogue may seem a real threat to those who need an enemy. By preaching that diversity is not a threat but a wealth, we are attacking the very heart of

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a culture of violence. Could the dialogue be such a powerful instrument? Can the dialogue become the anti-terrorist manifesto or at least the anti-terrorist banner?

Dialogue needs a solid underpinning: one that only a global ethic can provide. Both Dr. Hans Küng and Dr. Javad Zarif have provided their view of such an underpinning in the essays contained in this issue of the journal. Both are members of the Group of Eminent Persons appointed by the UN Secretary General for the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. The book which we all co-authored, "Crossing the Divide", was published by the School of Diplomacy at Seton Hall University. It was presented to the UN and its membership in November 2001.