

The Domino Effect of Terrorism

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The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 will be remembered as a defining moment in the history of the United States of America. The attack was a horrific event and is proving to have consequences of biblical proportion.

At this writing, two weeks have passed since that horrible day and I am stunned at the domino effect. Who could have anticipated the enormity of the terrorist attacks? When all of the losses are added up (loss of life, freedom, property, financial resources, injuries and collateral damage), this event will be counted as one of the United State's greatest tragedies.

Authorities tell us that the number of dead and missing at the World Trade Center is more than 5,700 people and the number of people injured is more than 8,700. At the Pentagon, the death toll stands at 189.

In Pennsylvania, where the airliner plunged into a cornfield at 528 miles per hour, the death toll stands at 93. Only five people were rescued from the collapsed towers, after two weeks of heroic effort. However, the number of the missing, injured and dead is only a part of the big picture. Consider the domino effect from the events of this tragedy. Relief agencies are saying that more than 10,000 children have lost one or both parents.

Insurance companies and government officials are estimating that the damage and clean up costs will be more than \$40 billion dollars in New York City and \$500 million at the Pentagon. The costs may be even higher than these initial estimates.

The Impact Continues

The consequences from these events on September 11 will also impact many people who were not even near ground zero. For example, who can add up the financial impact on the families of the victims? Who can measure their sorrow and grief? The problems in corporate America loom much bigger now.

Because the attacks were caused by hijacked airplanes, the nation's airlines had to be grounded for several days and due to safety concerns, fewer people are now flying. Again, notice the domino effect. The airline industry has announced a reduction of more than 100,000 employees and says it will lose more than \$7 billion in revenue during the last quarter of 2001 alone.

To keep airlines in business, Congress appropriated \$15 billion in emergency relief. This is not the end of the story. People are not traveling, which means travel agencies, hotels, motels, restaurants, cruise ships, theme parks and many other forms of recreation are suffering.

The MGM Mirage complex in Las Vegas has laid off 3,000 employees. Fewer tourists mean

fewer dollars and fewer dollars means loss of jobs in places where the tourist dollar is the primary source of income.

Another domino effect: President Bush has received \$40 billion from Congress to help pay for rescue and recovery at home and to declare war on terrorists abroad. Where does this \$40 billion come from? More than 27,000 troops have been sent out to find terrorists and their sponsors and more than 17,000 military reserves have been called to active duty.

Who pays for this? It is the United States taxpayer. Another domino effect: Wall Street and the financial markets have been up and down during the past two weeks with an emphasis on "down." The stock market experienced its largest one week drop in its history during the week after the attack.

To bolster an already sagging economy, the Federal Reserve Board lowered interest rates to 2.5%. As people spend less, the economy slows down so tax revenues for the government evaporate. The tax surplus which Republicans and Democrats were haggling over a few weeks ago has been significantly reduced without a single vote! The financial impact of September 11 could reach \$200 billion. (One billion is a thousand millions.)

The attack on the World Trade Center has or will affect every U.S. citizen and repercussions will reverberate throughout the world.

The *United* States

Another domino effect: Millions of Americans rushed to church and began to pray as a result of the attack. Prayer services and candlelight vigils were held around the nation. CNN reported that church attendance in some areas of the country was up 300%.

Bible sales during the first two weeks after the tragedy were up 27% and sales on books about prophecy were up 80%. A prayer service was televised from the steps of the Capitol Building (first time I have ever seen this) and contrary to the Supreme Court's ruling, I am sure many prayers were offered in public schools around the nation.

A sense of sobriety fell on U.S. citizens during the week of September 11, 2001 and for the first time in a very long time, we became *the united* states of America.

Another domino effect: Attorney General Ashcroft is asking Congress to enact and update a series of laws to give police and intelligence agencies greater freedom to infiltrate terrorist cells. The downside to this, of course, will be some loss of civil liberty. Up to a point, Congress seems willing to give the authorities greater freedom to invade our privacy by enacting new laws for the sake of public safety.

Finding an acceptable balance between safety and liberty is a serious matter. The U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights will be challenged and I anticipate a great deal of debate on these and other related matters in days to come.

Peace and Safety

Another domino effect: Every nation now realizes that a relatively small group of terrorists can be responsible for devastating events. Consequently, I expect the merry-go-round of "terrorism then retaliation" to speed up. Every time a terrorist act occurs, retaliation will be swift and deadly.

Giving in to terrorists is not an option for any government. President Bush and a host of nations intend to eliminate terrorism from the world, but I do not think this will be possible. Their attempts may limit terrorism, but evil cannot be prevented.

A free society is a wonderful way of life as long as people live by the golden rule. However, when people take advantage of a free society to kill and maim others, something has to be done.

When the rules of conduct change, everyone loses freedom. There is a minority of people in the U.S. who are opposed to a military response to the terrorism of September 11. As one preacher said on TV, "If we follow 'the eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth doctrine,' the world will soon be blind and toothless."

This statement seems to be confusing forgiveness with justice. Christians glorify God when we turn the other cheek and forgive our enemies. We also glorify God when we stand up for righteous principles. God has made provision for the rule of law and the right of governments to defend their citizens. (Romans 13:1-4)

Why the Hatred?

As the 21st century begins, we find that Earth has become very small. There is not enough inhabitable land or resources for six billion people to live together with divergent cultures, languages and religious beliefs.

Many people are asking, what would cause these 19 terrorists to attack the U.S. and cause so much death and destruction? In any conflict, there are always two opposing sides with reasons they feel are valid. For example, some of the Arab hatred toward America stems from two previous wars.

First, after World War II, the United Nations and the U.S. aggressively supported the formation of Israel as a nation. The formation of Israel in 1948 required tens of thousands of Palestinians who had lived in and around Jerusalem for several centuries to be displaced.

They were forced at gun point to abandon their land, homes and property to Jewish refugees. Thousands of Palestinians became captives of subhuman refugee camps with nowhere to go and no one to turn to for help. During the past 53 years, the U.S. has supported Israel with billions of dollars in aid and in weapons which have been used to subdue the Palestinians. In 1967, Israel took even more land from the Palestinians, as well as land from neighboring Arab

states.

To maintain control and "keep the peace," Israeli forces occupied the land they had taken from the Palestinians and imposed its rule of law on them. Needless to say, the bitterness between Arabs and Jews runs so deep that no peace process has been able to find a solution.

Millions of Jews now occupy the property that once belonged to Palestinians. The Middle East is a place where racial profiling, racial discrimination, racial hatred and religious antagonism are part of the human fabric. Fifty-three years of hatred, injustice and thousands of casualties have produced a generation of young people in the Arab world who have no confidence in any peace process.

I have heard it said that hundreds of young Arabs would count it a privilege to terrorize the enemy with their own death, and maybe through terrorism they will succeed where endless talking has been able to do nothing. Many Arabs believe that martyrdom is better than churning in the hopeless and futile state in which they find themselves.

Another reason some Arabs hate the U.S. stems from the 1991 war, "Desert Storm." Although most Arabs did not approve of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, neither did they appreciate American soldiers in Saudi Arabia.

Most Arab nations do not have a sharp distinction between church and state, therefore, finding diversity of religion is very difficult in most Arab nations. Furthermore, many Arab nations are not democratic and the ruling authorities remain in power for as long as they can hold on to power.

These two features dramatically influence how the Koran is used (or abused). Militant Arabs can use the Koran to justify a "holy war," just as easily as peace loving Arabs can use the Koran to claim they are a religion of peace. This divergence on the Koran is not unique to Moslems. In the U.S., we have a similar parallel.

Some fundamentalist Christians are militant about the abortion issue and have declared a "holy war" on abortion clinics, even going so far as to bomb clinics and assassinate doctors. Other Christians, using the *same Bible*, believe a woman has the right to choose.

The salient point here is that Christians and Arabs share similar human characteristics. Although this comparison between Christians and Moslems is not perfect, it still proves the point that people can religiously justify whatever they want to believe.

If a Moslem wants to justify martyrdom and his hatred of the U.S. (the great Satan), he can find religious justification in the Koran to do so. If a Christian wants to justify his hatred for abortion and those who offer the service, he can find religious justification in the Bible to do so.

When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1991 on the pretext that the land originally belonged to Iraq, the U.S., along with a coalition of other nations, responded to a plea for help from bordering Saudi Arabia. The U.S.A. responded primarily because our country depends on the oil that comes

from the fields of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. It was in our "national interest" to stop the invasion of Saddam Hussein.

But the plea for help came with a series of religious concerns and concessions. Moslems and Christians do not share much in common and the Saudi's did not want their liberators desecrating their holy land. (The two shrines Moslems consider to be the most holy are located in Saudi Arabia.)

To the best of our ability, Americans respected the requests made by the Saudi's and Iraq was driven out of Kuwait in just a few days. However, to keep Saddam Hussein from causing more trouble, American forces have been stationed in Saudi Arabia for the past 10 years. The presence of foreigners in the "holy" land of Saudi Arabia continues to anger a conservative segment of the Islamic world.

They feel that U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia is an abomination to Allah and his prophet, Mohammed. Obviously, the Saudi's who govern the country feel otherwise. The problem stems from the fact that the Saudi's do not "own" the holy shrines. The shrines belong to 1.3 billion Moslems who are religiously required at some point in life, to make a pilgrimage to Mecca.

This is but a short summary of some of the reasons why some conservative Moslems have come to hate the government of the U.S. Many more reasons for this hatred exist, which provide a fertile seed bed allowing terrorism to flourish and grow.

Putting the Attack in Context

President Bush and his staff have done an excellent job of responding on numerous fronts to "the terrorist attack," however, this terrorist attack against America has posed a very interesting problem. America has no choice but to engage in a *new type* of war.

I do not mean new counter-terrorism tactics or a covert war, but a new type of war that could be a religio-political war. The U.S. is trying its best to avoid this type of war, but forces beyond our control could pull the U.S. into a religio-political war pitting Moslem versus Christian.

Unfortunately, there is an inherent antagonism between all of the religions of the world. Each religion has its own view of God and His will. Even more, each religious system has its hierarchy of leaders and scholars and one system will not give way to the other. (When was the last time you heard any religious organization admit that another religion knows more about God?)

This antagonism cannot/will not dissolve until there is a one world religion. Yes, Protestants and Catholics can live side by side if religious differences are not at issue. Yet, we only need to look to Northern Ireland to prove that two similar religions (both calling themselves Christian) can be at war. Will there be peace and safety? Not with the current situation. The road to peace with Arabs will need to address a wide variety of religious and political issues.

Islamic fundamentalists are going to be hard to please as long as, they see (a) the U.S.

supporting Israel in its oppression of the Palestinians, (b) the U.S. westernizing the world with its corrupt morals as it produces an endless stream of degenerate movies and books, and (c) the U.S. continues to desecrate the holy land of Moslems.

The Crossroads

Terrorists are considered both heroes and villains. They are heroes (or freedom fighters) to people who share their ideology and they are villains to those who do not. Because of population growth, ethnicity is changing the political and religious landscape.

I believe the terrorism-retaliation merry-go-round will speed up because there is no human solution to man's diversity. The most powerful military force on Earth cannot stop terrorism. When human beings become drunk from imbibing an ideology that contains a deadly mixture of politics and religion, there is no way a terrorist can be stopped from killing others in the name of God.

There are ways to limit their destructive abilities, but remember, this also means a loss of freedom for everyone. As the cry for peace and safety escalates in the days ahead, I anticipate that it will take God to step into the conflict on Earth with His own firepower that is described in Revelation 8.

The Apostle Paul wrote, **"While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief."** (1Thessalonians 5:3-4)

Paul says the world will be crying out for "peace and safety" when God sends sudden destruction. The events of September 11 put the whole world into this setting. The world stands at a very interesting crossroad. Will terrorists use some weapon of mass destruction?

Will a world war unfold as the nations of the world are forced into taking sides between those who harbor terrorists and those who are determined to destroy them? What does the future hold? The Bible does not give details about what happens before the Great Tribulation. However, the Bible is a beacon that shows us where the need for "peace and safety" is leading.

In closing, there is one more domino effect the reader should consider. At the end of the 1,000 years, all terrorists will stand before God's great white throne. At that time, everyone outside the holy city will receive his due reward.

The Bible says that all who have committed murder will be destroyed with fire. **"Outside [the holy city] are the dogs [scoundrels], those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood."** (Revelation 22:14,15) Their final reward will be this: ". . . **But fire came down from heaven and devoured them."** (Revelation 20:9)

At that time, the last domino (Lucifer, the father of hatred, liars and murderers) will fall.