

## Violence does not end with violence

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Columnist

Over the past week I have had the opportunity to speak with friends and family members about the horrific tragedy that took place in our country on Sept. 11. I was initially on the bandwagon of "total military retaliation." After allowing my head to cool and after consulting many sources I have reached the conclusion that we should not use military force against Afghanistan or any other country in the world.

I believe I can justify my conclusion by taking a look at our foreign policy throughout the twentieth century. Many would argue that our military mishaps began with our involvement in World War I. Those who believe it was a mishap would argue that helping Germany led to the empowerment of Adolf Hitler. This eventually led to World War II, a war that was preceded by the murder of millions of innocent civilians, but also a war that took many lives of Americans.

We entered Vietnam in a very controversial manner. Ho Chi Minh originally wanted a government based on the principles of some of America's founding documents. France decided to attempt to continue its occupation of Vietnam and the United States quickly jumped on the side of the French.

This helped promote the formation of communism in the North Vietnam territory. The United States propped up a crooked leader in the south that helped lead to the demise of South Vietnam, as well as eventually to the America's chances of victory in Vietnam.

In the 1980s, the United States CIA helped train a man by the name of Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden was able to lead the Afghans through a very bloody war with the Soviet Union. Our foreign policy also helped prop up leaders such as Slobodan Milosevic in Yugoslavia and Saddam Hussein in Iraq, supporting and providing military assistance to Iraq in its war with Iran.

## The view from here: *Teacher in an Arab nation describes students' reactions to last week's attacks*

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I walked into my classroom this morning, and found a room full of scared, worried young women. Classes have only barely started for this semester, so my students didn't know me that well yet. As soon as I came in, they asked, "Are you from America?" When I said yes, they asked if I had friends or family in Washington or New York. I told them I had friends in Washington, but they were all right. I said I'd been awake until 3 a.m. to make sure everyone was safe.

And then we just sat and talked. Forget the lesson plans, and getting into the meat of the semester. Today wasn't a day for teaching. The quiz, the editing and the research guidelines just didn't matter today.

Being a teacher, part of my job is to help my students make sense of the world. Since my students are university age, that stage where one minute they are mature young adults and the next minute children, I'm here to guide them as they sort out their worlds for themselves, along with teaching the subject matter in my class description, of course.

How can I help them make

sense of this when I can't make sense of it myself? I'm in just as much shock as they are. I want someone to say it's all right, just like they do. Nothing in this is straightforward.

All the emotions are complex, relief that my own family and friends are safe combined with worry for those whose aren't, or remain missing.

The most striking emotional cocktail of this for me is the reassurance and heartbreak at how desperately my students want this not to have been done by Arabs.

You see, I teach in the Middle East. All those young women who are my students are Arabs. Muslims. I've seen and heard people in the United States saying "Damn Arabs," or "Damn Muslims" or "Damn Middle Easterners". I've heard that, and worse.

To some of you, Arabs may be nameless and faceless, considered suspicious or dangerous and easy to blame. To me, Arabs are my students and their families. Arabs are as diverse a group as any other. Hating them all would be like hating all Europeans for the atrocities in Kosovo or Serbia. Let me make them less faceless for you.

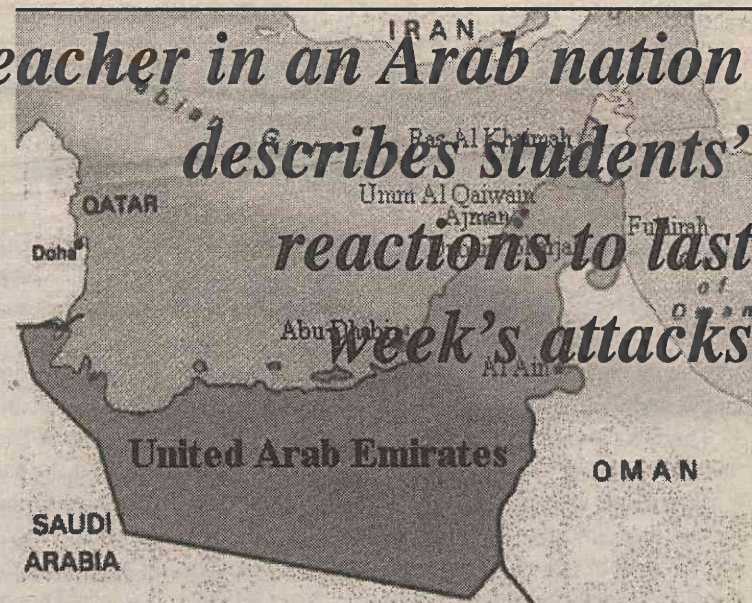
My students are young women. Like university students anywhere, they're worried about grades and exams, about course requirements and majors, and, of course, about juggling their classwork with their

While it is an embarrassment to our foreign policy to have put such dictatorial leaders in office in various countries throughout the world, our main folly has quite simply been our military presence in over 100 countries around the world while providing little or no defense for our own people.

The 1990s have been humiliating for the United States. Our foreign presence in the Middle East to help enforce embargoes in Iraq has starved and killed over a million innocent Iraqis. Our embargoes and restrictions on Cuba, a country which we appear to be modeling our education and health care systems after, have led to many deaths of people trying to escape because there is nothing in their home

country for them to live for. Our bombing of baby food factories and pharmaceutical plants has led to deaths of innocent civilians in countries such as Sudan.

Our policy of intervention has killed millions of innocent people. While this will never ever justify the taking of thousands of American lives by a terrorist group, we must realize that this foreign policy is the reason for these attacks. We were not attacked because we are the freest nation in the world. We were not attacked because of our country's religious makeup. We were attacked because we have spent too much time meddling in the affairs of foreign countries. Just ask those countries who laugh at what has happened in New York and



social lives.

They have dreams and plans, about their careers, about marriage and family, about places they'd like to travel to. They may dress differently than a group of women the same age in the US, but underneath the shayla and abaya, they're not very different at all.

Today, they're in shock. They're worried about war. They're concerned about their relatives who are in the United States. They remember the Gulf War, and they're afraid this will be so much worse.

Our university is near an airport. Normally, they just ignore the planes as they take off and land. Either they pause until the sound has died down, or try to talk over it. Today, they flinched. I've never seen the planes make them nervous before.

They're horrified by the attacks on the United States. While they are

Washington. They would collectively say that if the United States would mind its own business, no attacks of this kind would occur.

It is my belief that if we bring our troops home off of the majority of the foreign soil they currently reside on and put our emphasis on defending our own territory, terrorist groups would have no reason to come after innocent Americans. If you don't believe that neutral nations with strong national defenses based in their own territory work, just ask Switzerland. Any country that steps in their boundaries with malicious acts on their mind will be greeted with a citizenry that knows how to use a gun.

The "When Will We Learn"

angry that the United States appears to support Israel, they cannot accept what has happened. My students do not celebrate this, nor do they take it lightly. They say it is haram, forbidden by religion. The deaths of so many innocents can never be acceptable. Not for any reason.

My students are still learning English. They had to struggle sometimes to express themselves. They know how to talk about classes and majors. They know the vocabulary for the lives of university students. They don't have the words for the deaths of innocents. I find it tragic that they had to learn the word "innocent" under such appalling circumstances.

I can no more make sense of this for you, or for myself, than I could for my students. All I can do is pray for the victims and pray for peace.

series by Harry Browne is available on the web at <http://www.harrybrowne.org> Harry makes a strong argument through a series of columns that military retaliation can not work in any case, especially the situation we are in now.

### Write to The Pendulum

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