

Since our invasion of Iraq, terrorism around the world has increased dramatically due to a profound misunderstanding of its causes, resulting not only in continued pursuit of the very actions that spawn it, but also in the neglect of policies that could successfully lead to its demise.

The Rise of Terrorism ... Again  
Terrorists in today's Middle East are not unique, but are much the same as in all parts of the world and in all periods of history.

**Why does terrorism occur?** The seeds of today's terrorism are not found in the Muslim religion, but rather in the extreme poverty of most citizens of Middle Eastern countries. In the case of al Qaeda and related groups, terrorism is also rooted in rapid modernization, which disrupts tradition, social order, family structure, sources and predictability of income, and other foundational aspects of life. It often leaves people,

# Our Actions and Policies Are Dramatically Increasing World Terrorism

## An Urgent Call for a New World Vision

especially the poor, reaching out to retrieve this lost order through fundamentalism — a reaction which, in the broad sweep of history, has at times been seen to erupt in hate and violence. In an extreme form, al Qaeda reflects the broader, long-held concerns of the Muslim community, which rightly or wrongly, views U.S. foreign policy and aid to be heavily biased in favor of Israel and a significant threat to Islam. Also, they believe it is an abomination that the U.S. military has had a presence on sacred Islamic soil in Saudi Arabia. As religious zealots, Al Qaeda's leaders prey on their impoverished society's vulnerability, manipulating *jihad* to suit their own ends.

Given oppressive poverty and rapid modernization and its fearful, fundamentalist response in the continuing rise of terrorism — which, in turn, historically surmounts traditional military reactions — how then should we respond when history shows decisively that, over the long haul, attacking terrorism increases terrorism, and violence begets violence?

A Thoughtful Response:  
What We Should Do

**First**, we must pursue true terrorists aggressively by identifying and isolating them, and interrupting their access to weapons and the means to fund them.

**Second**, we should make meaningful progress toward balanced resolutions in

solving the ongoing, intractable problems in Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir and other places that directly affect the Islamic world.

**Third**, we should build up trade with enlightened Muslim countries, creating broader prosperity beyond the power elite.

**Fourth**, we should dramatically lower our profile in Iraq.

A Thoughtful Response:  
What We Should NOT Do

We should not use the rhetoric of self-righteousness, haughtiness or power.

We should not preemptively attack.

Thoughtful Objections ...  
and Reasoned Answers

Thoughtful friends have raised two important objections to our thesis. One of these is that not attacking the insurgents is tantamount to appeasing thugs, and appeasement is a mistake. But our strength

and dominance mean we can

achieve our goals through economic means and other types of influence.

Therefore, "appeasement" is not a risk. Neglecting to track down true terrorists is a risk. Neglecting to track down

nuclear weapons is a risk. Reducing our profile in an Iraqi civil war is almost certainly not.

The second objection our friends have raised is with our thesis that poverty and hyperchange are catalysts and that exercising our formidable military strength is not the best or only solution. As an example, they cite liberal mayors in the 1960s and 1970s explaining rising crime as a byproduct of poverty and urban despair, while subsequent mayors more recently empowered the police to aggressively enforce the law, which yielded a decrease in violent crime. To this we answer that regardless of conservative or liberal administrations, crime statistics nationwide from the 1960s to the present have been similar. Careful analysis suggests some demographic or societal force beyond the police was responsible. Likewise, military action in the Middle East cannot solve any of the root causes of the problems there. Ultimately, force does not subdue — it enrages, increasing the perception of our antagonism toward Muslim nations and damaging our case for the morality of our cause.

Changing the Course of History ...  
by Reclaiming the Course of History

In the wake of 9/11, it was appropriate to be concerned and to build defenses and protection that we had not previously con-

templated. But it is not appropriate that this defensiveness should become paranoia and result in a decline in the treasured civil liberties that define our nation. We recall Lincoln, in his second inaugural address, "with malice toward none, with charity for all" ... or Washington in his farewell address to Congress, "Observe good faith and justice toward all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all." We should remember that our vision of ourselves as a beacon on a hill implies love, respect and friendship more than it implies power.

Reversing our approach is not merely about redeeming our heritage. The billions spent fighting in Iraq can be used on true anti-terrorist actions ... or deficit reduction ... or cancer research. We can use this money to support our educational system, to stimulate employment at home or to fight with renewed resources those other wars that we have not yet shown an ability to win — such as the war on our own domestic poverty, or the war on drugs.

We have erred in attacking Iraq. There has been an unacceptable loss in lives and an incalculable effect that has engendered hatred and increased terrorism around the world. That is not our America — ours is bold and vigorous, whose achievements continue to surpass those of any nation before us, and that at its heart values love, friendship, respect and decency for the entire world.

No matter which candidate earns our nation's vote this November, we would entreat both to hear our call for a new vision and new policies. To read the full version of this abridged essay, **we invite you to visit our website at [www.americanrespect.com](http://www.americanrespect.com)**. We are neither a PAC nor an organization asking for contributions to advance a cause or candidate. There's no charge for downloading this article; please share it and help open the discussion to these ideas. **Please send your reactions and responses to us at [comments@americanrespect.com](mailto:comments@americanrespect.com)**.

Let us all take this critical time in history to reexamine where we are ... and who we are ... and what we really need to do.

Grasp with us again the American mantle of love, respect, friendship and freedom that has long served as a beacon to the world.