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Three Key Principles in the War Against Terrorism

Benjamin Netanyahu
Former Prime Minister of Israel



BENJAMIN NETANYAHU was born in Tel Aviv in 1949, grew up in Jerusalem, and spent his high school years in the United States, where his father taught history. In 1967, he enlisted in the Israel Defense Forces and served in an elite commando unit. Wounded in the rescue operation of hijacked Sabena Airline hostages at Ben Gurion Airport and later cited for outstanding operational leadership, he was discharged from the I.D.F. in 1972. Mr. Netanyahu received a B.S. in Architecture and an M.S. in Management Studies from M.I.T., and studied political science at M.I.T. and Harvard University. He was employed by the Boston Consulting Group, an international business consulting firm, and later joined the senior management of Rim Industries. In 1979, he organized an international conference against terrorism under the auspices of the Jonathan Institute – a private foundation dedicated to the study of terrorism and named

after his brother, who gave his life leading the famous and daring Entebbe rescue mission. Mr. Netanyahu served as Deputy Chief of Mission in the Israeli Embassy in Washington from 1982 to 1984, and as Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations from 1986 to 1988, when he was elected to the Knesset as a Likud member and became Deputy Foreign Minister. In 1996, he was elected Prime Minister of Israel. Mr. Netanyahu is the author of three books: *Terrorism: How the West Can Win* (edited 1986), *A Place Among the Nations* (1992), and *Fighting Terrorism: How Democracies Can Defeat Domestic and International Terrorism* (1995).

The following is abridged from a speech delivered at a Hillsdale College seminar in Naples, Florida, on March 19, 2002.

The United States is well on its way to winning the war against terrorism because the United States, under President Bush, has espoused three clear principles.

The first principle is moral clarity. President Bush said in his remarkable speech right after September 11 that there are no good terrorists, only bad terrorists – that terrorism is always evil. In saying this, he was saying that nothing justifies terrorism. It is important to state this point clearly and to elaborate on it, because the main weapon that terrorists use against the West is not

bombs or guns, but moral obfuscation: “You’re terrorists, because you kill civilians, too. America, Britain, Israel – all are terrorist states.” We must harden ourselves against this amoral and debilitating charge.

Terrorism is not defined by the identity of its perpetrator. Nor is it defined by the cause, real or imagined, that its perpetrators espouse. Terrorism is defined by one thing and one thing alone. It is defined by the nature of the act. Terrorists systematically and deliberately attack the innocent. That is a very different thing from the unintentional civilian casualties that often accompany legitimate acts of war.

For example, in 1944 the British Air Force set out to bomb the Gestapo headquarters in Copenhagen. The British pilots missed, and instead of hitting the Gestapo they hit a hospital and killed 83 children and four nuns. That was not terrorism. That did not make Britain a terrorist state. That was a terrible but unintentional accident of the kind that accompanies every war. But terrorists don't *accidentally* kill civilians. The deaths of innocents are not an unintentional byproduct of their strategy. Terrorists deliberately target the innocent. They intentionally cross the lines that define the conventions of war that have been developed, in accordance with basic morality, to try to limit and regulate conflict. They willfully try to kill as many innocent civilians as they can. And this is never justified, regardless of the cause.

Going back to World War II, consider this hypothetical: You're an American officer. You're fighting for the most just cause in history. But you come into a German village – maybe even a village next to a concentration camp – and you line up the women and children in that village and kill them with a machine gun. You have committed an act of terrorism. You have committed a war crime and you will be judged guilty and executed, and properly so. Not even the most just cause can justify terrorism. It is always illegitimate, always criminal.

Allow me to add one other observation – I think an important one – on this point. It is not merely that the goals of terrorists do not justify their means. In addition, the means that terrorists use tell us something about their real goals. We can see this very simply by looking at what happens when terrorists come to power. They don't establish free societies. They don't establish governments that respect human rights. They establish dictatorships that trample human rights. It's the same whether we look at Cuba or at Iran or at Libya or at Afghanistan under the Taliban. Terrorist movements may talk about fighting for democracy and freedom, but if they're in the business of terror, you can bet they

plan, when they come to power, to grind human rights into the dust.

So again, terrorism is always criminal, whether practiced by Israel, America, or the Palestinian Authority. The deliberate and systematic assault on innocents is evil. Nor do ratios count. In Afghanistan, when the final tally is over, America will probably have killed a lot more Afghans than the number of Americans slaughtered in New York and Washington. But that doesn't make the Taliban cause just, or America's cause unjust.

I think the United States is not and will not be cowed by arguments that try to delegitimize its war against terrorism – arguments that equate terrorism with the unintentional killing of civilians. That's what I mean when I say that President Bush and the American people have moral clarity.

Strategic Clarity

THIS BRINGS us to the second principle – strategic clarity. I think the United States understands that fighting terrorism doesn't really mean fighting the terrorists. Of course it is necessary and right to go after them. But they are not really the most important target. If you want to fight terrorism – and I've been saying this for over two decades – you don't go out looking for the needle in the haystack. You go after the haystack.

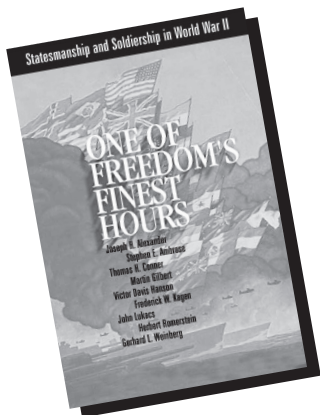
To use a different analogy, if you have kamikaze pilots coming at you, you can shoot down a kamikaze pilot here and there. You can even go after their squadron leader. But you will still have kamikazes coming in. The only way that you can stop the attacks from continuing is to go after the aircraft carrier that is their base. Likewise, if you want to stop terrorism, you have got to go after the regimes that stand behind the terrorists. You have to understand that the terrorists are not floating up in space. They have to take off from a certain place and go back to it. They have to have a location to hatch their grisly plots, and to equip and train

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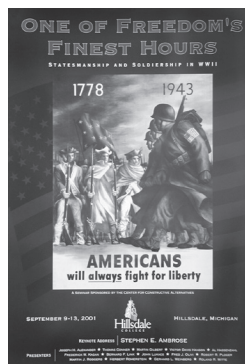
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themselves. That haven is always the territory of a sovereign state. If you take away the support of that sovereign state, the whole scaffolding of international terrorism will collapse into the dust.

That's exactly what the United States is doing now. It went after the Taliban and Al Qaeda began to crumble. There are remnants in Afghanistan. There is perhaps even a residual terrorist capacity. But when the roots are cut off, the grapes left on the vine wither and die. And this is fairly easy to do, because the whole terror network consists of a half-dozen states with about two dozen terrorist organizations affiliated with them – sometimes working directly for them. If you take care of those states, the rest is easy. And there are only two things you can do with terror-sponsoring states: deter them or dismantle them. That means giving them a choice. This choice was well articulated by the British Prime Minister, speaking to the Taliban: "Surrender terrorism, or surrender power." They didn't surren-

der terrorism, and out they went. There is no third choice.

I think the United States is well on its way to handling two other terrorist regimes. One is practicing terrorism this very moment, inciting radicalism and terror and militancy from the Philippines to Los Angeles. I'm talking about Iran. But the first target will be Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Both of these regimes, if unattended, will succeed – fairly rapidly – in the programs they have launched to develop atomic weapons. And once they possess atomic weapons, these two foundations of the terror network could threaten the world and our civilization with a terror that we cannot even imagine today.

President Bush is absolutely right in boldly naming these two countries and going after them – or in the case of Iran, perhaps, waiting for the implosion of its regime after the collapse

of Saddam Hussein. So in addition to the moral clarity to identify all terrorism as illegitimate, the United States is demonstrating strategic clarity in moving to root out the terror-supporting regimes.

Imperative for Victory

WHICH BRINGS me to the third principle: the imperative for victory. And when I say this, I don't just mean that the United States wants to win. That's obvious. I mean that the United States understands that the only way to defeat terrorism is actually to defeat it. That sounds redundant, but it isn't. There is a very powerful view today, after all — held even by some former Presidents — that says the root cause of terrorism is the deprivation of national rights or civil rights. This deprivation, according to this view, is what's driving terrorism — which is, of course, what the terrorists themselves say. Anyone who knows modern history, however, can enumerate several hundred battles, struggles, conflicts, and wars that were aimed at the achievement of national liberation, independence, or equal and civil rights, and that did not employ terror. Indeed, one has to look very hard to find the use of terrorism in these conflicts.

For example, if we ask what is the worst occupation in history — the very worst — I think most of us would agree that it was the Nazi occupation of Europe. Yet when we look, we're hard pressed to find one example of, say, the French Resistance using terrorism. They had plenty of opportunities, but they never once targeted the wives and children of French collaborators, or even the wives or children of German officers stationed in France. Why didn't they? Because they weren't terrorists. They were democrats. Or take an example closer to home: the struggle of blacks for civil equality in the United States during the 1950s and early 1960s. That struggle never employed terror either,

because it also proceeded from a democratic mind-set.

The only way to persuade people to obliterate buses full of children, or buildings, or cities — the only way to persuade people to abandon the moral constraints that govern human action, even in war — is to inculcate in their minds the idea that there is a cause higher or more important than morality. That cause could be racial. It could be religious. It could be ethnic. It could be social. But whatever it is, it must be *total* if it is going to allow people to circumvent morality even to the point of intentionally blowing up children. That kind of thinking proceeds not from a democratic, but from a totalitarian mind-set. That's why, from its inception, terrorism has been wedded to totalitarianism. From Lenin to Stalin to Hitler, down to the Ayatollahs, terrorism is bred by totalitarianism.

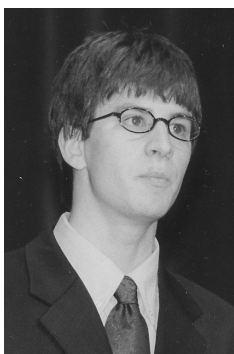
It requires a machine that inculcates hatred from childhood, grinding it into peoples' minds and hearts until they are willing even to blow themselves up for the purpose of murdering innocents.

So the root cause of the kind of systemic terrorism we confront today is totalitarianism, and in order to defeat totalitarianism we have to defeat the totalitarian regimes. That was accomplished through war in the case of Nazi Germany. In the case of the Soviet Union, Ronald Reagan won bloodlessly in the end. But he won. Victory over Nazism and communism were imperative for freedom. And in the case of militant Islamic terrorism, the same spirit is required.

Of course, the United States and its allies are often told that if they fight this war, they'll get hundreds of millions of people angry at them. For instance, many said that if America bombed Afghanistan during Ramadan, tens of thousands of

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Freedom is Not Free: Our Responsibility to the Republic

Daniel Young

Hillsdale College Class of 2002

Winner, 2002 Edward Everett Prize in Oratory

The following is adapted from a speech by Daniel Young delivered at the 2002 Edward Everett Prize in Oratory competition, held on April 18 in Phillips Auditorium on the campus of Hillsdale College. The Edward Everett Prize was established at Hillsdale in 2000 through the generosity of the Charles M. Bauervic Foundation of Suttons Bay, Michigan. Hillsdale College students in all majors are eligible to compete by presenting memorized ten-minute orations on an assigned theme. The prize is named for Edward Everett, the man who spoke before Lincoln at Gettysburg. One of the leading orators of his time, Everett spoke at Hillsdale College in 1862 on the topic, "The Origin and Character of War."

"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."

To the Founding Fathers, freedom was an unalienable right. Freedom was not for sale. Freedom was the birthright of every individual, regardless of their social, economic or political standing. So freedom was free... or was it?

After all, the same 56 men who affirmed, at the beginning of our founding document, the right of every citizen of this nation to be free, affirmed at the end of that document that "for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor."

Our forefathers recognized that freedom came from our Creator without a price tag. But the preservation of this freedom would forever place the citizens of this nation in debt.

This is a debt paid in part by those whose families are forever marked with an empty chair at the dinner table, and by those families themselves. It is a debt paid in part by the millions of

Americans who have answered the call of this nation to serve both in peace and in war. It is a debt paid in part by the original 56 who lived up to their pledge. And it is a debt paid in part by those who have recently fallen in the mountains of Afghanistan.

These and others have paid their part of the debt owed for freedom. But to many in our time, freedom appears to be free. Its cost seems little. For too long, too many of us have ignored the debt we owe for freedom, allowing others to pick up the check. Now it is time for us to adopt the old adage, "There's no such thing as a free lunch." It's time for us to recognize, and act upon, the fact that freedom is not free.

It is improbable and impractical that all of us will serve in the military. But that does not negate our responsibility to pay our debt to preserve freedom. While there are many ways to do this, time only allows me to focus on a few. They are found in an oath that has its origin in Great Britain. This oath was brought to our continent by an elderly gentleman by the name of William Boyce.

Some of you may recall the story of Mr. Boyce. Visiting London, he became hopelessly lost in the dense London fog. He was helped by a young boy, who offered directions to Boyce and ensured his safe return to his lodgings. This boy told Boyce about the oath that motivated him to offer help, and to refuse reward. Thus were the Boy Scouts, founded by Sir Robert Baden-Powell in England, brought to the United States.

The cornerstone of the Boy Scout movement is the Scout Oath, written in 1909. And while most everything in this world has changed in the past 90 years, the Boy Scout Oath has not. Why? Because — like our Constitution — it works.

In the first line of the Scout Oath, there are twelve words that provide insight into three of freedom's conditions, and help to illuminate the responsibilities of the individual in a republic.

“*On my honor...*” Honor is one of those words we think we understand, until we are asked to define it. Lately, honor has become rare. We have gone so far as to denigrate and devalue it, as in the phrase “honor among thieves.” Honor has no place among base and low characters.

Sixty years ago, Dr. W.F. Tillet of Vanderbilt University related the story of how ermine – small animals widely valued for their fur – were hunted in Europe. The hunters would search out the den of the ermine, and daub the opening with filth, before setting the dogs loose. When the ermine would run back to its den for shelter and find that it must soil its coat to enter, it would turn and fight for its life. It would rather have his coat stained with blood than dirtied with filth. It would sooner face death than sully its most valuable and precious quality. For honorable human beings, honor is likewise dearer than life. But there are far too few.

Today, one has only to browse the newspaper headlines – whether in the news, sports, business or entertainment sections – for numerous examples of honor sacrificed at the altars of expediency and personal gain. Because honor is not genetic. It is learned. What we read in our newspapers is rooted in lessons learned in homes, at schools, and in communities. For the sake of preserving freedom, we must strive once again to be people of honor.

The Scout Oath continues: “...*I will do my best...*” Former President Jimmy Carter, in his book *Why Not the Best?*, recalls being interviewed by Admiral Hyman G. Rickover for the Nuclear Submarine Program. He had hoped to make a good impression with his high marks from the Naval Academy, but Admiral Rickover surprised him by asking, “Did you always do your best?” Mr. Carter had to admit he hadn’t, to which the Admiral quickly shot back, “Why not?”

Why not? This question should be asked of all of us. Why do we often think that the best is what someone else should do? We expect the best from mechanics, plumbers, teachers, pilots and others, yet too easily excuse ourselves. Doing our best may not attract worldwide attention, or even thanks, but it will make a difference. It will improve our families, schools, businesses, churches and communities. A simple act, but a debt paid.

The Oath continues: “...*To do my duty...*” When I think of duty, I’m reminded of one of the world’s foremost philosophers – Charlie Brown. I recall a discussion between Charlie and Linus about growing up. Charlie said that growing up is like being in a car. In the beginning you ride in the backseat and somebody else takes care of everything. But one day, all of a sudden, wham! You’re grown-up and you can’t ride in the backseat anymore. Duty means giving up the backseat and taking the wheel. But in our time, too many of us are unwilling to take it.

The word “duty” is derived from the French word *deu*. This is also where we get our word “debt.” Duty is what one owes to others. We all have civic duties: to pay taxes, to serve on juries, and so on. Other duties are moral: to have integrity, to provide and care for our families, to pull our own weight. Our natural tendency is to do things that are fun, or to live for beauty. But as we become intellectually and morally aware, we find that real life *is* duty.

We have a duty to those with whom we work. We have duties to our families, to our friends and to ourselves. Duty, like honor, is not inherited. It is taught and it is caught... by example. How many people, getting called for jury duty, react with the proper sense of responsibility? It’s quite clear that we recognize duty all too well, by the great lengths to which we go in avoiding it. We should rather face up to it, like Daniel Webster: “A sense of duty pursues us ever,” he said. “It is omnipresent.”

Freedom was a free gift from our Creator, but our nation today faces an ever-looming debt. Freedom has seemed free up to now for many of us who have yet to serve, to volunteer, to vote, to contribute, to participate, or to make a commitment. But now we are called to do these things.

History is strewn with the wreckage of great civilizations that fell, not because they lacked a great military, but for lack of morality. They crumbled from within. To preserve freedom, America needs strong families, ethical businesses, colleges and universities with upstanding professors. It needs citizens who will stand up and say, “*On my honor I will do my best to do my duty...*” 🌲

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