

September 11 will go down in his story as a defining moment in our civilization. The attack on the World Trade Towers was a second Pearl Harbour that ended one period in time and heralded the beginning of another.

On that fateful day, the world tumbled out of a time when Communism was the threat, the fear, the bloc that was to be contained. The world tumbled into a different period when Islam and the Muslim nations seemingly replaced Communism as the new threat, the new fear and the new world that was to be contained.

In the one year since the world shook with the shock of America attacked, much has changed. Civil liberties suffered a set back. Many Muslims in America live in terror of being hauled up on suspicion and taken away. Some Muslims shaved their beards and changed their attire to avoid hate crimes.

Now security rather than fundamental rights are the new messages of a new era. Many Western nations seem willing to sacrifice constitutional civil rights and civil liberties to live in security.

The World Trade Centre attacks shook the west and it also shook the Muslim world. Almost every Muslim country joined the war against terror. They sympathized with America and the American people.

Many Muslims wonder why, given their solidarity with America, and their condemnation of Osama and his men, they are viewed with suspicion. The reality is that racial profiling points the finger of suspicion at Muslims. Muslims have suffered for the actions of Osama and Al Qaeda as a community.

This is the time to distinguish between those who commit crimes in the name of religion and those who belong

A new global chessboard

Benazir Bhutto

The evil of some men now threatens to taint otherwise good men and women within the Muslim world.

to a community that wishes to live in peace and harmony with other religions. It would be a tragedy if suspicion towards Muslims led to a backlash that created a clash of civilizations.

Osama and his men used commercial airliners as bombs against cities creating a new global chessboard.

All nineteen of the hijackers that hit the World Trade Centre were Arabs. That Arab countries produced men who launched such an attack makes them the centre of scrutiny in the twenty-first century. Whether one likes it or not, for the coming decades the Muslims in general, and the Arab nations in particular, will be watched and contained as carefully as were the Communist countries in the days of the Cold War.

This has triggered a growing siege mentality within the Muslim world and a change is clearly discernible since that fateful day one year back. Then the Muslim world rallied round the United States as it led the War Against Terror. Now many in the Muslim world are moving away from the new objectives set by the United States as part of the War Against Terror.

One year ago the Iraqi regime of President Saddam was isolated. Today it has rejoined the Arab World in a Summit held earlier this year in Lebanon. At the summit, embraces replaced distances.

President Bush has repeatedly stated that his goal is to pre-empt danger to the world community through regime change in Iraq. Most in the Muslim

world remain unconvinced. Many see an attack on Iraq presaging a wider attack against an array of Muslim countries including possibly Iran, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and eventually Pakistan.

Today the intellectual opinion in the Muslim and non-Muslim world may be on a collision course. Many intellectuals in the United States see the Arab/Muslim countries as failed nations that gave birth to evil men who could plan the cold blooded murder of three thousand innocents in New York and Washington.

And although most Muslim intellectuals condemn the attacks on the World Trade Centre, they believe that unaddressed political problems provided the atmosphere for evil to be born.

America emerged stronger from the day of tragedy when airliners crashed into skyscrapers. President Bush pro-

vided the leadership in a huge military response as well as the domestic measures. Those saved the American people from further attacks. Muslims know that an attack by fanatics could easily increase their own vulnerability.

Yet a military response is only part of the solution.

Some American leaders recognize this. President Carter's National Security Advisor Mr Brezinsky is quoted to have said, "lurking behind every terrorist act is a specific political antecedent".

The concern is that the evil of some men now threatens to taint otherwise good men and women within the Muslim world. Terrorism is still to be defined collectively by the world community. Unless there is an agreement that terrorism knows no religion and no civilization, we could be on the precipice of a much more dangerous world.

The bombing of Afghanistan and the continuing violence in the Middle East and Kashmir impacts upon the people in the street. No one knows when the masses can become a mob. So far demonstrations in the Muslim world remained few and far between. Most Muslims recognized that America was wrongly targeted and it had a right to self defense, to pursuing the criminals that planned the bombings and trained and harboured the terrorists. The concern is that with a broader conflict within the Muslim world, mob fury could develop focussing on foreign targets.

The attack on the American Embassy in Iran during the time of Ayotullah Khomeini when American hostages were taken is an example. The burning of the American Embassy in Islamabad under General Zia is another. Fanatics could take advantage of anger amongst the Muslim people to work up a mob frenzy that attacks western targets provoking a clash of civilizations that could inflame the world.

Today America is the world's sole superpower. It has little need of any other country in planning an action or taking a measure to defend itself and the security of its people. The rest of the world must acquiesce, in practical terms, irrespective of whether it agrees. But America is a democracy that believes in the politics of consensus. Unilateralism runs contrary to the most basic US trait that flourished since its founding fathers gave birth to the new nation.

The righteousness of the American cause leads it down the tempting road of unilateral action. One year later, the need to prevent it from turning into a clash of civilizations and religions is also righteous. The concept of collective security was the anchor of a world when Communism was the great threat. It must continue to be the anchor now that the danger from Islamic countries seems to have replaced Communism as the great threat.

Having tumbled from one age to another in the blink of an eye as the huge fireball engulfed the Trade Towers, the time has come to pause and reflect. Without a shared security mechanism and the definition of terrorism, the world could actually find itself in a holy war between Islam and the West. It is a war that no one wants—except the extremists.