

## Dealing with the Tinder As Well As the Flint

**V**iolence is not a pathology of the poor. But the compound of poverty, powerlessness, lack of opportunity, and injustice is volatile: exactly the mix that the terrorists who attacked us hope to ignite. Osama bin Laden seems bent on provoking a war in which the poor would be his soldiers. Under such circumstances, we cannot create security only by striking at the flint; we must also deal with the tinder.

If we only capture the leaders of terrorist groups, seize their resources, disrupt their networks, and deter their state sponsors, will our world be secure? Or does a safe and stable world require more fundamental changes—a broader response focused not only on dealing out justice to our enemies but also on displacing the conditions that foster injustice?

Half the world's jobs depend on fisheries, forests, and small-scale farming. But two-thirds of the world's fisheries are being harvested beyond sustainability, forest loss in poor regions is accelerating, and soil degradation is widespread. One-third of the world's people, nearly all in developing countries, face water scarcity. These trends degrade the resource base for economic development and directly undercut people's livelihoods. As a result, the cities in poor regions are being overwhelmed by the tide of desperate people leaving rural areas in search of opportunity. The squalid slums of those sprawling cities of the poorest parts of the world are expanding by a million people a week. Within a decade, if trends continue, there will be 27 cities in the developing world bigger than New York. If they are full of jobless young men with nowhere to turn, they will be tinderboxes of anger and despair; easy recruiting grounds for bin Laden or those who may come after him.

Global warming is underway and is likely to bring not just hotter weather but more severe floods and droughts, intensifying the misery of the poor and driving still more refugees from the land. Global warming is in part a consequence of increasing oil consumption, particularly for transportation; so is the violence of September 11, according to bin Laden, who has justified terrorist acts as a response to the presence of U.S. military bases in the Islamic holy land of Saudi Arabia. The U.S. military is there to ensure access to oil.

Imagine if we determined not only to root out terrorism but also to deprive it of soil in which to grow. If we in the United States directed only a little more of our resources to the poorest nations, we could enable vast improvements in education, health, agriculture, and credit to launch small businesses. If we paired our immense technological capacity with enlightened policy, we could hasten the development of more efficient cars and trucks and lower our dependence on Middle Eastern oil and our contributions to global warming. If we tapped the research creativity of our universities, we could create the knowledge base that would allow people everywhere to manage ecosystems more productively and more sustainably, preserving the forests and fisheries for present and future generations. If we supported private-sector investments in poor countries, we could help distribute practical technologies to use water many times more efficiently and help bring electricity and telecommunications to the billions of people who now do without. In sum, we could join our allies, whose help we now seek in confronting terrorism, in a broader partnership for human security—human security for all.

I do not believe that a free society can harden every target, check every truck, inspect every envelope, protect every water supply, or guard every mile of every border and still remain free. I do believe that we can improve security by protecting the Earth and seeking to ensure that people everywhere live in dignity. And I believe that we can refocus environmental research on the problems that have the most promise to sustain the ecosystems on which all societies depend; even in the face of the extraordinary changes, such as global warming, that now confront us.

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