



## **America With Its Friends on the Moral High Road** by Tommy Koh

There is a struggle in the Muslim world for the soul of Islam, between those who wish to reconcile their religion with modernity and others who reject modernity. It is a struggle between those who regard the United States as benign and those who regard it as malevolent. And between those who pray to the God of Love and those who pray to the God of Hate.

What we do not have, however, is a war between Islam and Christianity, because the overwhelming majority of Muslims around the world have condemned the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Defense Department in Washington.

Nor is this a clash of civilizations. I have spent 20 years of my life in the United States and can speak about the country with some authority. I reject the attempt by Muslim extremists to demonize America, because its people have shown, time and again, courage in adversity and magnanimity in victory. Americans are always among the first to respond to any humanitarian crisis anywhere in the world.

At a moment when the United States is under attack, its allies and friends in Asia should have the courage to stand up and be counted. How can they assist? They can:

- Help the United States to identify the terrorists, their networks, sponsors and safe havens.
- Prevent their territories from being used by terrorists and their networks.
- Prevent their institutions and nationals from assisting the terrorists and their networks.
- Join the United States in mobilizing a global campaign against terrorism.
- Support the right of the United States to act in self-defense in accordance with the United Nations Charter and international law.
- Work with the United States to resolve intractable regional conflicts which have provided fertile ground for hatred to take root and grow.

America stands at a new crossroads in its history. It has to choose between two roads. The low road will lead it to turn inward, disengage from the world, rely on its own strength and act unilaterally. This is precisely what the terrorists would like it to do, because they have a global network. To win the war against terrorism, America cannot go it alone but must build a global coalition against terrorism.

The high road will lead the United States to engage even more with the world, work with like-minded countries to build

world peace and prosperity, and give to peoples who are suffering from injustice and abject poverty the hope of a better tomorrow.

U.S. leaders have said they want to work with other countries. I am glad that the American people have chosen the high road of internationalism and not the low road of isolationism.

The United States should continue to consult widely with its allies and friends, pursue its just cause by just means and act wisely so as not to lose its moral high ground and the sympathy and support of the world.

*Tommy Koh is a former Singapore Ambassador to the United States. This article appeared in the International Herald Tribune and is reprinted with permission.*