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Weed out the roots

A YEAR after 9/11, the United States is not facing up to the reality that the war on terrorism cannot be won unless and until its root causes are addressed. Despite repeated calls by the global community, led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, President George Bush and rightwing supporters have ignored this larger issue.

Now it would appear that some clear-eyed thinking have infiltrated the Central Intelligence Agency whereby its latest documents have warned that the Gordian knot of global terrorism could not be easily cut because American counter-terrorist operations around the world fail to address the root causes of terrorism. Terrorism is a sigh of the despair. As the CIA said, these root causes are fuelling the rise of the disaffected, who see violence as the only option.

The point is that 9/11 could have taken the US in other directions: toward greater empathy with what others have suffered; toward more concern for human security and the conditions that give rise to terrorism such as global poverty, economic inequity and ideological imperialism; and toward recognition of the importance of multilateral institutions in a globally linked world. But that would have required a very different leadership. One which Bush apparently cannot provide. Will Bush and his hawks listen to the CIA? Or will he insist on becoming a selffulfilling prophet of war, waging aggression "until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated"?