

U.S. foreign policy demands reevaluation, change

The atrocities committed by America are a harsh reality to face during this time of mourning.

On Sept. 14 it hit me. I saw a photograph on Time.com of a little boy placing flowers at the fence of the U.S. embassy in Moscow – not a particularly remarkable photograph, and certainly no more jarring than any of the images we have all been exposed to since this nightmare began on Sept. 11 – and I broke down. Through my tears I saw a crowd gathering in front of the

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steps of Wait Chapel for a noon prayer service on the Quad outside the window of my dorm room in Taylor House. After wavering for a moment, I grabbed my keys, ran down the stairs of my dorm and joined the crowd, hoping to find solace in the company of others. I don't remember a single word that was uttered during the service. All I remember are my overwhelming feelings of loss, utter helplessness and fear – fear that Americans were succumbing to their desires for vengeance, fear that the leaders of my government were steering the country in the wrong direction and fear that the ubiquitous cycle of violence was only going to intensify.

Before I go any further, allow me to be abundantly clear of my intentions – I will in no way attempt to justify or excuse the atrocities committed on Sept. 11 because there is no

justification for acts of terror, no excuse for cold-blooded mass murder and no rationale behind what I can only describe as pure, unadulterated evil. However, since Sept. 11, American pride has permeated our daily lives, and I have not been a participant in this resurgence of patriotism.

While many Americans may be using national pride as a way to deal with their grief, to me, this wave of patriotism smacks of ethnocentrism, ignorance and a denial of the United States' prior wrongdoings. Some may suggest that I am "un-American," but I believe that the most "American" ideal of all is the desire and the will to question one's country and one's government and those who lead it. What service are we doing to our nation, supposedly founded upon ideals of liberty, democracy and free will, if we blindly follow our leaders in the names of unity and patriotism? We cannot pretend that just because the United States has become the latest victim of terrorism that its actions up until the morning of Sept. 11 were without fault. Both Osama bin Laden and the Taliban were financed and armed by the Reagan and Bush administrations to fight pro-Soviet forces in Afghanistan in the '80s. The United States has been bombing Middle Eastern countries – Lebanon, Libya, Iraq, Iran, the Sudan and Afghanistan – since 1983. Military operations against Iraq have been in effect for more than a decade, and include daily bombings, which have led to countless casualties ignored by mainstream American media. Israel, which simply would not exist without the full support of the United States, was established in an area already occupied by Palestinians, who have since been forced out of their homes, been stripped of their businesses and had their citizenship revoked.

My already shaky confidence in the wisdom of

What service are we doing to our nation, supposedly founded upon ideals of liberty, democracy and free will, if we blindly follow our leaders in the names of unity and patriotism? We cannot pretend that just because the United States has become the latest victim of terrorism that its actions up until the morning of Sept. 11 were without fault.

George W. Bush was shattered when I began to hear him toss around the word "war" as though such a threat came without consequences. "We're at war," Bush said during an address from Camp David. "There's been an act of war declared upon America by terrorists, and we will respond accordingly." Who are we at war with? Afghanistan? Bin Laden? Al Qaeda, the Islamic terror group bin Laden leads? It seems to me that the notoriously inhospitable terrain of Afghanistan, described as a guerilla's dream and a general's nightmare, combined with this absence of a clearly defined enemy has the makings of another Vietnam for America. It doesn't help when Bush alludes to posters in the American West that read "Wanted: Dead or Alive" in reference to his desire to capture bin Laden, and makes promises to "get them running and to find them and to hunt them down" – I believe the inanity of these statements speaks for itself.

Bush has also said, "Those who make war on the United States have chosen their own destruction." Unfortunately, millions of innocent Afghans, victims of what is currently the world's worst refugee crisis after years of war, drought

and famine, have not chosen the additional suffering they are sure to endure. Residents of the capital city of Kabul have already begun to spend what little money they have on food, despite the 10 percent increase in the cost of foodstuffs since Sept. 11, and to race for the borders, which are lined with barbed wire and guarded by ruthless Taliban fighters, to escape what they believe will be an inevitable military retaliation by the United States. If we invade Afghanistan, it is far more likely that these innocent civilians will suffer rather than bin Laden and his supporters.

I wish Bush would pay closer attention to the hesitancy of our NATO allies, who originally offered support but are not warning that the terrorist attacks do not necessarily warrant unconditional retaliation. On Sept. 15 the British daily *The Guardian* urged Bush to stop and think before "sending his enormous bombs," saying, "There is another way. It is less dramatic, less visceral, more statesmanlike," and encouraging, among other things, diplomatic coercion, interdiction of terrorist funds and a review of U.S. foreign policy.

I have been told that at this time, Americans have too great a need of simply dealing with their grief to think of having an intellectual, rational discussion of U.S. foreign policy and the ramifications of any possible action we could take against the perpetrators of the vicious attacks of Sept. 11. I stand firm in my belief, however, that if Americans allow themselves to be blinded by the glare of red, white and blue and to be overcome by desire for revenge, we will simply bear witness to more destruction, more murder and more pain. All of us must remember the words of Gandhi when he said, "an eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind."

Peace must be more than simple rhetoric

It is a struggle to maintain our humanity in the face of terrorism and violence.

Peace. Hate. Anger. Joy. Despair. Make love, not war. Do the right thing. So much of what has occurred over the past week with the recent series of tragedies afflicting the nation gives us all more food for thought tied into our quality of life. In watching the video replays of the

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planes colliding into the World Trade Center in New York and seeing the aftermath of the devastation there and at the Pentagon at Washington D.C. – all of this had a surreal quality to it. These scenes reminded all of us of the horror and terror associated with the loss of innocent human lives especially as we listen to the testimonies of people who were affected by the crisis, some who are close to us such as our friends, family or extended family.

In my mind, all of this presents a sobering moment of reflection as we consider the reality of our vulnerability not only as a nation, but as a community in crisis.

The word "crisis" in Asian characters is a combination of two words, "danger" and "opportunity." And this perhaps best captures what we are now exposed to in light of these recent tragedies. How we choose to act or respond to the crisis can present either danger or opportunity for us to move beyond the pain, suffering, hate and anger, or, on the flip side, promote more of it.

The danger lies in our being consumed with grief, denial or anger, and in projecting that upon others. The notion of revenge or retaliation are fueled by these feelings that can make an ordinary person into a zealot or transform a peaceful country into warriors. And when we are confounded in this way by the emotion of what surrounds us, then all notions of justice and reason suddenly go beyond our grasp or understanding.

The opportunity lies in our ability to step back, reflect and consider what our options are and what our response should be before we choose to act.

Can we address these issues responsibly without blaming anyone and adding more fuel to the fire of hatred? In the terrorists' minds, they want to provoke us to lash out without sensitivity. And then what will this promote?

At the memorial service on Sept. 11, President Thomas K. Hearn, Jr.'s address best captures where our focus should be in his statement: "We must be aware also, not only of what terrorism does to America, but what we

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do to America out of fear of terrorism. We must not, out of fear, become less than the nation whose noble ideals summon our honor and loyalty." At the Opening Convocation, Mary Easley, a professor of law at North Carolina Central University, also echoed similar insights as she acknowledged that through these national tragedies we are given opportunities to wrestle with questions about why evil exists in the world and what we can do about it.

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As we move through this new millennium, are we capable of moving out of being "at war" with one another to be at peace? What would it take for us to be peacekeepers?

Do we have what it takes to think rationally when others around us are prompting us to retaliate? Is the show of force (i.e., arms, harassment, the taking of innocent lives) necessary, and, if so, what will be the consequences? Who is the real enemy behind the scenes?

Fear and hate can perpetuate and promote the worst within us and between us as a community and as a country. Where then does the war within us end?

While I have no answers to these questions, I pose them for our consideration. I would hope that as we consider our options individually and collectively as a community and a nation, that we reflect and act responsibly because we care ... not because we hate.

And I would also hope that as an academy dedicated to higher learning, we remember to operate from the higher principles that frame community life as we know it ... *Pro Humanitate.*



The evils of indoctrination

The perpetrators of this crime have dishonored themselves and their cause.

The assault against America on our soil has been unprecedented in its overall scale and scope. As so many people have said, this is a deeply disturbing occurrence, and we all feel strongly for the victims and their friends and families. The attack goes beyond

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those who lost their lives, and even beyond their friends and families. The destruction strikes at every American's very soul. I personally feel, and believe that I speak for all of us in saying, that the strike was worse than had it hit my very self. Would that they were to have just struck me I would not feel such pain as I do now that they have struck my brethren.

The terrorists were almost undoubtedly indoctrinated to believe that what they did was ultimately right, and that the United States would buckle to their political wants, or even collapse altogether. This shall not be the case. Throughout history, terrorism and war have consistently strengthened the resolve and togetherness of Americans as a people. These enemies have not come forth and

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have not given any cause, but would that they were to have done, so they would have done nothing but detriment to it. They have deeply dishonored themselves and their aims, and roused America's resolve to capture those that aided in their aggressions. As for their resolve that they died for a cause, they no doubt have a distant view from us, as do all those that would celebrate the loss of human life. The best thing that we could do is to continue to show that the people that were here were human beings, and that there were real casualties.

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We should not blame or feel animosity toward any group of people of which the perpetrators might have been a part, as has been done in the past in various instances, or repudiate

those that do not mourn, but to feel the sympathy for them that they lack for our people. I feel bad for Palestinians that dance in the streets on hearing that Americans have died, for they do not represent their people as a whole, but just those that have suffered from the emotional and intellectual rape that is indoctrination. They suffer from their own inability to escape the cycle of ignorance that their fathers were raised into and their fathers' fathers as well. We must remember that had Thomas Jefferson been raised in modern times and by enlightened people, he would not have looked down on those of African descent. He was an ignorant, naïve man, but was raised with no other options than to have been so. So must we remember that had the men that piloted the planes had the opportunity to be good men, they would no doubt have taken it. We must not allow ourselves to be trapped in all of the anachronistic and unethical practices of our times just because our fathers consider them common, especially after such a grim reminder of what men whose minds are enslaved are capable of justifying.

Another issue that could have an effect on university students' lives is the potential for a land war that may require a draft. It is far too early to assess the potential necessity of this, but I am sure that we, as Americans, are ready. If any country has ties to these actions, or harbors those who do, then they must immediately extradite anyone involved with this dishonorable act, or will undoubtedly face the use of tremendous and united opposition forces.