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Position Paper

by

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The Quest for Preemptive Peace in the Middle East

Mass communication, ease of transportation, and interdependence between the nations of the world has blurred boundaries and shorn countries and peoples of their isolation and insulation. Today, we speak of a global economy and global warming, and much of what happens in the world, good or bad, now has global repercussions. And so it is with warfare. While in the last century we had two world wars and a number of conventional regional wars, outbursts of terror were sporadic and disconnected occurrences. In the twenty-first century, however, we can no longer consider incidents of terror as isolated events. We are forced to acknowledge that we face terror on a global scope. And its confrontation, therefore, must also be global. The attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001, brought the United States to the forefront of this new kind of war.

The U.S. administration, under the leadership of George W. Bush, mobilized the military, intelligence, and economic assets of the country for this global confrontation. It called for the cooperation of the other free nations of the world and declared that any country that harbored, trained, and aided terrorists would be held as accountable as the terrorists themselves. It was on that basis that the war in Afghanistan was waged. Varying degrees of cooperation were offered by various countries but in most cases with a low degree of urgency and intensity. When the terrorists' violence struck at the heart of another nation, it spurred that country into more serious action, as in the Philippines, Indonesia, Australia, Russia, Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Spain, and, most recently, England. Whatever measures the United States and the other countries are currently taking will undoubtedly continue to intensify and become more comprehensive over the years.

After the Afghanistan conflict, the United States adopted the principle of “preemptive war”—taking the war to the terrorists before the terrorists could strike again. The war in Iraq has been largely waged on this basis. But as events developed after the cessation of major military combat in Iraq and the collapse of Saddam Hussein’s army, terrorists from different parts of the world gravitated to Iraq to join in the war of terror against the American and coalition forces; recently, they have increasingly targeted the newly formed Iraqi authorities as well as Iraqi civilians. The present status of the preemptive war in Iraq is likely to continue in one variation or another through the foreseeable future.

In fact, given the way the war on terror has been unfolding globally, it seems to have no end. For as soon as one faction of the enemy is squelched, another springs into action. There is no better example to illustrate this problem than the current fight in Iraq. We hear almost on a weekly basis that a leading insurgent/terrorist has been killed or captured, but without fail, new explosive attacks take place immediately thereafter. And in the meantime, coordinated attacks hit unexpectedly in other corners of the world, as we have seen in Madrid, London, and Egypt.

History has taught us to look for the peace that comes at the end of the war. Wars were won when aggressor states were vanquished, and peace ensued. But this is not a conventional war. We cannot wait for it to end in order to have peace because we have no way of knowing how and when it will end. The new reality of warfare requires a different approach, something equal to the task the twenty-first century has laid at the feet of all peace-loving nations of the world. *Thus, just as we devised a preemptive war, we must formulate a preemptive peace.*

All the current efforts, necessary as they are, deal with the outbreaks of terror by treating its symptoms. But this is not an adequate response. We must also look for the root causes of the disease—the causes of terrorism embedded so deeply in its ideology—and study the nature and motives of those who participate in it. We must seek to understand this ideology, learn about its beginnings and the way it has spread and infected so much of the world, and then proceed to systematically dismantle it. Once we accomplish that, we will have found a means to develop a preemptive peace.

Wars of Different Colors

Throughout history, aggressive conventional wars have been waged for expansionist purposes (colonial wars), revenge (tribal wars), ego satisfaction of ambitious warriors (Napoleon), ideology (Nazism, communism), and propagation of religion (the Crusades). To

prepare for these wars, the aggressor state or faction first had to indoctrinate its people in the “Culture of Death,” a process that took place over months and years during which death was exalted and life devalued. This convoluted logic glorified the death not only of the targeted enemy but also of the people in whose name the war was being waged and of the warrior himself. Thus, German soldiers died to reclaim Teutonic pride, czarists troops sacrificed themselves for “Mother Russia,” and kamikazi pilots sought eternal glory by flying their planes into Allied warships in the name of Imperial Japan.

Defensive wars, by contrast, are imposed on nations and people who do not seek them. They are fought for survival and the preservation of life, liberty, and property or to ward off impending threat. Participants in such wars seek to reinforce a culture that fosters, sustains, enhances, and preserves life—the “Culture of Life.”

Sometimes during the course of a defensive war, people can become indoctrinated in the Culture of Death. Then, after they prevail in their defensive war, they go on to wage aggressive wars of their own. A case in point is Afghanistan’s fight against the Russian occupation forces in the late 1970s and 1980s, which led to the rise of the Taliban and the Culture of Death it fostered.

The Evolution of the Terror War

The terror war we are facing today has its own rules, rules that defy all convention. In a conventional war, civilians are not purposely targeted, and the weapons and tactics employed by the aggressor can be matched by the defender. In the terror war, however, civilians are the primary targets, and the defender cannot prevail by simply destroying the community that harbors the terrorist. In the current fighting in Iraq, the insurgents/terrorists have targeted the innocent Shiite civilians while the Shiites, who hold the power, refrain from retaliating against the civilians of the Sunni community. The same has been true in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and after British Muslim terrorists attacked the underground trains and buses in London in July 2005, no reprisals were launched against innocent Muslims in the country. Another distinguishing feature of the terror war is the perfection of the Culture of Death, in which the martyr’s death is exalted, his family financially rewarded, and the schools, mosques, and media reinforce the message of death. Consequently, together with the random targeting of civilians, *the Culture of Death has become a weapon of asymmetric warfare*. This lethal weapon is aimed at civil destruction, and it can be deployed by any group and for any cause. For this reason alone,

the fight against terrorism requires not only the decimation of conventional weaponry but also and more fundamentally the dismantling of the Culture of Death.

Al-Qaeda, the chief terrorist group in operation today, has declared that its goal is to wage a religious war to spread Islam throughout the world, dominate all the Islamic nations, and colonize the non-Islamic countries across the globe. The leaders and their adherents in this terror movement, Osama bin Laden et al., express pleasure when their exploits lead to anarchy, as has happened in Somalia, or when they confound the order and safety of a society, as in Iraq, because in such a fractured environment, they can maintain their control over the targeted population through terror and intimidation, much as the Taliban controlled the Afghan people in the recent past.

It has been said that all terrorists are Muslims but not all Muslims are terrorists. Of course, this is not literally true—consider the actions of the Irish Republican Army or the devastation caused by Timothy McVey. But the perception that terrorism is intimately linked to extremist Muslims is rooted in two demonstrable facts. First, most of the causes claimed by the terrorists who employ this mode of warfare are Arab or Muslim causes. Early on, the cause was Pan-Arabism, then it became the championing of the Palestinians, and in the latter decades of the twentieth century, it flourished in Afghanistan in the fight against Russian occupation, which gave rise to the bin Ladenism of today. Second, the invocation of the Islamic call for holy war, or jihad, is intrinsic to the vast majority of terrorist actions, no matter who the target may be, non-Muslim or Muslim.

Pan-Arabism, the early Arab/Muslim cause, started after World War I when the Arab countries of the Middle East and North Africa were liberated from Turkish Muslim rule only to find themselves colonized by the Christian European nations of Britain, France, and Italy. One of the many ironies in today's world is that the leaders of the Muslim Ottoman Empire, which encompassed all of North Africa, the Middle East, the Arabian Peninsula, and Asia Minor (Turkey) and part of southern Europe, were seen by the Arab Muslims as foreign occupiers. They never agreed to grant the Turkish sultans the religious title of caliph, as the post-Mohammed rulers of the Arab Empire were called. For that reason, the Muslims of the Arab nations did not declare jihad to fight the European "infidels" in World War I. Nor did they rush to save the Turkish-Muslim Empire. On the contrary, some cooperated with the European invaders when the Hashemite Sherif Hussein of Mecca and his sons collaborated with the British

Lawrence of Arabia. The Arab nations expected to be rewarded for their cooperation by having the freedom to rebuild the Arab Empire of old and reclaim the glory of Islam. Pan-Arabism remained a nostalgic call but never gained traction, as it quickly became ensnarled in a competition for leadership between various Arab nations, among them Iraq, Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia.

Fighting for the Palestinians served as a unifying cause for all the Arab nations starting shortly after World War I and intensifying after World War II. And it was in that fight that international terrorism took form. Airplane hijackings, the murder of Olympic athletes, and attacks on civilians gained the Palestinians worldwide recognition and notoriety. During that time, many nations, Arab and Western alike, in essence excused the terrorist actions, pronouncing that “one nation’s terrorist is another nation’s freedom fighter.” Ironically, Russia, which now calls its Chechen rebels terrorists, had trained Palestinian terrorists on its soil for many years and described them as freedom fighters. Only after September 11, did the United States and then some other nations of the world begin to assert that “terrorism is terrorism, and no cause can justify it.” It is a sad fact that this truism is emphatically asserted only when a country is itself directly attacked by terrorists.

Terrorism—the purposeful targeting of civilians—took an ominous turn when it introduced the human bomb, the suicidal bomber. Despite the fact that suicide is condemned in the Islamic faith, it was sanctified by a Shiite leader, Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran, as an act of martyrdom (*shaheed*). During his war with Iraq in the early 1980s, Khomeini needed a quick way to clear mines in the battlefield between Iraq and Iran. He directed his clerics (*mullahs*) to recruit thirteen-year-old boys, destined for a certain death, to clear the minefields. Each child was given a headband declaring the greatness of God (*Allah Akbar*) and a wooden key to heaven. In 1983, the Iranian clerics exported the suicide bomber weapon to the Shiites’ Hisballah in Lebanon, which used it with great success against the American forces who were on a peace mission in Beirut at that time.

In response, the U.S. administration, still confused about the distinction between a terrorist and a freedom fighter, decided to withdraw from Lebanon. Thus, a new and deadly weapon was introduced to the world by combining the suicidal bomber who targeted civilians and the call for holy war that led to his self-glorification. *The suicide bomber became a weapon of civil destruction (WCD)*, which could be easily transported and stealthily deployed to any

corner of the earth. Soon, the WCD became the weapon of choice of all terror groups. The Palestinians, who had already obtained the tacit acquiescence of most of the Western world for introducing terrorist tactics such as hijacking civilian planes, took up this WCD even though they themselves were not Shiites but Sunnis who religiously opposed suicide. With an elaborate Culture of Death in place, they essentially built a factory to mass-produce suicide bombers—individuals who were praised by their community, their religious teachers, and even their own mothers as martyrs for the cause. The media and academia of the Arab world collaborated whole-heartedly in this enterprise.

Osama bin Laden came onto the world scene after he tasted the success of jihadism in the Afghanistan war against the Russians. With a megalomaniac's ambition, he put together well-tested fighting tactics. He acquired, by money and by indoctrination, eager young fighters and trained them to be his WCDs. His exploits under the mantle of jihad gained him acceptance and support in the Muslim population at large. He declared that his goal was to reclaim the glory and ascendancy not only of the Arabs but of all the Muslim world. Bin Laden was able to capture the imagination of many of the common people and religious leaders in the Muslim world by igniting their religious fervor and stoking a deep longing for Islamic domination. His movement became a symbol of religious idealism and the successes of his attacks a source of Islamic pride. How else could one explain the fact that Muslim students at Georgia Tech cheered the collapse of the Twin Towers in New York on September 11? True, there were some perfunctory expressions of condemnation by a number of Muslim leaders, but the response of the Muslim world as a whole was noticeably muted. It seemed strange that Yasir Arafat, the godfather of international terrorism, donated blood for the September 11 victims under the glare of television cameras. He would die two years later, and many suspected the cause was AIDS. Was he trying to help—or to infect?

Osama bin Laden has succeeded in embroiling the world in a global war. Powerful nations led by the United States continue to pour worldly goods and human resources into this war. Meanwhile, many Muslims, perhaps millions, take pleasure in seeing the mighty Western nations appear impotent in preventing terrorist attacks. And they are not alone. Many non-Muslims in the West, probably also numbering in the millions, by nature and ideology carry a self-hating guilt and have also shown a “they deserve it” type of satisfaction when these attacks are carried out.

Knowing all this, shall we all start preparing ourselves to accommodate to a Taliban type of future? Not quite.

The nations of the West of course have a strong instinct for self-preservation. And beyond that, there are compelling reasons to believe the people of the Islamic world are beginning to recognize that they have been the larger losers all along in this jihadist war and that *they have been fooled by an imposter*. The meaning of the word *Islam* is submission, but it references submission to God, not to a fraud.

Bin Laden is a fraud because, by training and education, he is not a recognized religious leader with the authority to issue a religious decree, or *fatwa*, commanding all the believers to follow his edicts and attack whomever he designates as infidel.

Bin Laden's call for jihad is a fraud because the very concept of jihad as designated by Mohammed was meant to emphasize the duty of every Muslim to be diligent in the study of Islam and to fight the nonbelievers (in God) and enemies of Islam. But the very people against whom bin Laden has called his jihad are people of the book—the Christians and Jews who were called by the Koran *Ahl Al-Thimi*, “those to be protected.” The nonbelievers, according to Islam, are the billions of non-Muslims in India, China, Japan, and the Far East. They could have been his principal target, but they were not. Of course, this is not to say that bin Laden should attack the citizens of those honorable nations who are following their own religions. It is only to say that bin Laden's focus on the West is not based on the true religious teaching of Islam but on his personal, perverted whim. Nonetheless, in calling for his modern jihad, illegitimate as it is, bin Laden has been able to attract to his fold the extreme fundamentalists of Islam. His claim of championing the cause of Pan-Islamic empire is nothing more or less than a bid to declare himself the reinvented caliph of Islam.

Furthermore, bin Laden is a fraud because his actions have not advanced the welfare of the Muslim world but rather retarded its progress, directing it back to the twelfth century. There is no better example of what would happen to an Islamic country if it followed bin Laden's teachings and dictates than the state of affairs in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. If the Muslims of the world want to know what kind of religious practices he aims to impose on every one of them, they need look no further than the model established by the Taliban: if that is genuine Islam, let the masses practice it voluntarily. And like bin Laden, all of his fellow travelers are perpetrators of fraud as well.

The Need for a New Orientation

It is time to account for the real achievements and casualties that all the terrorists—Al-Qaeda, Hisballah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Chechen, etc.—have accrued. It is time to find out where the Culture of Death, advocated and promoted by the terrorists, has led the Muslim people.

How much longer can those in the Muslim world ignore the death inflicted on their people on a daily basis, the stifling of their economies, the insult to the very meaning of their religion, the degrading of the image of Islam projected to the non-Muslim world, and the shaming of their honor, all at the hands of lawless bands crouching in the different corners of the world? Over and over again, as they wreak havoc across the globe, members of these bands claim themselves to be the ultimate arbiters of the Muslim religion.

Between March 2004 and March 2005, for example, there were 5,362 deaths from terrorism worldwide, according to the RAND Corporation database. Although how many of the dead were Muslims and how many were “infidels” was not reported, a reasonable guess is that no more than 200 were non-Muslims. An example on a microcosm level is equally illustrative: on July 10, 2005, a Shiite mother and six of her children, ages two to fourteen, were shot to death in their sleep in Baghdad. The surviving father, who was not at home at the time of the attack, said, “I have no enemies, I have no political leaning.” His family was murdered by Islamic terrorists simply because they were Shiites.

On July 7, 2005, four suicide terrorists killed fifty-six individuals, including Muslims, in attacks on a bus and three subway cars in London. This attack did not scare the non-Muslims into submission, but it did frighten and humiliate the Muslims of England and the world. The BBC reviewed the editorial comments of prominent Arabic papers around the world in response to the attack and found they expressed uniform shame and unequivocal condemnation. Yet the next day, more than fifty Muslims were killed in Iraq by the Muslim “insurgents,” and a similar number perished one day later. The carnage just keeps piling up.

On July 21, two weeks after the first attack in London, similar bombings were attempted in three subway cars and one bus, but this time, there was only one injury and no deaths. The very next day, three car bombs exploded in an Egyptian resort area, killing more than sixty-eight people, most of them Muslim Egyptians and tourists. Egypt’s reputation and economy was dealt a devastating blow at a time when it could ill afford it.

One of the aims of the terrorists is to destroy the economy of the Western countries. It is true that the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., caused serious damage to the American economy and brought on a recession. But it took less than two years for the U.S. economy to recover and to expand at a faster pace than in any other country in Europe and Asia. Similarly, there is no doubt that England will recover from whatever setback the two recent attacks may have produced. In the meantime, by contrast, the Muslim country of Iraq, which so desperately needs to build its economy and restore a semblance of peace to its people, continues in a downward spiral. The situation there illustrates how the concerted and deliberate attacks on infrastructure (electricity, oil, and water) by the Muslim “insurgents” destroy and disrupt the economy and the daily life of the Muslim Iraqi people.

The economy and the well-being of a country always regresses when the Culture of Death persists. The agents of death, under whatever banner they parade—be it Jihadist, Islamist, Hisballah, Hamas, Al-Qaeda, or other—have an effect on the Muslim communities throughout the world that goes beyond just the killings. They pollute the very culture required to nourish the life and the spirit of the people. Like bin Laden, they seek to take their civilization back to the dark times of the twelfth century.

Isn't it strange that the recent tsunami disaster, caused by nature and affecting primarily Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world, prompted a quick and generous response from the United States and other Western nations but only a trickle of aid from the rich governments of Saudi Arabia and the gulf states? A tepid, inadequate response of this type can be expected when countries are guided more by a Culture of Death and less by a Culture of Life, for their priorities are stuck in a regressive mode; as an example, Israel, which does not experience earthquakes, nonetheless has the world's most elaborate rescue teams ready to deploy across the globe in response such catastrophes, whereas the Muslim countries are neither technically equipped nor mentally prepared to launch similar missions designed to save or enhance life.

What we are confronting, then, is a global terror war that hurts not only the people it wants to hurt but also—and more so—the people it supposedly wants to “elevate.” What is required in squaring off against this global terrorism is a global solution.

This war has many sporadic fronts, but those in Iraq and in the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation seem to shock us with daily atrocities. For that reason, I will focus on solutions in

the Middle East, with the implicit suggestion that whatever measures are ultimately adopted there should not be limited to that area only.

On September 26, 2001, I wrote a piece in the Denver *Rocky Mountain News*, stating that we in the West have been “derelict and let terrorism fester,” scolding the peoples and governments of the Western world for their inaction prior to the September 11 attack. I followed that piece with an essay on June 22, 2002, entitled “Reversing the Culture of Death Key to Peace,” in which I defined the problem and called for action. In explaining the process that establishes the Culture of Death, I wrote that the perpetrators start by choosing a villain to hate and proceed to vilify and demonize the targeted group. Then, a system is put in place assuring that the hate is taught to impressionable youngsters in school, depicted in plays, and expressed in songs. Parents are urged to sacrifice their sons and daughters for the cause and asked not to mourn but rather rejoice in their deaths. Other players who facilitate this process are the mullahs in the mosques who preach violent hatred week after week and the teachers in grade schools and higher education who, together with the media, glorify or justify the deadly acts either deliberately or inadvertently, often claiming the need to offer “nonjudgmental balance.”

I concluded the essay by stating that “it will fall to the well-meaning people and governments of this nation and the world to undertake the most crucial part of fostering peace: a comprehensive effort to reverse the Culture of Death. It should be directed at the schools, places of prayer, the media and the very homes where hearts are shaped.”

Since then, much has been written and much has been done in our efforts to confront global terror. Many leaders in the United States and other Western nations as well as in the Muslim world have focused, by necessity, on putting out terrorist fires and trying to bring terrorists to justice. These efforts have been carried out with a great deal of sophistication in some countries (the United States, England) and by half-hearted measures in others (Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Palestine). At the same time, however, much has been left undone.

Dismantling the Culture of Death

In the remainder of this essay, I will concentrate on an area that has thus far been largely overlooked in the war against terrorism—reversing the very culture that nurtures it, the Culture of Death. And I will argue that it is time for an awakening, *Al-Yaqtha*, among all well-intentioned peoples of the world.

President George Bush has often referred to an “ideology of death” or an “ideology of hatred” and called for its reversal, but he has not followed up on this call with any significant action. Since the July 7 and July 21 terrorist attacks in London, British Prime Minister Tony Blair has been more vocal, arguing for “dismantling the evil, misguided ideology of hate.” On July 22, he convened a meeting of British Muslim clergy and scholars and obtained their unambiguous commitment to counter the ideology of hatred in their schools, mosques, and communities. Blair also called on President Pervez Musharef of Pakistan to control the teaching of hate in the Pakistani religious schools (*madrakas*). On July 23, Akbar Ahmed, a professor at the American University, in discussing the subject “Why do they hate?” advocated forcefully for the “need to bring Muslims to the 21st century.” The July 7 London attack elicited other similar sentiments, all of which confirm that there is a problem hurting the Muslims in the world. Yet sadly, true to its nature, the Western media reflexively brought us “experts” from among the ranks of the deniers and the “blame the West first” crowd to educate us in the art of shifting the blame from the perpetrators to the victims. Commentators and political figures took to the air to instruct us that the “misguided war in Iraq” is causing the terrorist attacks.

In March 2005, the Spanish Muslim Council issued a fatwa against Osama bin Laden, calling him an apostate for his atrocities. What we need are many more brave religious leaders capable of giving universal, unambiguous fatwas condemning all forms of terrorism.

It is worth noting that on July 6, 2005, the day before the first London attack, a conference of 180 top Muslim sheikhs and imans, brought together under the auspices of Jordan’s King Abdullah, issued a statement stipulating that no Muslim could be declared *takfir* (an apostate), a designation that justifies religious execution. The statement seems to be directed primarily against the theological method employed by Al-Qaeda and by Al-Zarqawi and other extreme Islamists. Worse yet, in defining the kind of Muslim worthy of this protection, they referred to those who “believe in Allah...and all the articles of religion.” (Of course, all Christians and Jews, despite being the people of the book [*Ahl-Al-Kitab*], are considered fair game and their killing is considered *Halal* [sanctified].) This definition would thus exempt all the terrorists because they adhere to these tenets of Islam and would justify their actions against fellow Muslims who do not scrupulously meet these religious qualifications. Those honorable religious leaders ended up unwittingly playing bin Laden’s demagogic game. What is needed are courageous, straightforward thinkers who would call the evil deeds evil.

Further disheartening news came in an article by Almed Al-Rahim (*Wall Street Journal*, July 26, 2005) reporting on “the silencing of a liberal scholar, Sayyid Mahmud Al-Qimany.” Al-Qimany dared to criticize Islamism in his writings. For that, he was declared an apostate by the most revered institution of higher education of Sunni Islam, Al-Azhar in Egypt. To avoid what amounted to a death sentence, Al-Qimany recanted all his writings.

We must realize that the various terrorist groups and their ardent supporters are fighting for their own survival with greater vigor and cooperation than the rest of the world is investing in trying to eliminate them. The reality is, therefore, that the terror will intensify and will not end abruptly or soon. Rather, it is likely to linger for years. And to bring an end to terrorism will require the world to join this war with unwavering determination and unity, not only in the military field but in the education and communication fields as well.

One can predict that *terrorism will be controlled sooner in the Western world than in the Muslim world*. Happily, on July 28, 2005, the Irish Republican Army announced its decision to disarm, after thirty-five years of terrorist activities and 1,775 deaths, and turn away from violence and toward political activism. This turnaround was the result not of mediation but of a realization by the Irish people that, simply put, enough is enough.

The United States possesses not only a superior military power but also superior economic and diplomatic influence. This influence has been used to promote democracy in the Middle East, and it is already producing some results. We see significant movement in Lebanon, hesitant movement within the Palestinian Authority (PA), and a hint of movement in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. *But democracy by itself cannot guarantee a stable peace unless it is based on promoting a Culture of Life and rejecting a Culture of Death*. It is incumbent upon the United States and its allies to bring that issue into the center of their diplomatic and economic relations with the Arab and Muslim nations. All of their diplomats, from the lowest level of career professionals to the ambassadors, must focus their attention on what is being taught in Arab/Muslim schools, preached in mosques, discussed in academia, and portrayed in the media regarding the Culture of Death versus the Culture of Life. Every detail should be brought to the attention of the country concerned. The United States, together with European nations, should give considerable monetary aid to the Palestinians and the Iraqis, and whenever they do so, they should declare that the money is intended to build a culture, a society, and an economy that will promote life and condemn the celebration of death. Every meeting that U.S. Secretary of State

Condoleeza Rice has with Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas should begin with a discussion of what steps the PA has taken to stop the incitement of hatred in the Palestinian media and schools.

A sobering question has to be asked: how much damage can terrorists inflict on their own people in pursuit of their cause? Consider the Palestinian situation from the time of Ehud Barak's peace offer at Camp David in the year 2000 to the summer of 2005. The fact is that the terrorist cause did not advance one inch in those five years, yet the Palestinian people suffered untold humiliation and widespread destruction to their homes and their economy, and they paid a terrible toll in human lives, including among the leadership of the terrorists themselves. All this devastation took place when terrorism went full throttle. There is no escaping the conclusion that in the final analysis, the greatest damage inflicted by terrorism is on its own causes and on the very people it claims to champion.

For the Iraqis, it is imperative to point out that *the democracy they are building should be based on an ethic of supporting and enhancing life*. Besides the Sunni insurgents/terrorists, some of the Shiites, especially Muqtada Al-Sader and his followers and those supported by Iran, still incite the people by exhorting, "Death to the Americans." Such declarations should not be considered part of the freedom of speech that comes with Iraqi democracy. And in qualifying parties for the coming election in December, *those that do not exclude jihad and any other form of violence for political ends and those that fail to embrace a Culture of Life among their principles should not be allowed to participate*. In this way, the fledgling democratic state can avoid the possibility of a "one election only" outcome. This term refers to the possibility that if a violence-prone party were elected in December, it could redirect the country to its violent ideology and thereby foreclose the prospect of any future elections, as Hitler did in Germany in the years leading up to World War II. Another precedent of the World War II era, however, is well worth emulating. After that war, when Germany and Japan crafted their new constitutions, Nazis and the old Imperial Japanese elements, respectively, were excluded from qualifying for election. The framers of the Iraqi constitution should do no less for the sake of a peaceful and prosperous future.

The Israeli-Palestinian Theater of Operation

Early in the first term of his presidency, George W. Bush isolated and rejected Yasir Arafat, the Palestinian leader, as an obstacle to peace and a detriment to the welfare of the Palestinian people. Bush's attention was so focused on the leadership that the underlying cause

of the erosion of the entire Palestinian society, the Culture of Death, was ignored. Bush was not alone in this oversight. Dedicated peace activists of many countries and over many years were also woefully negligent in this regard. For more than nine years, from the inception of the Oslo Accord in 1991 until its collapse in the year 2000, the “peaceniks,” whose ranks include both Israelis and Palestinians, centered their efforts on educating the Israeli people to turn them away from fear, hatred, and mistrust and move toward an understanding and acceptance of their Palestinian neighbors. Meanwhile, messages of hate and calls for the death of the Israeli Jews issued forth with impunity on a daily basis via Palestinian television, radio, and newspapers and from the pulpits of the mosques. It is hard to understand how intelligent, peace-loving people could ignore the truism that “you need two willing partners to have peace and only one to have war.” And indeed, at the collapse of the “peace process,” when Arafat rejected Barak’s peace offer in the year 2000 at Camp David, war broke out. Even if a treaty had been signed, the Palestinians could not have existed in peace with their hated Israeli neighbors because nothing had been done to dismantle the Culture of Death.

An important lesson can be learned from one truncated peace that ignored the culture of enmity and hate. By the mid-1980s, Anwar Sadat, the president of Egypt, was fully prepared to turn away from war and embrace peace with the Jewish state, even though he had held a leadership role in two Israeli-Egyptian wars, in 1968 and 1973. However, he made a serious mistake: he did not prepare his people for peace and reconciliation until after he signed the 1986 peace treaty with Israel. I happened to visit Egypt the following year. As I traveled around, I saw arches on the roads emblazoned with pictures of Sadat and inscriptions in Arabic reading “Prince of Peace” and “No More Wars.” I talked with taxi drivers, travel guides, Egyptian boat captains, and other travelers, and they all spoke warmly about the new openness to the West and seemed relieved that the war atmosphere that had hovered over their country for long years seemed to be lifting at last. Unfortunately, Sadat was assassinated before the pacification effort was completed, and his successor, Husni Mubarak, halted this process. As a consequence, the official and nonofficial media and academics in Egypt resumed peddling hate and enmity toward Israel and the Jews. The net result was a cold peace that almost completely halted tourism, commerce, and cultural exchange between the two countries. And as is usually the case, when you flirt with the devil, the devil will turn on you. In recent years, Egypt has witnessed a number of terrorist attacks on its tourist industry, culminating with the triple car bomb attacks on the “City of

Peace,” the tourism center of Sharam Al-Sheikh, on August 22, 2004. Worse than that, the mastermind of the first attack on the World Trade Center in New York in 1993 was a blind Egyptian cleric (now serving a jail sentence in the United States), and the second in command to Osama bin Laden is an Egyptian, Ayman Al-Zawahiri.

The death of Yasir Arafat and the election of Mahmoud Abbas as president of the Palestinian Authority rekindled hope and held out a promise for peace. But again, we see that the efforts of Palestinian, Israeli, and American leaders in advancing the peace are focused almost exclusively on such tactical issues as disengaging from Gaza, easing restrictions on the movement of Palestinians, releasing prisoners, and funneling American and European monies to Abbas’s governing authorities. All of these are helpful and necessary steps, to be sure. But when we see only a temporary cease-fire observed by the numerous terrorist groups (and frequently violated with deadly results) and when we hear hatred and incitement to violence continue unabated, there is indeed cause for alarm. If, in the months or years ahead, all outstanding issues between the Israelis and Palestinians (borders, refugees, Jerusalem) are by some miracle resolved and a peace treaty is signed on the White House lawn, that document in and of itself will not bring true, enduring peace to the people of “two nations living side by side.”

No genuine and lasting peace will ensue unless and until all leaders in government and beyond start earnestly to work on dismantling the Culture of Death and replacing it with a dedication to life. Academics, members of the media, schoolteachers, and clerics all have a role to play. The task is difficult. It must be pursued consistently, persistently, and inspiringly. Every Palestinian leader must be guided by a clear understanding that *while it can easily harm the Israeli enemy, the Culture of Death will ultimately destroy its own people*. On both the Israel and Palestinian sides, the serious and respected men and women in academia and other circles who are dedicated to the betterment of their people must come to understand that they have a duty to join together to advance the concept of preemptive peace.

The Iraqi Theater of Operation

The early notion of jihad, a holy war in the service of Arab pride and nationalism, was discussed previously in terms of the Iraqi front of the war on terror. As noted, jihad was used as a tool to advance the political goals of Pan-Arabism after World War I.

As a teenager in Baghdad in the 1930s, I remember we were taught in school a song about “Jihad, the way to glory.” Iraq was the first country to champion the cause of the

Palestinians, beginning in the early 1930s, and thus, the jihad song was preparing us, the children, to sacrifice for that cause. When Nazism arose in Germany in the middle and late 1930s, Iraqi politicians and army officers were quickly attracted to the militarism, scapegoatism, and Culture of Death inherent in Nazi ideology. In middle school, I and other kids my age were drafted into the Fattuwa, a quasi-military organization styled after the Nazi Youth. One day while in my father's office, I heard my school principal, Sayyed Ameen, in the presence of his cousin Sheikh Abd Al-Kareem, commenting on the developing situation in Iraq and saying, "You know, first comes Saturday, then comes Sunday, and it doesn't take too long before Friday will come around." He was referring to the local politicians who were starting to demonize and persecute the Jews in order to advance their own political empowerment. He was warning that after the Jews, the authorities would turn against the Christians, and ultimately, they would target their fellow Muslims. We all understood that his statement did not mean just harassments and persecution but actual death. He was a wise, thoughtful, learned man, a truly religious, God-fearing Muslim. He cared about the Christians and Jews, but he also cared about what would become of the Muslims when death was glorified through jihad and then used for political gain. Sayyed Ameen, my teacher, I am sorry to tell you that now, some seventy years after we sat in that office, Friday has come around. *Baghdad is burning.*

Another day in history comes to mind. A few years after that warning, Sayyed Ameen's Saturday came to Baghdad. In 1941, a pro-Nazi coup took place in which Saddam Hussein's uncle, the man who raised him, took part. The new government tried to expel the British from the two bases they held in Iraq by treaty. The coup failed, and the rebellious government fled. Baghdad was left without a government for forty-eight hours, and during that time, angry mobs, with the help of the police, army officers, and, yes, some youth groups such as Fattuwa (I was out of it at the time) raided the Jewish quarters. They killed and raped the Jews and burned and looted their homes and businesses in a pogrom called Farhood.

When the loyal government forces entered Baghdad at the end of that siege, they took the usual security measures, including declaring martial law and instituting curfews. And interestingly, they also used religion—not to incite the people but to calm them. In that era, radio was the major communication means to reach the masses, and the authorities suspended the usual programs for weeks and instead transmitted continuous readings from the Koran calling for

peace, charity, and brotherhood. Their tactic worked. Could the mullahs of Iraq today take a lesson from that experience in 1940s Baghdad?

The daily news from Iraq coming to us today through radio, television, and the print media gives us dramatic images of death and destruction. But it is not the total picture. What we generally do not see are the two-thirds of the country, the South and the North, that enjoy relative calm and quiet.

Promise for the Future: The Liberal Democratic Party of Iraq and the Kurds

Amid the sensational headlines about car bombings and assassination attempts, so much of the progress being made in Iraq today is given scant coverage in print and broadcast media. We hear far too little, for example, of the work of the Liberal Democratic Party of Iraq (LDPI) and of the Kurds.

The *Liberal Democratic Party of Iraq* operates in the central and southern parts of the country. Its founder, Dr. Ayad Al-Rekabi, is the son of a sheikh in Nasserya in South Iraq. He has a Shiite religious title of ayatollah. The party's secretary general is a Shiite, Sheikh Mohammed Baqer Al-Suhail, residing in the Kathemiah, a suburb of Baghdad. In addition to the Shiites, party followers include Arab Sunnis from different parts of the country, as well as Kurds, Christians, and others. The two leaders, in addition to attracting adherents through their tribal connections, also attract many of the country's intellectuals and academicians. They subscribe to all the principles of democracy intrinsic to a Culture of Life: the rule of law, equality between the sexes and religions, and belief in a safe and progressive Iraq.

A survey in England after the July 7 London bombings showed that 94 percent of British Muslims totally condemned the terrorists' attack, while only 6 percent—about 100,000 individuals—felt that the terrorists were justified. In Iraq, the percentage who sympathize with and support the “insurgents” is of course higher, and the Liberal Party leaders are aware of that. But they reason that if they could convince the majority of peace-loving citizens that Allah does not really take pleasure in seeing all men wearing beards and all women walking like mummies according to the behavior code of the insurgents/terrorists, they could certainly help track the evil-doers among the minority of haters.

Dr. Ayad Al-Rekabi said recently that his and other like-minded parties in Iraq have to face the fact that in order to have the kind of future they dream of for their homeland, no less than *a profound, constructive cultural revolution is required*. His party is ready to be among its

leaders. If they succeed in the coming December election in having a say in the governing of the country, one could not wish for a better democracy in Iraq, the heart of the Middle East.

The story of the Kurds is another unsung chapter. The Kurdish political parties are more than adequately represented in the current assembly and interim government. The president of Iraq is a Kurd, and so are the foreign minister and other ministers. Not long ago, under Saddam's rule, Kurds were shunned, oppressed, and even gassed by their fellow Iraqis. Now that they are in the center of action in Baghdad, they have a chance to show the Arab Iraqis and the rest of the world what they are made of.

For one thing, they decided on their own to shun the Islamic Culture of Death that prevailed in the countries all around them, especially in Iran and in Saddam's Iraq. They distanced themselves from all forms of Islamism and defined themselves as secular Kurds. They did not allow the terrorists who infiltrated their region (Zarqawi among them) to gain a foothold. Has anyone noticed that since the coalition forces entered Iraq, *not a single American soldier has been killed in the Kurdish North*? In all of their years of struggle against the Iraqis and Iranians, members of the Kurdish underground never targeted civilians. Instead, *they lived and practiced a Culture of Life, rare among Muslim nations*. They took advantage of the nine years in which they were protected from Saddam's total domination by the "no-fly zone" and built an infrastructure and economic, educational, and representative political systems. They have a disciplined police force and a functioning, self-governing cabinet and prime minister. Contrast that with the situation of the Shiites of the South, who were also oppressed brutally by the Saddam regime and had the same "no-fly zone" protection by the coalition. We find them in a less fortunate situation. The main difference is that the Iranian Culture of Death infiltrated their midst, and in addition, Saddam had a freer hand in suppressing their economy when he drained the swamps and cut the livelihood of a good segment of the Shiite population. The net result has been that the economy of the South is in ruins; the unemployment rate is about 40 to 60 percent, compared to 0 percent in the Kurdish North. Additionally, even though he is not very popular among the Shiites at large, Muqtada Al-Saddar, a renegade Shiite cleric, thoroughly embraced the Culture of Death and did not hesitate to kill fellow Shiites who shunned his political domination or attack the Americans who liberated him. However, it must be noted that the Shiites have their own bright star in the person of the Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani. He is credited with single-handedly stopping a sectarian war from taking hold in spite of extreme provocation in the form of mass

murders carried out by the Sunni “insurgents” intent on starting a civil war. However long the insurgency/terrorist war may last, the fact that the country did not go totally down in flames will be due to the effort of this one pious man who rejected revenge and a Khomeini-type political power for himself.

A Wish List

In hopes of bringing a meaningful peace to the Middle East, vanquishing the terrorism that threatens the world today, and securing the future for Muslim and non-Muslim peoples across the globe, I would propose the following wish list:

1. Because a war instigated by religious decrees and Koranic interpretations cannot be fought by secularism (after all, the current Shiite majority in the Iraqi assembly was elected by promising the voters a ticket to paradise if they voted for their party), *I wish that the respected Kurdish Sunni clerics, Shiite Arab clerics including Al-Sistani, and their counterparts among the Sunni Arab clerics would come together and declare the following fatwas:*

a. That the “insurgents” and suicide terrorists, their organizers, recruiters, and those who aid them are to be called *agents of death and destruction*. Their fate is hell.

b. That the civilian men, women, and children who are attacked by the insurgents are to be called the *innocent victims of peace*. Their place is in paradise.

c. That the Iraqi soldiers, police officers, and recruits who perish in the attacks are to be named *heroes and protectors of the country and the people*. Their place is in paradise.

d. Further, that the daily newspapers and the official government records are to publicize the names of all these individuals under appropriate headings of “Innocents,” “Heroes,” or “Agents of Death.” (Labels are important in molding public opinion and in rewarding families that deserve recognition and preventing others from allowing or even encouraging their sons and daughters to volunteer for a mission to hell.)

2. Because the Kurdish leaders have been playing a constructive part in the current government, including actively encouraging Sunnis to participate in the writing of the constitution, *I wish that the Turkish leadership would openly declare their commitment to the Culture of Life and their championship of the preemptive peace and thereby serve as a model for other Muslim nations to emulate.*

3. Because there is no better way to engage young Muslim idealists in the cause of promoting the Culture of Life and to lead them away from the lure of Al-Qaeda and the

Islamists' Culture of Death and destruction, *I wish that Al-Yaqtha—the Awakening—would be vigorously promoted through the Internet.*

“Culture of Life” is not a sentimental slogan. It requires, first and foremost, a commitment to the supremacy of the rule of law and the protection of human rights. It involves an elaborate orientation toward life, a set of policy priorities, and a system of government to advance them. Such priorities would include funding for programs related to health, education, art, literature, economics, trade, and tourism, as well as building an infrastructure to improve the day-to-day life of the civilian population.

A wide-ranging movement for an “awakening” has yet to take shape. When it does, it will attract and involve aspiring Muslim leaders from around the world and lead them toward the goal of establishing a progressive, life-affirming future for their people and rejecting the backward ideology of death.

In these efforts, the Kurds of Iraq could take the lead among the non-Arab Islamic countries: Reformist Iran, Musharef’s Pakistan, Karzai’s Afghanistan, Turkey, other countries of Central Asia, and Indonesia. The Liberal Democratic Party of Iraq could take a similar lead among the Arab nations: Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, the gulf states, and the North African nations.

4. Because parties that allow or advocate jihadism or the use of force for political aims can sabotage the future of a nation, *I wish that these parties would be excluded from elections under the provisions of the constitution being written for the newly democratic Iraq.* Writing a constitution that will be acceptable to the three major segments of the Iraqi community—Shiites, Sunni Arabs, and Kurds—can go a long way in laying the groundwork for a stable Iraq, but only if it does not contain the seeds of its own destruction. It has been reported recently that the draft constitution forbids the presence of militias in a free Iraq. This is a significant first step because, as we saw in Lebanon in the 1980s, terror groups such as Hisballah can emerge out of sectarian militias.

Further, in defining freedom of religion, the constitution should guarantee the right of every individual to his or her religion as well as the right to practice that religion as he or she sees fit.

5. Because the Liberal Democratic Party of Iraq holds promise in terms of securing a stable, just, and peaceful future for Iraq, *I wish that the LDPI would have the ability to raise*

enough funds and organize its leadership for an effective campaign that will bring it success in the next election.

6. Because the Culture of Life cannot flourish in a climate of political assassinations and coerced religion, *I wish that responsible Shiite leaders would cleanse themselves, with the blessing of Ayatollah Sistani, of this Culture of Death.* A plague of death still hovers in the Shiite community, aided and abetted by Iranian agents, funds, and armaments. Currently, assassinations continue to scar the political landscape, and the readiness to force particular religious practices on the populous persists. Courageous leadership within that community can do much to rectify this situation.

7. Because a brain drain invariably occurs when the Culture of Death prevails in any land, *I wish that the Arab Sunni leaders would call on their fellow Sunni citizens, whose cooperation has thus far been lacking, to inform on the foreign terrorists and ex-Baathists hiding in their midst.* They can also join the current government, and they can count on the help of the Kurds, the Liberal Democratic Party, and many capable democratic Shiite leaders.

Writing in the *Wall Street Journal* on August 3, 2005, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad warned that a brain drain may occur among the Sunnis in central and western Iraq. Lebanon suffered a crippling drain, literally losing tens of thousands of its elite intellectuals and talented men and women of every profession (mostly Christians), during the death-drenched sectarian war of the 1980s and 1990s.

The only people who can reverse the situation in Iraq are the Arab Sunni leaders. Ambassador Khalilzad indicated that the U.S. government has already been signaling its support of efforts to forestall such a cataclysmic outcome.

To the people of Iraq I would send this message: The land you live in is yours. Do not let renegade “insurgents” destroy it. Take charge. The time of awakening, Al-Yaqtha, is long overdue.

8. Because much of the future in the Middle East depends on how peace is pursued by all concerned, *I wish that Israelis and Palestinian peace lovers would initiate in earnest a consistent, comprehensive effort by the Palestinians to replace the Culture of Death with a Culture of Life.* Life can only prosper in a structure that promotes it. And peace can only endure in a culture where life is paramount.

9. Because, for the sake of humanity, they have a special responsibility and duty to study and inform the public about the wide-ranging effects of death-driven and life-driven cultures, *I wish that academics would convene a conference of leading scholars from the following disciplines to report on this topic in the context of their particular fields: sociology/anthropology, political science, history/Classics, religious studies/theology, international relations/public diplomacy, economics, psychology, education, and mass communication.*

10. Because it is clear by now that we are dealing not with one monolithic terrorist organization with a central address but a network of terrorists with a similar modus operandi in something of a franchise operation, *I wish that President Bush and the U.S. administration would take bold initiatives in declaring the dismantling of the Culture of Death wherever it exists as their primary objective, to be pursued simultaneously and with the same vigor as the military war on terror.*

Some terrorists are following a local agenda; others are pursuing a general anti-West, anti-Christian/Jewish agenda. They all use the preferred weapon of civil destruction and turn to Al-Qaeda for inspiration and recruitment but not so much for planning and coordination. An example of this trend is the Twheed-Jihad organized by Al-Zarqawi in Iraq and affiliated with Al-Qaeda. The group claimed responsibility for the recent attack in Egypt.

On July 24, 2005, President Musharef of Pakistan said that confronting global terror by military means is not enough to control it. Tony Blair, the British prime minister, has been telegraphing a strong determination to dislodge and disrupt the “ideology of hate” from British Muslim communities, including the introduction of new laws to curtail the preachers of hate from “indirect incitements.” President Bush, who had declared democracy in the Middle East to be the major objective of American foreign policy now and in the future, could address the nation and the world and insist that a lasting democracy will have to be based on Culture of Peace and the delegitimization of hatred and politically based violence.

In Conclusion

The world is now engaged in a war against global terror, a terror that does not spare any nation or any group of people. Started by disaffected individuals and directed against the non-Muslim West, terrorism has now attracted hordes of misguided Islamists and has made the Muslim people among its foremost victims.

A critical aspect in the genesis of terror, the Culture of Death that feeds it, has been greatly overlooked to this point. To correct this crippling oversight, I offer the following recommendations:

- The leaders of all the world nations should have the vision to lead their people in the path of life.
- The esteemed academicians should take on the mission of studying the effects of the Culture of Death on the people that harbor it and offer advice on ways to promote its antithesis, the Culture of Life.
- The people of the world should be alert and not allow the evil-doers to hide behind their women and children, masquerading as defenders of the faith.
- The religious leaders throughout the Muslim world should take their religion back from the heretics who hijacked it and not leave it to the non-Muslim leaders alone to assert that Islam is a religion of peace.
- The media should trumpet the message of the promoters of peace, not just highlight the bad news. They should not hide behind a claim to “neutral objectivity.” There is good and bad in the world, and people should not be confused with the notion that everything is relative. To quote one honorable newsman, “Give us a break.”

Whether the twenty-first century will be marked by peace and progress or the escalating horror of a protracted terrorist war will depend on the actions not only of soldiers on the battlefield but also of professionals in the political, academic, religious, and media arenas. Thus far, these leaders have not been particularly forthcoming, and they seem to have been unable to see that treating the symptoms of terrorism is not adequate to the task of stamping out this scourge.

It is imperative that their perception clear in the immediate future. For only if these leaders—in government and civilian circles, both within and outside the Muslim countries—join together in concerted action, guided by a vision that heralds life-enhancing ethics, can a *Preemptive Peace* be struck to guarantee the rights and security of citizens across the globe.