

Tim Starr Replies to Dean Ahmad

What follows is a letter from Tim Starr to the Editor of Freedom Network News. For those who believe it is just for us to defend ourselves against terrorism, Tim has created a new e-mail list called "Fight For Liberty!" which you are invited to join. You can do so either by sending an email message to

fightforliberty-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

or at the Yahoo web site [here](#).

Editor:

I very much enjoyed this year's ISIL conference in Vilnius, Lithuania. It was my tenth one in a row, and each one seems to keep on getting better than the last.

Unfortunately, the conference was marred by the lack of representation for the "hawk" side on the panel discussion of war and foreign policy. I would like to try to make up for that deficiency by replying to Dean Ahmad's presentation in this letter.

Ahmad began by pointing out that traditional Islam made great contributions to science, philosophy, and the rule of law. This is true. However, those contributions stopped centuries ago. Also, Ahmad did not mention the "dark side" of Islam. Perhaps this is because he personally rejects those elements of traditional Islam, as do most moderate Muslims today. However, today's militant Islamists intend to restore traditional Islam in its entirety, including its more unlibertarian elements.

This was demonstrated by what militant Islamists did within the regime where they had the most power, Afghanistan, where the Taliban banned music, kite-flying, chess, movies, and carrying guns without a permit (issued at the discretion of the Taliban, of course). Men were forbidden to shave their beards. Women were forbidden to go have professions outside the home or to leave home without wearing a burkha and being accompanied by a male relative. The Taliban also blew up the historic giant statues of Buddha at Bamiyan because they considered them to be pagan and because they considered all representational art to be contrary to Islam. The

Taliban imposed the death penalty for homosexuality, for

proselytizing non-Islamic religions, and had special religious police to enforce such laws. This is the sort of thing we have in store for us if the Islamists get their way, and it would be a grave mistake for us to ignore the roots of their vision in traditional Islam.

The most unlibertarian aspect of traditional Islam is Jihad. While the literal meaning of the word "jihad" is merely "struggle" or "striving," its meaning in traditional Islam is much more than that. Ibn Khaldun, who is sometimes cited by libertarians as the Islamic Adam Smith, summarized the meaning of "Jihad" according to all schools of Islamic thought thusly:

"In the Muslim community, the holy war is a religious duty, because of the universalism of the (Muslim) mission and (the obligation to) convert everybody to Islam either by persuasion or by force. Therefore, caliphate and royal authority are united in (Islam), so that the person in charge can devote the available strength to both of them."

That clearly says that Jihad means holy war to convert everyone to Islam, and, historically, the spread of Islam was largely by wars of aggression. In the West, Islamic conquerors were only stopped by military force, first at the battle of Poitiers in southern France, and then later at the gates of Vienna, where the Austrians along with their Polish and Lithuanian allies stopped them. In the East, Moslems conquered their way through India, establishing the Mughal Empire. In the West, Islamic civilization culminated in the Ottoman Empire. Traditional Islam is not opposed to imperialist aggression, so long as it is Islamic imperialist aggression.

The history of traditional Islamic civilization is also plagued by democide (mass-murder). When Mohammed conquered Arabia in the 7th century, he massacred and expelled the Jews. When Tamerlane conquered India in 1398, he executed 100,000 prisoners of war in one action alone. Even in Islamic Spain, which has often been cited as an example of tolerance under Islamic rule, Christians and Jews were massacred by the thousands. The Ottomans massacred thousands of Armenians as late as the 1890s.

Since Islamic law permits enslavement of non-Moslems, many of those who were conquered by Moslems were enslaved. For centuries, Serbian boys were enslaved into the Janissaries, the elite soldiers of the Ottoman Sultan. The Islamic slave trade began long before the Western slave trade, and continued long after the West led the world in abolishing slavery. Slavery wasn't officially abolished in Saudi Arabia until the 1960s, and unofficially continues there today, as well as in other Islamic countries like Sudan.

Jews and Christians who were spared execution and enslavement, but failed to convert to Islam, were subject to a form of religious apartheid called "dhimmitude." It is illegal under Islamic law to force people to convert to Islam, but "dhimmi" are obliged to pay a special head tax that is not imposed upon Moslems, and are forbidden to proselytize, to repair old churches/temples, or to build new ones. Their testimony is not admissible in Islamic courts. This

"privileged" status was reserved only for Jews and Christians, since

Islam considers them "People of the Book". Islamic law does not require the extension of these privileges to pagans, Hindus, Buddhists, atheists, etc.

The combined effect over time of these Islamic policies of mass-murdering, enslaving, and subjugating non-Moslems was to radically reduce the numbers of non-Moslems living under Islamic rule, until the nineteenth century when the European powers got the Ottoman Empire to improve its treatment of its Jewish and Christian subjects. That is the reality of what Ahmad described as Jews and Christians living "peacefully" under Islamic rule.

Ahmad blamed Western intervention for the lack of freedom in Arab countries, saying that they imitated the socialism of their former colonizers, and that it was racist to hold Arab culture responsible for the lack of freedom in those countries. However, racism is based upon biology, not culture, and there are reasons to think that Arab culture bears some responsibility for the lack of freedom in the Arab world.

The political regimes of the Arab world range from authoritarian monarchies to totalitarian dictatorships, and yet none of the European colonizers of the Middle East were authoritarian monarchies or totalitarian dictatorships. The Arab countries did not imitate the social democracy of their former colonizers, the British and the French; they imitated the totalitarian socialism of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. The Arab countries did not imitate the freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and separation of powers of Western Europe; they imitated the orthodoxy, censorship, and autocracy of Eastern Europe. It is no surprise that traditional Islamic rulers were also autocrats who censored unorthodox ideas.

Ahmad then turned to Iraq, and attributed the overthrow of Saddam Hussein to the influence of neoconservatives and falsified intelligence. However, there is no need to fabricate evidence that Saddam Hussein was a fascist dictator with a history of reckless aggression, sponsorship of terrorism, and the development and use of weapons of mass destruction. Saddam Hussein initiated two wars of aggression against Iran and one against Kuwait, launched missiles at Israel, paid \$25,000 checks to the families of Palestinian suicide bombers, used chemical weapons against the Iranians and the Kurds, and pursued nuclear power despite having enough oil to provide for all the energy Iraq could have possibly needed for any civilian purpose. These are well-known facts, not a bunch of lies cooked up by some neoconservative conspiracy.

Furthermore, for every piece of pre-war intelligence that has turned out to be false, many more have been confirmed. US inspectors found a nuclear centrifuge buried in the backyard of an Iraqi nuclear scientist. Western journalists found Iraqi intelligence files detailing the Saddam-Osama Pact. Sources considered "highly credible" by the CIA have confirmed meetings between Iraqi intelligence and Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al Qaeda's second-in-command, and that the

former head of Iraqi external intelligence, Farouk Hijazi, gave a

significant amount of money to Al Qaeda.

Ahmad claimed that neoconservatives want the US to forcibly impose their views upon the rest of the world. The leading neoconservative, William Kristol, denied this when I heard him speak at the World Affairs Council in San Francisco. Only dictatorships that sponsor terrorism and pursue weapons of mass destruction are to be targeted for regime change according to President Bush's National Security Strategy, and even then military force is only a last resort. Ahmad also made much of the fact that some neoconservatives called for the overthrow of Saddam's Ba'athist dictatorship back in 1998. Does that make them "premature anti-Ba'athists"? What's so bad about advocating the overthrow of a ruthless dictator responsible for the death of more Moslems than anyone else in the whole twentieth century?

Finally, Dr. Ahmad turned to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, claiming that more Palestinian than Israeli civilians have been killed in the current Intifada, at a ratio of three to one. He didn't cite any source, so it's impossible to verify this claim. However, the Israelis try to avoid killing Palestinian civilians, and issue statements of apology and regret when they accidentally kill civilians. The Palestinians deliberately try to kill as many Israeli civilians as possible, and celebrate when they succeed. Palestinian terrorists also use civilians as human shields, so as to make it as difficult as possible for the Israelis to attack the terrorists without killing civilians. Many of those Palestinian civilians were killed when the Israelis attacked Palestinian terrorists who were about to kill Israeli civilians. If those attacks had not been prevented, a lot more Israeli civilians would have been killed.

Ahmad singled out Israel for its alleged militarism, racism, and collectivism. However, Israel has never been a military dictatorship, unlike many other countries in the Middle East. Ahmad failed to mention that Israel has about a million Arab citizens whose legal rights are equal to those of Israeli Jews, and much greater than the legal rights of Arabs in Arab countries. For example, Israel is the only country in the Middle East in which Arab women have the right to vote.

Ahmad also failed to mention any of the anti-Jewish policies of the Arab regimes, such as the Palestinian Authority making it a death penalty offense for Palestinians to sell land to Jews and the specific exclusion of Jews from Jordan's Law of Return. Since Israel's founding, hundreds of thousands of Jews have fled to Israel from anti-Semitic persecution in Arab countries. There have been about as many of these Jewish refugees as there were Palestinian refugees from the Israeli War of Independence.

As for Israel's socialism, the only Middle Eastern countries with more economic freedom than Israel are Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, according to the Heritage Foundation's 2003 Index of Economic Freedom. Compared to Europe, Israel has more economic freedom than Latvia, the Czech Republic, France, and Armenia.

Ahmad blamed Israel alone for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,

saying that it was only Israeli refusal to discuss the Palestinian "Right of Return" that prevented the alleged Palestinian moderates from controlling the hard-liners. However, the history of refugee problems shows that a "right of return" for refugees is not a necessary precondition for the establishment of peace. For instance, more than 15 million Germans were expelled from Czechoslovakia and Poland at the end of WWII. Yet we do not see millions of German refugees from Poland and Czechoslovakia (and their children and grandchildren) living in refugee camps, committing acts of terrorism against Poland and Czechia, and demanding their "right of return." German claims to lost property are being pursued peacefully by lawsuits, not mass-murder. What explains the difference? Germany allowed its refugees to integrate into mainstream German society. The Palestinian refugees have never been allowed to do that. Their Arab rulers have kept them in refugee camps for decades, in order to maintain a permanently disgruntled army of "innocent victims" from which to recruit terrorists to murder Israeli civilians.

Arab political leaders have had at least three opportunities to accept a peaceful settlement in the Middle East in which the Palestinians would have gotten their own state – in 1937, in 1947, and in 2000. Each time, the Arab leaders have refused, because they would have had to accept Jewish sovereignty on "their" land. The Arab leaders refused to accept Jewish independence of Islamic rule before there were any Palestinian refugees from the Israeli War of Independence, and ever since then they have been inflating the number of refugees as much as possible and demanding their right to return in numbers large enough to demographically overwhelm the Israelis, thus eliminating Israel as a bastion of Jewish independence.

In 1967, Israel fought and won the Six Day War, then offered to trade the land it won in that defensive war for peace with its enemies. Egypt and Jordan did eventually take Israel up on this offer, and Israel kept its promises, dismantling settlements in the Sinai Desert and relinquishing territory to Egypt and Jordan. Yet Islamists assassinated Egyptian President Anwar Sadat for the "treason" of making peace with Israel, and Egypt still allows weapons to be smuggled through its territory into Gaza to arm the Islamist terrorists of Hamas, who reject the very existence of Israel.

In 2000, the Barak government of Israel offered Arafat virtually everything he could reasonably want, including \$30 billion in compensation for the Palestinian refugees, but Arafat still refused the offer and launched the current wave of terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians, instead.

The militant Islamic terrorists who have declared war on the USA, Israel, all of their allies around the world, and who call for the killing of all Americans, Jews, and those Moslems they consider "apostates" are not animated by an essentially libertarian worldview, or by opposition to imperialism and colonialism. Theirs is a vision of conquest, enslavement and religious apartheid for the whole world that makes Puritanism look mild in comparison, and they have repeatedly demonstrated their willingness to mass-

murder anyone who stands in their way, even if they have to commit suicide in the process. It is a mystery to me how anyone who considers himself a libertarian can blame this terrorism upon its intended victims, and characterize the measures taken to defend against it as imperialist aggression.

Tim Starr

Tue, 10/14/2003 - 08:33 | [permalink](#)

Copyright © 2005 Setting The World To Rights