

IN DEFENSE OF FREEDOM

After the end of the Cold War, Americans breathed a collective sigh of relief. Many were convinced that the supposed end of tyranny would usher in a golden era of peace and prosperity.

This prediction may yet turn out to be true, but only if we remain vigilant in the defense of freedom against yet another of its foes. Today we face what was, until September 11th 2001, an ignored threat to our ideal of liberty under law. That is the threat of Islamic Terrorism.

When speaking about the cause of freedom in his classic work "Common Sense", Thomas Paine wrote:

"The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth. 'Tis not the affair of a city, a country, a province or a kingdom, but of a continent - of at least one eighth part of the habitable globe. 'Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected, even to the end of time, by the proceedings now."

Indeed, posterity has been involved in this all important struggle between tyranny and freedom and the battle now concerns the entire globe. It is crucial that we see clearly the nature of the current struggle and what is at stake. In a *NEW YORK POST* September 4, 2003 piece entitled: "AL QAEDA'S AGENDA FOR IRAQ", Amir Taheri quotes extensively from a book entitled: "The Future of Iraq and The Arabian Peninsula After The Fall of Baghdad" by Yussuf al-Ayyeri, one of Osama bin Laden's closest associates since the early '90s. In the book, al-Ayyeri makes the claim that:

"IT is not the American war machine that should be of the utmost concern to Muslims. What threatens the future of Islam, in fact its very survival, is American democracy."

When we look further, we note that he sees democracy as a form of "unbelief" which is more threatening to Islam than all the other forms combined. The reason for this is that:

"This form of "unbelief" persuades the people that they are in charge of their destiny and that, using their collective reasoning, they can shape policies and pass laws as they see fit. That leads them into ignoring the "unalterable laws" promulgated by God for the whole of mankind, and codified in the Islamic shariah (jurisprudence) until the end of time."

This is what he sees as at stake in Iraq:

"In Iraq today, there are only two sides," Al-Ayyeri asserts. "Here we have a clash of two visions of the world and the future of mankind. The side prepared to accept more sacrifices will win."

It is quite clear here that he, and others like him, view the freedoms we associate with our democratic tradition as heretical, sacrilegious and incompatible with Islam. Herein lies the basic nature of the conflict of visions which we are engaged in. If we are to prevail, we had better get a better handle on just what our principles are and what is at stake in this struggle.

The most succinct and clear expression of the principles animating our side of the struggle remains the words penned by Jefferson when our founders declared their independence for England;

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, —

The God that gave us life also gave us liberty. It is liberty that makes life worth living and which separates us from animals, which God gave life to as well. Liberty is necessary for the realization of human purpose, which is expressed as the “pursuit of happiness”.

Further clarification is in order here. Today our view of happiness tends to be hedonistic. We want to feel good immediately and tend not to think too far ahead. So we see a night out or a pleasant activity as a route to happiness. This was not the view that the founders had in mind. Their view was more in line with the ancient Greeks.

The Greeks had a very different perspective on happiness. Aristotle spoke about achieving *eudaimonia*, which is roughly translated into happiness.

Eudaimonia is not an emotional state; it is more about being all that you can, fulfilling your potential. The idea is that by living in a way that reaches your full potential you bloom or flourish and so display the best version of you that you can be.

For early Americans, who were inheritors of the Judeo-Christian tradition, our potential as human beings created in the image of God can only be fulfilled in a loving relation with him. It is important to note that they were claiming a right to “pursue” happiness, rather than a right to happiness itself. Happiness is something that can not be provided to us, but must be pursued.

There is a drive within human beings that causes us to reach beyond ourselves. At its highest, this drive manifests itself as religious devotion to a sense of transcendent meaning and purpose and to enter into a relationship with the source of that meaning and purpose, our creator. It also manifests itself in various human endeavors where we seek to stretch our limitations and emerge victorious against all the odds. This is seen in the mountain climber who climbs the mountain simply because it is there, the inventor, the explorer, the entrepreneur, and countless other examples. Needless to say, the type liberty needed for humans to pursue their happiness is broad and includes religious

freedom and economic freedom as well as political freedom. The power of human freedom is one of history's most revolutionary forces and has inspired both intense devotion to that principle, as well as intense opposition.

Following the American Revolution, the expression of these principles and the example of the revolution inspired a renewed interest in the principles of liberty during the 19th Century. This renewed interest in such principles inspired a number of pro-liberty European thinkers to embark on a political pilgrimage to America so that they could view first hand this experiment in ordered liberty. One such thinker was Frenchman Alexis De Tocqueville, who wrote in his now famous work Democracy in America: ***“The civilization of New England has been like a beacon lit on a hill, which, after it has diffused its warmth immediately around it, also tinges the distant horizon with its glow...”*** Of course that distant horizon was Europe, where those who found themselves yearning to follow that beacon on a hill, started a global abolitionist movement which succeeded in abolishing slavery in much of the world and inspired movements for national independence among people who were living under oppression. From Europe these ideas spread out to the non-western world. In the 19th Century, the western notions of individual liberty, although deemed heretical by the traditionalists, were embraced by the young western educated elites in the Muslim world. This influence resulted in an end to slavery in much of that part of the world and movement for national liberation among oppressed religious and national minorities, who once were in the majority. The process of influence culminated on March 3, 1924, when the first President of the Turkish Republic, Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, as part of his reforms, constitutionally abolished the institution of the Caliphate (A single leader who was a political and religious leader over the whole Muslim world with the responsibility to implement Islamic law). Its powers within Turkey were transferred to the Turkish Grand National Assembly (parliament) of the newly formed Turkish Republic. That was the high point of the influence of such western notions as individual liberty and self government in the Muslim world. As an acknowledgement of the role played by America in inspiring this movement towards liberty, the nation of France gave the Statute of Liberty to America as a gift in 1865.

At the start of the 20th Century when freedom was threatened by Fascism, young American's risked their lives overseas to roll back the tide of Fascism in World War I. Once again, when freedom was threatened by Nazism and other totalitarian systems in World War II, young Americans fought and died so that others may have freedom. Not only did we not colonize those we defeated, but we helped to rebuild those nations into free and prosperous societies. In addition, it was America who convinced European countries to give up their former colonies after the war. This resulted in a further spreading of the notions of independence and political freedom in much of the world. Finally, it was America who led a long effort to roll back the threat of Communism during the Cold War. While not perfect, America has a recognizable track record of defending freedom.

America's ideological contribution to the spread of human liberty is not confined to the political sphere, but includes the economic sphere as well. In addition to the spread of

the notion of political freedom in Europe during the 19th Century, there was a corresponding spread of the notions of economic freedom as well. The result was a freeing up of trade and a lifting of the standards of living throughout most of the developed world. In the 20th Century, we pioneered the Information Age economy and unleashed a global economic movement that has lifted the living standards of much of the world, including developing nations. The importance of the Information Age in development for the 21st Century and America's role in leading the way is acknowledged by the Japanese government in a document entitled "The Frontier Within" <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/21century/report/htmls/index.html> In the report, they note the advantages America has in the "Information Age" global economy.

"Some judge globalization to be no more than Americanization or to mean the unilateral imposition of American standards. It is true that the United States currently enjoys an overwhelming advantage in the multiple processes of globalization."

The report describes those "multiple processes":

"At the same time there has been movement toward integration driven by the emergence of English as the international lingua franca and the overwhelmingly superior position of those who control information and IT. We also see a trend toward what we might call realignment-the challenging of established industries by new industrial players, the loss of state control, and the growth of individuals' say, accompanied by a regrouping of winners and losers based on a widening of the gap between the information "haves" and "have-nots." Meanwhile, the construction of multiple networks has broadened the opportunities for women and members of other traditionally disadvantaged groups to participate more fully in society and has provided a path for the sudden opening up of individual options and opportunities for self-realization."

It goes on to highlight the essential theme of the 21st Century:

"If the twentieth century was the century of the organization, the twenty-first century will be the century of the individual. ... Individual freedom and empowerment, so far enjoyed by only a handful of people, will be within reach of the great majority. If so, it is all the more important that each and every person firmly establish his or her individuality."

It is important that we do everything in our power to ensure that this trend continues as the advancement of a civilization inspired by individual liberty depends on it.

At this point one may ask whether it really is a matter of the survival of civilization if radical Islam does emerge victorious. After all, wasn't Islam once the inspiration of an advanced and flourishing civilization? It is true that the territory now controlled by Islamic nations was once a vibrant and flourishing civilization. The problem is that it was so a long time before Islam arrived on the scene. When the Arab tribes invaded the lands of the eastern half of the Roman Empire and the Persian Empire, they took control

of what was then the most advanced civilization of the day. The inhabitants of that civilization, Assyrian Christian, Byzantine Christian, Persian, Jew, etc., translated the Greeks works of Plato and Aristotle into Arabic for the new rulers and still engaged in research and cultural exploration. This civilization still flourished for centuries. See "What Arab Civilization?" <http://www.ninevehsoft.com/fiorina.htm>

Once these communities ceased to flourish and were reduced to a small minority in the lands that they one were the majority, this part of the world fell into a collapse of civilization from which it has never recovered. No matter which measure of civilization is used, the Islamic world ranks among the least advanced parts of the globe. From the development of the arts and science, to human rights, to economic progress the stagnation of this part of the world is staggering and the human misery it has created tragic. In a book entitled "America Alone: The End Of The World As We Know It", Mark Steyn sees the coming of a global dark age of human misery ahead if radical Islam is able to emerge victorious in its cause. He sees America as the only obstacle in its way.

Once again it falls to America to defend the freedom that we have fought for so hard and so long to preserve. As has been pointed out, the contest between freedom and tyranny is not restricted to one age or generation, but is a timeless battle. Neither is it restricted to a particular location or people, but it is a global ballet. The sacrifices made by our brave men and women in the armed forces today are linked in this noble cause to those made by Americans of the past. It is our duty to honor those brave souls who have laid there life on the line for liberty both past and present. The best way to honor them is to renew our dedication to the cause for which they laid down their lives and ensure that victory is the end result. In doing so we must always keep in mind Thomas Jefferson's warning that: **"The price of freedom is eternal vigilance."**