

# Future foreign policy directions

BY KEON S. CHI

**T**he ongoing war on terrorism is raising serious questions for policy-makers and the public. What do we need to do to prevent domestic terrorist attacks? What foreign policy directions should the United States pursue after Afghanistan? How can we envision a world without terrorists? There seem to be no easy answers to any of these questions. We can only suggest some broad policy directions for further considerations.

First, we should have a more realistic image and accurate perception of the current international system so we can counter terrorism more proactively. Neither the United States nor other countries were prepared to deal with terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda prior to the Sept. 11 attacks. We failed to pay close attention to such non-state actors while being preoccupied with normal affairs of nation states. When the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked, the General Assembly of the 189-member United Nations began its annual session with some members expressing concerns about state-sponsored terrorism. In retrospect, both the United Nations and United States should have paid closer attention to “homeless terrorists.”

The end of the Cold War has intensified cultural cleavages and hatreds among various actors in world politics. Controlling cultural conflicts in many corners of the world will be a challenge, and religious conflict might be more difficult to deal with than the ideological conflict that existed during the Cold War. As a first step, we must learn how to manage hatred, suspicion and distrust by learning more about diverse populations and faiths, especially religious fundamentalists and fanatics. One approach would be to establish international “meeting houses” to help leaders of world religions better communicate and understand one another. Our policy-makers, students and citizens need exposure to a multicultural education here and abroad.

Second, we should continue to educate people in other countries, particularly in non-Western and less developed countries, about U.S. political culture and foreign policy. Even though we live in an information age, a vast majority of 6 billion people in the world still lack accurate information on U.S. policies. Many people in foreign nations have become victims of either misinformation or misunderstanding of the United States, due in part to official foreign-government propaganda or distorted perceptions by foreign political and religious leaders, especially in Muslim countries. Indeed, some descriptions of suicide bombers and

other violent terrorists show they were influenced by distortions and misperceptions.

One continuous challenge for U.S. policy-makers, the media and the public is to tell the world about our liberty and freedom — the hallmark of U.S. foreign policy. One way would be to develop more focused public relations and marketing programs than the traditional Voice of America and Peace Corps programs. The U.S. government and the states could do a much more sophisticated job of “selling” the United States in mass markets. At the same time, we should allow more, not fewer, students, tourists and government officials from other countries to visit the United States, under closer scrutiny, to learn more about American society. When more people in the world learn more what the United States and its people stand for, threats from potential terrorists might be considerably reduced.

Third, we need to do more to help underdeveloped countries. Poverty, misery and despair in foreign countries can be a continuous source of international terrorism. When people feel deprived and desperate, they tend to resort to whatever means they can to further their objectives.

Despite countless bilateral and multilateral development projects in the past half century, the gap between rich and poor countries has widened, and the North-South dialogue has done little to narrow the gap. The United States now spends less than 0.5 percent (not 20 to 30 percent as some believe) of its GNP for foreign aid, and should launch another Marshall Plan with help from other G-8 members to help the poor countries. This time, however, we should support a long-term investment in education, training and infrastructure, not just one-time debt forgiveness or short-term humanitarian assistance. We should do more to eliminate the breeding ground for terrorism in other countries.

Finally, our future policy should aim at creating a brand new world order. This new world order should be based on a new concept of collective security — one against all, all against one — to counter terrorism and maintain peace. Instead of building more weapons of mass destruction, this time all participants in the global community should engage in more serious dialogue to correct misinformation, distortion and misperceptions in international relations.



**Reaching out to others in foreign countries to teach them about our values will help counter terrorism.**

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