

## YOUR TURN

# War against terrorism a war without winners

Never in the history of terrorism have so many innocent people been killed in such a way that even the world's most powerful nation feels helpless against a handful of determined attackers with a highly sophisticated scheme.

For many in America, the tragic terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington D.C. make a day that "will live in infamy," something that hasn't happened on American soil since the fateful Pearl Harbor bombing in December 1941.

It is, nevertheless, a different type



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of war. Sixty years ago, the Empire of the Sun carried out perhaps the "cleanest" attack on a pure military target in Hawaii. While the total American casualties in the Pearl Harbor raid was 3,478 (including 2,334 dead), only 68 civilians were killed. With a

soldier-to-civilian kill ratio of about 34 to 1, the Japanese attack was directed from Tokyo; and the rest was history.

The massive and messy attacks on Americans' symbols of economic power (the twin World Trade Towers) and military might (the Pentagon) left thousands of dead and wounded, but only a trace of the identity of the attackers. Dealing with a shadowy enemy like this is well beyond the range of conventional military means.

While an aroused and determined America rallied around the flag after the Pearl Harbor raid in 1941 and razed Japanese cities with fire bombs and atomic weapons, the Pentagon, "the elephant," has yet to figure out how its most expensive and sophisticated

gadgets can be used to deal with a few invisible "mosquitoes."

After the wars of the knights of the Middle Ages, of the mercenaries in the 16th century, of the merchants of the 17th and 18th centuries, of professionals and revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries, and the "total wars" of technologies and nuclear weapons of the 20th century, this is a new and different type of war in the new millennium.

It is a war waged by a minimum number of actors for maximum impact; it is a war without a specific target, and yet everybody can be a target. It is a war also beyond purely military solutions and cannot be won with maximum application of firepower. And it is a war without winners.

In the short run, the United States is simply overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the destruction of financial and political centers, and the difficult search for clues of the attackers.

Beyond the current crisis, the world's most powerful nation with the most open society has to decide how to manage a difficult trade-off between freedom and security for its citizens.

In the longer term, Washington has to rethink how to relate this most powerful nation to the rest of the world. This nation can no longer hide behind its natural fortress (the two oceans) while the rest of the world is in turmoil. The Post-Cold War - or the half-peace - is over, at least in America.

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