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Message to the Conference:

What Will Happen After Iraq? How Will Global Terrorism be Defeated?

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HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY FOR STATESMANSHIP

While news programmes continue to discuss the abstracts of advances, resistance and collateral damage, we are living the real-life calculus of hope and fear every day in my part of the world. I hope that it will not be too long before the people of the region will be able to move on to hope and peace. I, myself, kept hoping against hope that everything could have been solved without having to resort to war.

This war is already characterised as a war of media as well as missiles. A Knight Ridder poll not long ago showed that the majority of Americans now believe that there were one or more Iraqis among the hijackers of the planes on September 11, 2001¹. But there were no Iraqis on the planes. The real connection between this war and terrorism will, I fear, become clear only afterwards when it is realised yet again that abuse leads to abuse, violence begets violence, hatred propagates hatred, and suffering smothers the natural human impulse towards reconciliation and mutual help. Mental health workers, teachers and social workers understand this in the context of human beings abused as children by their parents. Why do we not realise it in the context of the human beings who make up societies that either contribute to or detract from international security?

¹ Knight Ridder poll, January, 2003; viewable at: <http://www.realcities.com/mld/kriwashington/4920860.htm>

The media war is not only about misunderstanding or disinformation but also lack of information. There exists no internationally agreed definition of terrorism. It is too easy for partnerships of convenience to be created on the basis of other people's fears, and for 'terrorism' to become a label that is merely politically expedient. I agree with the Israeli thinker Boaz Ganor when he calls for 'no prohibition [of terrorism] without definition!'²

A third and deadly aspect of the current war is the insidious freight of pessimism that it brings with it. We witness generations in Iraq and Palestine enduring without hope. Their young people, full of energy and the desire for a brighter future, are unable to fulfil themselves in their present moment. They are denied any opportunity to determine their own future, and are gradually being deprived of their own past as ancient skyline after skyline is replaced and more and more archaeological and civilisational treasures are lost or destroyed. It is all too easy to give up. We all worry about international terrorist movements devoted to destroying our global civilisation in the name of one or another rigid vision. We fear the unintended consequences of addressing conflict or terrorists with military or economic force alone. Whilst acknowledging these pressures, I would like, with my friend Professor Shimon Shamir, to 'turn our attention from the threat projected by the radicals to the promise implied by the liberals' – whilst noting, again with him, that 'radical' and 'liberal' are not here intended as political labels.³

The Iraq war has overshadowed the tragic Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Yet, when all is said and done about the many issues involving the Middle East, there is still nothing more fundamental nor more compelling in terms of our future security than the need to address the Palestinian-Israeli dispute.

The present cycle of violence started in September 2000 at the Al Aqsa mosque after an impromptu visit by the then General Sharon, some 2,000 soldiers and assorted security forces, following the Friday Muslim sermon. Stones were thrown; and bullets fired in return. Since then, the violence has escalated, with over 700 Israelis and some 3,000 Palestinians killed. Both sides have disregarded international law in their efforts to pursue an agenda

² Ganor, B., 'Terrorism: No Prohibition Without Definition,' October 7, 2001; viewable at: <http://www.ict.org.il/articles/articleDet.cfm?articleid=393>.

³ Shamir, S., 'Acceptance of the Other: Liberal Interpretations of Islam and Judaism in Egypt and Israel', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 53 (2002), 201-22, at p. 203..

of mutual blame. Leaders on both sides seem unable to find the way out, and the United States, commonly acknowledged to be the only power capable of ending the situation, seems to have abdicated that role — at least temporarily.

The United Nations supported the formation of the Quartet — the United States, the European Union and Russia — and their Road Map. The Bush Administration did not follow up on this map convincingly and, in the absence of any determined steering, Prime Minister Sharon set it aside and Palestinian Authority Chairman Arafat was rendered ineffective by the opposition and distrust of both President Bush and PM Sharon. The Palestinian people, on the grounds of principle, have resisted calls for their ‘regime change’ even while acknowledging that the Palestinian Authority has been ineffective and corrupt.

In the United States, anxiety about terrorism and ambitions for regime-change in Iraq have fuelled a vilification campaign against Islam. Discriminatory measures have been applied to Muslims and Arabs with open disregard for American values of freedom and equality that were a beacon for the world over at least the last half-century.

Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, provides a haven for a certain number of extremist thinkers. Religious writings, being fixed and passive, do not deny us the possibility of actively reading intolerance, oppression or violence towards ‘the other’ into our scriptures as divinely-sanctioned precepts. The gift of free will and individual power of choice between a right path and a wrong one is very powerfully expressed as a foundation or beginning of the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. As Professor Shimon Shamir has put it:

Devious and misconstrued as the terrorists’ interpretations of religion may be, the fact is that they derive their doctrines from their religious heritage, imbue their adherents with religious zeal, and have no great difficulty in finding religious authorities to explicitly or implicitly endorse their radical objectives and methods.⁴

We cannot address problems of metaphysics between cultures and traditions; but we can address the question of where the next meal is coming from. We must as a matter of immediate urgency break out of the impasse on the

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.201.

Palestinian-Israeli situation, irrespective of the war in Iraq, in order to bring peace to the wider region. This is to be accomplished with determined efforts by the United States, with international support, to found a regional security regime for the whole region, including the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. This security regime would have its own joint monitoring and inspection operations and committees of Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs. Such a regime and its institutions will in itself be a confidence-building mechanism and a potential foundation for a regional cooperation, much like the European Union.

Israel, the future Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq should be part of such a regional system because of their geographic contiguity, and complementary economic and social factors. Considering only Israel, Palestine and Jordan and the prospective doubling of their population growths in the next 30 years, neither the land nor the resources will be enough if walls and barbed wires are erected between them. Only cooperation, sharing of resources, and integrated economies can help achieve economic and social growth, followed by peace and stability.

Therefore, within the next few months, the United States must reconvene the Madrid Conference, or a Madrid-like conference. Outstanding issues include: 1) Settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; 2) Peace between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon; 3) The setting in motion of mechanisms to establish a regional security regime and the elimination of WMD, including enhanced cooperation to eliminate threats by non-state actors using conventional weapons and potentially, WMDs; 4) Enhancing security cooperation for the prevention and control of “terrorism”; 5) Development of mechanisms to eliminate anti-Jewish, anti-Israeli, anti-Arab and anti-Muslim materials from public education and the media; 6) The establishment of regional institutions for cooperation in the sharing of natural resources and their conservation (particularly water), joint operation of public utilities, joint efforts on transportation and communications, and promoting a free flow of peoples, goods, information and financial transactions in the region; 7) Within the concept of a regional security regime, the establishment of centralised institutions to address crisis management, conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

The United States must not forego this historic opportunity of statesmanship where its leadership for peace can be long-lasting and deep reaching.

It is ironic that globalisation has come to contradict multilateralism and regional cooperation. We, as the region, must find help from the developed world to solve our problems by coming to the table — rather than remaining on the menu. Globalisation has huge civilisational potential but civilisation will not emerge through the exercise or resistance of raw power, but by thinking in terms of four security councils instead of three: political, economic, social and, very importantly, cultural security, placing anthropolitics above realpolitik and petropolitics.

Last November, when speaking at a conference organised by the German Intelligence organisation, I referred not only to Iraq, but to the Middle East region as a whole in saying that military action by the United States could prompt a domino effect of regime change. I expressed the fervent prayer that such military action did not take place at the cost of large-scale civilian casualties which could tip all dominoes the wrong way.

Dissatisfaction and the need for change on ‘the street’ will eventually produce change whether leaders and institutions like it or not. The imperative now for international policymakers is to offer viable change that is civilised and peaceful, and not to leave the provision of change to the extremists and the violent fundamentalists of all types.

Terrorism is an anti-human movement. It can only appeal to wanton destroyers and power-seekers, to the deeply disturbed and the desperate. It can only be accepted by people driven into a corner or those who are utterly numb. By channelling power and self-determination to a peaceful majority through the building of civil society from the grassroots upwards, we open the way for a stable anti-terrorist society which does not depend upon military destruction to control unruly elements within its own body, because it can effectively police itself.