Two models opposite terrorism

By Juan Gabriel Tokatlian (for Safe Democracy)

Juan Gabriel Tokatlian explain that two differentiated models exist today in the fight against terrorism: the American, which looks to deter it through force as well as making it impracticable in American soil, and the European, whose aim is to overcome the asymmetry in force in a longer term, not immediate, and not exclusively through punitive means (dissuasion, development and dialogue). Tokatlian believes that the community of democratic nations today confronts a crucial dilemma: adopt the American model or further develop the European model. The Occidental ideal -- and perhaps its own destiny-- is at stake in this crossroad.

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THE PHENOMENON OF TERRORISM IS the expression of an asymmetric conflict, whose main advantage is, at first, for the weakest actor, who can choose the way, place, circumstances and objective for the use force.

The democratic nations community in the Occident, co-existed for lustrums with such asymmetric situation, since in order to ensure the validity of the democracy, it was essential not to drastically alter the delicate equilibrium between security and freedom.

Essentially, the democracies could not use the terror tactics to reply with violence: at that moment, the ethic basis of democracy itself would have been lost. Nevertheless, September 11, 2001, dramatically altered and exacerbated the world context and the way in which to face the world-range transnational terrorism.

TO TURN TERRORISM INTO IMPOSSIBLE
The model of response chosen by the government of George W. Bush implicitly relies on the idea of symmetry opposite the adversary. The main objective is to turn international terrorism into an impossible and unfeasible fact, at least inside the United States’ territory. This means, conceptually, that the most powerful actor becomes just as aggressive and treacherous as the weakest.

Not only is it about deploying its own war power, but also to improve the intelligence capacity, to sanction those who support terrorism and to ostracize those who encourage terrorist groups. Furthermore, it is about cutting off local public rights in the interest of a major security, in order to legitimate the early annihilation of suspicious terrorism, and to ignore international law regulations related to human rights and armed conflicts.

COSTS FOR DEMOCRACY
Temporarily, as it has been happening in fact, since September 2001, the international terrorism shows itself beyond the United States’ borders. In this light, the Washington’s biggest success in Iraq and Afghanistan, is to replace the worst violent and terror manifestations back in their origins: Middle-East and Asia. However, it is difficult to assume that Washington will be able to impose such policy without costs for its own democracy and for the world stability.

THE EUROPEAN MODEL
A second model, closer to an extent glance at Europe, looks for overcoming the asymmetry in a longer-term, not immediate, and through not exclusively punitive means. In this case, it is about turning the terrorism into an improbable, unnecessary and illegitimate fact. In such light, dissuasion, development and dialog are necessaries.
War and policy dissuasion belong obviously to the State, and imply more prevention, intelligence and sophistication. The effect of dissuasion is to turn the terrorist behavior into a less probable action. The political, social and economic development involves the State, but also the private sector and the non-state sector: the more development, the less necessity to resort to terror.

**CROSSROAD TO OCCIDENT**

Dialog belongs to a non-state area, which means, contact and interconnection between religions, generations and civilizations. A dialog between societies and cultures minds the legitimacy of those who try to invoke it so as to justify the use of terror.

The democratic nation’s community faces a crucial dilemma: to go deeper into the American model or to develop the European one. The ideal of the Occident, perhaps its own destiny, is put at stake in this crossroad.