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U.S. tragedy shows peril of bad globalization

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COLUMNIST

THERE ARE NO WORDS to adequately describe the horror of what happened in the United States yesterday.

A small band of terrorists struck with deadly precision at the most visible symbols of American capitalism and American military power.

This was a different kind of globalization, but a powerful warning that the tensions between the spread of western civilization and other societies and civilizations could be a source of growing conflict in the years ahead.

No one can condone what the terrorists brought about in the United States yesterday, any more than anyone can condone the daily terrorism faced by Israeli citizens. It is also true, however, that a deep-seated sense of grievance in other parts of the world, combined with terrible poverty and a sense of hopelessness, is the biggest threat to a more peaceful world.

The Middle East is a good example of this. George Tenet, director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, explained why in testimony before the U.S. Senate select committee on intelligence earlier this year.

Population pressures and limited prospects for economic development, along with growing access to information, are making the Arab world much more restless, he said. Many countries in the Middle East have some of the highest population-growth rates in the world, and these countries are severely challenged in providing jobs for the large numbers of young people entering the labour force each year.

``At the same time, Islamic militancy is expanding, and the worldwide pool of potential recruits for terrorist networks is growing. In central Asia, the Middle East and South Asia, Islamic terrorist organizations are trying to attract new recruits," Tenet said. He added that ``international terrorist networks have used the explosion in information technology to advance their capabilities."

While Americans use the Internet to buy books, terrorists use the Internet to acquire information for chemical, biological and other weaponry, to raise money and to find recruits.

This raises a bigger question, one symbolized by the book *The Clash Of Civilizations* by Samuel Huntington. He warned that the attempt to spread western - or American - civilization across the world would trigger responses from civilizations with different religious and cultural foundations.

Indeed, globalization is seen in many parts of the world as a threat to other civilizations or even as a

plot by the western nations to impose their values and institutions on other societies. The warning is that, if we are not sensitive to other systems of belief and to other cultures, and to their concerns and grievances, we will pay a price.

Huntington quotes former Canadian prime minister Lester Pearson as warning, back in the mid-1950s, that the world was moving into "an age when different civilizations will have to learn to live side by side in peaceful interchange, learning from each other, studying each other's history and ideals and art and culture, mutually enriching each other's lives. The alternative, in this crowded little world, is misunderstanding, tension, clash and catastrophe."

This risk can only grow if we continue on our present course. The world has 6.1 billion people today, of whom 20 per cent live in the western world. In 2050, according to the latest United Nations population report, there will be 9.2 billion people, of whom only 13 per cent will live in the western world. All of the 3.2 billion increase will be in the developing world.

The response should not be one of paranoia and isolation. While the United States is entitled to bring the perpetrators of yesterday's savage attacks to justice, the longer-term challenge is to recognize that globalization will not work if it simply means westernization. Our systems of global governance must be more representative: It is absurd, for example, that the U.N. Security Council still has three permanent members from the western world but no permanent representatives from the developing world, aside from China.

It is also critical that the western world recognize its moral responsibility, as well as its own self-interest, to address the terrible levels of inequality between nations and the degree of absolute poverty that exist in the world.

The failure so far to address these issues in no way excuses terrorism and the dreadful crimes committed yesterday.

But, looking beyond them as best we can right now, it's also important to recognize that the present course of globalization will not work if it simply means the westernization of the world and fails to recognize the cultures and needs of other societies.

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