

The Brunswickian International

Terrorism in U.S. Foreign Policy

Noam Chomsky starts off his book "Pirates and Emperors" by repeating to us the story which St. Augustine tells. "How dare you molest the sea?" asked Alexander the Great. "How dare you molest the whole world?" the pirate replied. "Because I do it with a little ship only, I am called a thief; you, doing it with a great navy, are called an Emperor". (Noam Chomsky, Pirates and Emperors, 9) This quotation reflects the hypocrisy with which the United States relates to the Middle East and the rest of the world today. When asked the question: Who is the terrorist? the majority of the US and Canadian population would rather point their finger at not themselves, but the Arab world. This is not a coincidence. It is perpetrated by the US, the dominant superpower and producer of the most elaborate system of media production and propagation, which determines who is a terrorist for the entire western world. While citizens believe they live in a country with a completely free press, they casually assume that the news brought to them by CNN, ABC, CBS, CBC and others is objective and complete. This is not the case. Coincidentally, this ignorance and racism, which is encouraged by the media, results in much of the bloodletting and acts of terrorism in which the US is directly involved.

During the Iranian conflict of the early 1980s, the majority of Western people significantly depended on the "experts" to construct a representation of the facts. The factual representation was a biased and narrowly focused picture of the situation. "There was a tendency to study and

restudy, to focus resolutely on the same things: elites, modernization programs, the role of the military, greatly visible leaders, geopolitical strategy (from the American point of view), and communist inroads." (Edward Said, Covering Islam, 21) This persists today in Western media. Alt is only a slight overstatement to say that Muslims and Arabs are essentially covered, discussed, apprehended, either as oil suppliers or as potential terrorists@. (Edward Said, Covering Islam, 26) Very little of the detail, the human decency, the passion of Arab-Muslim life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Islamic world. Edward Said states that the result is a limited series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way as, among other things, to make that world vulnerable to military aggression. For example, the people of Afghanistan are being portrayed as militant Islamic fundamentalists, when in fact they are victims of the repressive Taliban regime.

There is a large focus by Western media on 'Islamic fundamentalism.' This concept is described as the strict maintenance of the ancient or fundamental doctrines of Islam by means of militancy. The terms 'terrorist' and 'Islamic fundamentalism' are used almost interchangeably by Western media. By strictly focusing on such concepts, the media contribute to traditional racist misconceptions and misrepresentations of Islam and the Middle East. It also ought to be noted that, "...Israel's avowedly religious character is rarely mentioned in the Western press." (Edward Said,

Covering Islam, 31) Said suggests that this is due to the United States' "pro-Israeli" attitudes and policies.

The pattern of US behavior in the rest of the world demonstrates the nature of US foreign policy. The US has funded and continually supported violent regimes, some of which include: Batista of Cuba (until 1950s), counterinsurgency forces and terrorist groups (which US implemented) in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, Panama and Chile (since 1960s) to name a few. Saddam Hussein was politically, militarily and financially supported by the United States during his worst atrocities, including the gassing of the Kurds. The US is heavily involved in Israeli policies of extreme oppression towards the 'independent nationalist' Palestinian population. For example, during the media fervor over bombing of the WTC in New York, Israel using US tanks and funds attacked the Palestinian towns of Jenin and Jericho, which it currently occupies.

The effects of US foreign policy are felt throughout the world in a very horrific manner, and therein lies the motivation for anti-US terrorist acts. The quick fix solution of punishing the government responsible for harbouring the terrorists or even punishing the terrorists themselves will not solve the problem, rather it may simply escalate such violent acts.

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Horrible terrorist attacks on the USA: How should we respond?

Tuesday, September 11, 2001 will forever be remembered as a day of infamy, tragedy, suicidal fanaticism, loving surrender of victims, and heroism by rescuers.

On September 11, 2001 Air Force One, and similar movies, became reality, as terrorists hijacked four passenger planes and turned them into missiles aimed at the two World Trade Center towers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. (one, it seems, was forced to crash in Pennsylvania and missed its likely target—perhaps the White House). The terrorists, motivated by suicidal fanaticism, were responsible for killing about 6,000 innocent civilians from many countries and cultural-racial backgrounds who were working in, or just visiting, the World Trade Center.

The exemplary heroism of hundreds of police and firefighters who gave up their lives to try to rescue the victims has been celebrated by many, and especially by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who—Churchill-like in the midst of the devastation—rallied New Yorkers not to give up, but rather to fight back against the cowards who had perpetrated this heinous crime.

Responding both personally and politically, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said: "I think the message should be clear: We should look for the culprits, and punish them, but we should not make anyone guilty by association, by religion, or by the region that he or she comes from. ... The whole world has come together in solidarity with what has happened here in New York, with the American people and the American Government. And they have vowed to work together to root out terrorism. And I mean the whole world."

We should commend President George W. Bush for

meeting with Arab-Americans and Islamic-Americans to reassure them and disown other Americans who have been attacking Arab- and Islamic-Americans. On the other hand, some of his comments have veered off the course of affirming justice and global interests.

On September 17, he said the U.S. Government wants Osama Bin-Laden "Dead or Alive," reminding us of the frontier West. But justice in a high-tech era cannot be secured by a unilateral American sheriff with a posse and "DEAD OR ALIVE POSTERS." The terrorists who used the fuel of Boeing 767s and 757s as conventional bombs tied to plane-missiles were high-tech terrorists, even if they only used small knives and box-cutters to take over the planes. They had an extensive network behind them to be able to succeed, a network that extends throughout dozens of countries. Personalizing the struggle with "Apocalyptic Terrorism" through the accusation of Osama Bin-Laden and images of Western movies is unworthy of sophisticated leadership. This global conflict with terrorism will be a long-term, complex struggle ("war" in a very special sense only, as in the "cold war" in terms of its duration). This struggle will require the opposite of impulsive short-term thinking—ice-cold calculation, competent surgical strikes and special operations, new creative initiatives in intelligence gathering and preemptive arrests.

Apocalyptic Terrorism is now a real and present danger for the USA and Canada (though no country is secure), where it was only a theoretical threat before September 11. Now we must prepare for, and do everything to prevent, new attacks at a higher level of physical destruction and social disorder—through the use of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons

against civilians, accompanied by cyber-attacks on our computer networks. Let us not seek to hide our heads in the sand of our private endeavors. We need rational fear and rational, creative political and military responses to these threats. In this protracted global conflict with the extremists dedicated to horrifying Apocalyptic Terrorism, we need global, multilateral operations, involving the UN Security Council, abroad, and democratic consensus at home—both on how to respond creatively and effectively to these terrorist threats and how to preserve and enhance our democratic, free, and open societies.

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Canadians! Dare we look at ourselves?

Canadians have been asking a lot of questions these past two weeks. Questions like: How should the U.S. react to the extreme measures taken against it? Did the terrorists who gave up their lives on September 11 have legitimate grievances? Is the U.S. flexing its considerable military and economic muscles too freely or too quickly? Is the U.S. consuming more than its fair share of the world's resources?

Tough questions, except for the last one, which is a no-brainer, depending on your point of view.

The U.S. simply can't get enough energy. President George W. Bush recently warned that the United States needs more energy sources if it expects to permanently overcome the energy "crisis" that it narrowly avoided this summer. Given the events of last week, and the uncertainty surrounding the fate of the oil-rich Middle East, U.S. energy cravings may be left unsatisfied for quite some time.

That's not a huge surprise if you consider just how huge those cravings are. The U.S. currently accounts for about 25% of the world's total energy consumption. That's more than the other G-8 nations combined.

But even with its voracious energy consumption, the United States only comes in second on the list of the world's biggest appetites if you consider them per capita. Can you guess which country consumes more energy per person than the United States?

Canada, O Canada.

That's right. With its relatively tiny population of almost 30 million, Canada actually consumes 15% more energy per person than the United States—making it the world's largest energy consumer on a per capita basis.

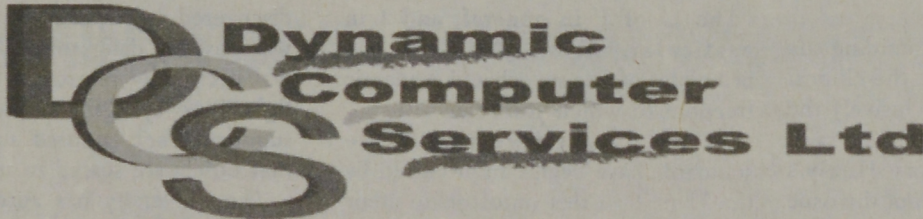
Although it only accounts for 3% of world consumption, Canada uses almost 72% more energy per person than the average G-8 country. In fact, we use more energy per capita than the people of Germany and Japan combined, despite having only a fraction of their combined populations.

And when it comes to carbon dioxide emissions, and waste generation, per capita, Canada comes in second only to the U.S., way ahead of Western Europe.

What is the message here? If nothing else, it's a good indication that, regardless of what we say, we ain't any better than our neighbors to the South so far as the ecological footprint we leave on the earth goes.

The questions we are asking of the United States, and the consumer society it has come to represent, are important questions that we should strive to answer. That is, so long as we realize that we should also be asking them of ourselves.

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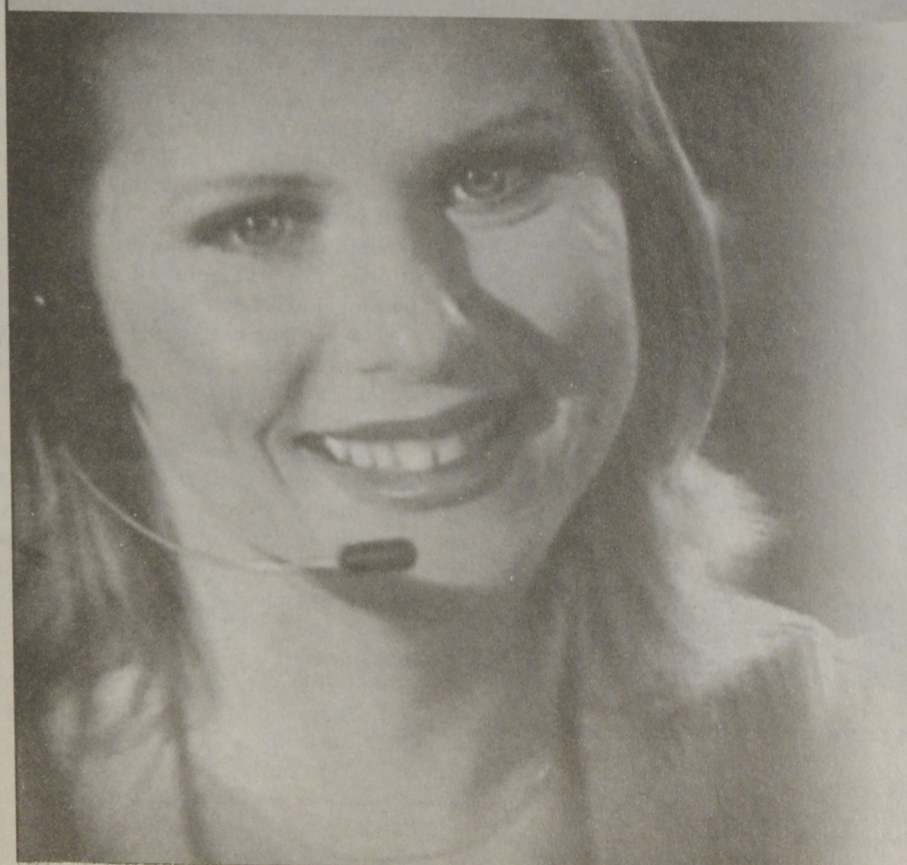
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