Mohammad Khatami's dialogue of civilizations is an attempt to produce a militant vision of jihad and offers a way to avoid destructive conflict. Dialogue with the West is an important way of strengthening Islam. Khatami’s vision holds out the hope that, as the West advances and possibly declines, Islam will regain its position as the leading progressive world civilization.

From a continued encounter of Islam and the West in the twenty-first century, Khatami's dialogue of civilizations reflects a significant perspective very different from that of both Western analysts such as Samuel Huntington and old-style Islamic advocates of militant jihad such as Sayyid Qutb and, more recently, Osama bin Laden.

ABDURRAHMAN WAHID:

COSMOPOLITAN ISLAM AND GLOBAL DIVERSITY

On October 1999, Abdurrahman Wahid, leader of the Nahdatul Ulama (Renewal of Religious Scholars), the biggest (35 million members) Islamic organization in the world's largest Muslim country, became the first elected president in Indonesia's history.  

Nahdatul Ulama (NU) is a predominantly conservative, rural-based cultural organization founded in 1926 to defend the interests of traditional Islam and counter the threat of modernism. Wahid, however, is best described as a modern, urban, liberal Islamic intellectual. As a religious leader and social and political reformer, he has staunchly opposed those who would reassert the role in politics and has warned of the dangers of Islamic fundamentalism.

Facing the worlds of traditional Islam and modern thought, Wahid espouses a reformist intellectual synthesis and social agenda that distinguishes between unchanging religious doctrines or laws and those that can be altered to accommodate social change. Wahid has thus been a generation of reformers who advocate a progressive Islam, one that is inclusive, democratic, pluralistic, and tolerant.

Wahid advocates a cosmopolitan Islam, the product of creative appropriation or reformulation, responsive to the demands of modern life and reflecting Indonesian Islam's diverse religious and ethnic history and communities.
Wahid believes that contemporary Muslims are at a critical crossroad. Two choices or paths confront them: to pursue a traditional, static legal-formalistic Islam or to reclaim and refashion a more dynamic cosmopolitan, universal, pluralistic worldview. In contrast to many “fundamentalists” today, he rejects the notion that Islam should form the basis for the nation-state’s political or legal system, a notion he characterizes as a Middle Eastern tradition, alien to Indonesia. Indonesian Muslims should apply a moderate, tolerant brand of Islam to their daily lives in a society where “a Muslim and a non-Muslim are the same,” a state in which religion and politics are separate. Rejecting legal-formalism or fundamentalism as an aberration and a major obstacle to Islamic reform and to Islam’s response to global change, Wahid has spent his life promoting the development of a multifaceted Muslim identity and a dynamic Islamic tradition capable of responding to the realities of modern life. Its cornerstones are free will and the right of all Muslims, both laity and religious scholars (ulama) to “perpetual reinterpretation” (ijithad) of the Quran and tradition of the Prophet in light of “everchanging human situations.”

Wahid’s cosmopolitan Islam is pluralistic and global, affirming the diversity of peoples and civilizations. The challenge for contemporary Muslims is to articulate and preserve an authentic identity informed by their Islamic heritage but open to the cosmopolitan realities of a global environment. It is based on a recognition of universal basic rights, respect for other faiths, ideologies, and cultures, and open to the best that modern science and technology have to offer.

A political realist who recognized the needs to create national unity in the face of communalism, to establish the rule of law, and to develop viable economic frameworks for the equitable distribution of wealth, Wahid also put his finger on a major cause of violence and terrorism in Muslim countries. Most governments in the Muslim world rely on sociopolitical engineering, authoritarianism, political suppression, and violence to impose their vision. Wahid maintains that governments close their eyes to a fundamental issue of development when they reduce national problems solely to political and socioeconomic and technical factors. The failure to address the relationship of faith to national identity and to institution building contributes to instability and risks “massive social explosions.” Governments that rely on social control rather than consultation, that employ violence and repression, create a climate that contributes to radicalization and violence against the state. Wahid has astutely identified the heart of the struggle in Islam today. Movements are faced with two options, “the choice of following either a radical approach or a gradual response in their struggle for social justice, equal treatment before the law and freedom of expression.”

Anwar Ibrahim, Mohammad Khatami, and Abdurrahman Wahid are but three of many voices for Islamic reform. They demonstrate that there is no essentialist or monolithic Islam or Muslim society. All may share a common faith, at times articulate an Islamically inspired worldview, and use Islam as a source of legitimacy and mobilization. Still, their visions, goals, and strategies are shaped as much by diverse political and cultural contexts as by faith. They challenge those who see the world of the early twenty-first century in polarities, either confrontation and conflict or dialogue and cooperation, to appreciate the limitations and failures of old paradigms and to develop new paradigms for governance and policy that are sensitive to the importance of religion and culture.

Finally, in an increasingly global society, defining Islam and the Muslim world monolithically becomes more difficult as clear boundaries between Islam and the West evaporate. Not only are Muslim countries, societies, and institutions deeply involved with non-Muslim societies and communities but, more important, Islam is so present in America and Europe that Muslims have become part of the fabric of Western societies, as citizens, professionals, and neighbors. Many Muslims are third- and fourth-generation citizens in Western societies, no more and no less American or European than Jews, Christians, and Hindus. And yet, one of the questions we constantly hear is, Can they be democratic?
Islam and Democracy

The most glaring difference between the Muslim world and the West today is the contrast between authoritarian and democratically elected governments. Authoritarianism has been the norm not the exception in Muslim politics, cutting across the political and ideological spectrum. The track record of governments both non-Islamist (Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt) and Islamist (Afghanistan, Sudan, and Iran) reveals a culture of authoritarianism that is incapable of tolerating any significant opposition.

Those already convinced about how different “they” are—that Islam is incompatible with modernization and that the mixing of religion and politics is an explosive formula for violent extremism and terrorism and an inevitable clash of civilizations—have solid examples to buttress their arguments. In theory, Islam and democratic or parliamentary forms of government are not incompatible. In actual practice, the results have been mixed, with strikingly contradictory experiences. Khomeini’s Iran, Afghanistan’s Taliban, Sudan’s Islamic government have provided damning examples of political oppression, sexual discrimination, domestic and international violence and terrorism.

The case of Iran, the longest-lasting experiment in creating a modern Islamic system, demonstrates the changing dynamic relationship between religion and sociopolitical realities. During its first decade, the Islamic republic remained authoritarian, with strict and narrow limitations on political participation. However, the political system has experienced a push from both above and below along the democratization path. President Khatami’s emphasis on the importance of civil society, democratization, and the rule of law has been a response to societal pressure, especially from women and the younger generation who make up a significant number of Iranian voters. However, given the ongoing struggle between reformers and a more hard-line conservative political and religious establishment led by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the outcome remains uncertain.

Why the glaring absence of democratic governments? As we have seen, the Muslim world is dealing with a legacy that created a powerful culture of authoritarianism still deeply entrenched in many countries. It is perpetuated today by rulers who inherited or seized power: from the unelected kings and emirs of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco, and Kuwait to the military and ex-military presidents of Sudan, Pakistan, Egypt, Libya, and Iraq. So too, political authoritarianism, whether religious or secular, has often been the norm, not only in the Islamic governments of Iran, Sudan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Saudi Arabia but also in the more secular governments of Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Algeria, and Indonesia, where the situation has changed with the fall of Suharto and democratic elections but remains precarious.

Most Muslim countries remain security (mukhabarat) states whose rulers are focused on retaining their power and privilege at any cost through strong military and security forces. Many rulers have been “reelected” in government-controlled elections in which they garner 95 to 99.91 percent of the vote. Political parties and trade unions are nonexistent or severely restricted, elections are often rigged, and the culture and institutions of civil society are weak. Democratic elections have occurred in a number of countries (Turkey, Pakistan, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt) but most remain limited or guided democracies at best. Turkey and Pakistan have experienced military intervention and rule. Jordan and Morocco are monarchies. The recent succession of Syria’s Bashar Assad after the death of his father, Hafez al-Assad, and the apparent grooming of Saddam Hussein’s son in Iraq portend a new nondemocratic paradigm. The modern Muslim experience supports the impression that Islam and democracy are incompatible.43

Many say that Islam and democracy do not mix because traditional Islamic institutions such as the caliphate preclude significant popular political participation and democratic institutions. Yet, the history of religions demonstrates that religious traditions, like political ideologies such as democracy and communism, are
capable of multiple interpretations and relations to the state. Modern reforms transformed European monarchies and principalities, whose rule had been religiously justified by divine right, into modern Western democratic states. Moreover, democracy itself has meant different things to different peoples at different times, from ancient Greece to modern Europe, from direct to indirect democracy, from majority rule to majority vote. Judaism and Christianity, once supportive of political absolutism and divine right monarchies, have been reinterpreted to accommodate the democratic ideal. As a result, many Jews and Christians now believe that modern democracy is rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition or at least not in conflict with their religion.

Islam throughout history has proven dynamic and diverse. It adapted to support the movement from the city-state of Medina to empires and sultanates, was able to encompass diverse schools of theology, law, and philosophy as well as different Sunni and Shii branches, and has been used to support both extremism and conservative orthodoxy. Islam continues today to lend itself to multiple interpretations of government; it is used to support limited democracy and dictatorship, republicanism, and monarchy. Like other religions, Islam possesses intellectual and ideological resources that can provide the justification for a wide range of governing models from absolute monarchy to democracy. In recent years, the democracy debate has intensified.

Experts and policymakers who worry that Islamic movements will use electoral politics to “hijack democracy” often fail to show equal concern that few current rulers in the region have been democratically elected and that many who speak of democracy only believe in “risk-free democracy.” They permit political participation and liberalization as long there is no risk of a strong opposition (secular or religious) or a potential loss of power. Failure to appreciate that the issue of the hijacking of democracy is a two-way street was reflected in the responses (awkward silence or support) of many western governments and experts for the Algerian military’s intervention and their abrogation of the results of the democratic electoral process, the Turkish military’s suppression of the Islamic Refah party, and the growing authoritarianism of the Mubarak government in Egypt.

**Democrats and Dissidents**

A diversity of voices, some harmonious and others strident, discuss and debate political participation. Secularists argue for the separation of religion and the state. Rejectionists (both moderate and militant Muslims) maintain that Islam’s forms of governance do not conform to democracy. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, a longtime ally of the West, says that “the democratic system prevalent in the world is not appropriate in this region. . . . The election system has no place in the Islamic creed, which calls for a government of advice and consultation and for the shepherd’s openness to his flock, and holds the ruler fully responsible before his people.” Extremists agree, condemning any form of democracy as haram (forbidden), an idolatrous threat to God’s rule and divine sovereignty. Their unholy wars to topple governments aim to impose an authoritarian Islamic rule. Conservatives often argue that popular sovereignty contradicts the sovereignty of God, with the result that the alternative has often been some form of monarchy.

Reformers reinterpret key traditional Islamic concepts and institutions: consultation (shura) of rulers with those ruled, consensus (ijma) of the community, reinterpretation (ijtihad), and legal principles such as the public welfare (maslaha) of society to develop Islamic forms of parliamentary governance, representative elections, and religious reform. Just as it was appropriate in the past for Muhammad’s senior Companions to constitute a consultative assembly (majlis al-shura) and to select or elect his successor (caliph) through a process of consultation, Muslims now reinterpret and extend this notion to the creation of modern forms of political participation, parliamentary government, and the direct or indirect election of heads of state.

Some advocates of Islamic democracy argue that the doctrine of the oneness of God (tawhid) or monotheism requires some form of democratic system. “No Muslim questions the sovereignty of
God or the rule of Shariah, Islamic Law. However, most Muslims
do (and did) have misgivings about any claims by one person that
he is sovereign. The sovereignty of one man contradicts the sover-
eignty of God, for all men are equal in front of God. . . . Blind
obedience to one-man rule is contrary to Islam.  

The Tunisian Islamist leader of the Renaissance Party and politi-
cal exile Rashid Ghannouchi provided an early example of a grow-
ing democratic trend: "If by democracy is meant the liberal model
of government prevailing in the West, a system under which the
people freely choose their representatives and leaders, in which there
is an alternation of power, as well as all freedoms and human rights
for the public, then Muslims will find nothing in their religion to
oppose democracy, and it is not in their interests to do so."  

However, reformist efforts toward political liberalization, electo-
rational politics, and democratization in the Muslim world do not
imply uncritical acceptance of Western democratic forms. Most
accommodationists would agree that it is important for Muslims
not to uncritically copy what the West has done, emphasizing that
there are different forms that legitimate democracy can take. Iran's
president Mohammad Khatami, in a television interview in June
2001 before his country's presidential elections, noted that "the
existing democracies do not necessarily follow one formula or as-
pect. It is possible that a democracy may lead to a liberal system. It
is possible that democracy may lead to a socialist system. Or it
may be a democracy with the inclusion of religious norms in the
government. We have accepted the third option." Khatami pre-
sents a view common among the advocates of Islamic democracy
that "today world democracies are suffering from a major vacuum
which is the vacuum of spirituality," and that Islam can provide
the framework for combining democracy with spirituality and re-
ligious government.

**Grass-Roots Democratization**

The most pervasive and vibrant example of the push from below
for greater democratization and power sharing is the growing pres-
ence and implementation of Islam in civil society, in nongovern-
mental institutions and associations (NGOs). The development of
a strong civil society is a critical ingredient for building demo-
ocratic institutions. It incorporates and inculcates the principles and
values of power sharing: greater political participation, representa-
tion, self-determination, government accountability, the rule of
law, and social justice.

Although for much of the 1980s revolutionary Iran and extremist
movements provided the dominant note, the late 1980s and 1990s
revealed the many faces of Islamic social and political activism.
Islamic movements and associations became part and parcel of
mainstream institutional forces in civil society. Islamic activist
organizations and NGOs created networks of mosques, hospitals,
clinics, day-care centers, youth clubs, legal aid societies, foreign
language schools, banks, drug rehabilitation programs, insurance
companies, and publishing houses. They fill a void and thus serve,
in some countries, as an implicit indictment of the government's
ability to provide adequate services, in particular for the nonelite
sectors of society. Their services provide an alternative to expen-
sive private institutions and overcrowded public facilities. At the
same time, they reinforce a sense of community identity as well as
spiritual and moral renewal.

Though many Islamic associations and NGOs are nonpolitical
and nonviolent, others like Lebanon's Hizbollah and Hamas in
Palestine have combined extensive and effective educational and
social services with political action and militant jihad. Their vio-
lent confrontations with Israel and acts of terrorism have led two
successive American presidential administrations to designate
Hamas and Hizbollah as terrorist organizations and to shut down
several American Muslim organizations charged with channeling
funds to them. At the same time, Hizbollah provides an instruc-
tive example of the extent to which Islamic movements are shaped
not simply by a religious impulse but by political contexts. Hiz-
bollah was primarily a militant Shii response to Israel's invasion
and occupation of Lebanon and the Lebanese Civil War. With the
end of the civil war, Hizbollah put down its arms in the north,
became a political party, and won seats in Parliament. However, it kept up its militant resistance to Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon, fighting Israeli forces until Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. Though Hezbollah remains on some countries' list of terrorist states (including the lists of the United States and Israel), it functions today within mainstream Lebanese society, combining politics with a vast network of educational and social services.

Many Islamic movements in recent years have eschewed violence and terrorism. Alongside the terrorist trail of unholy wars, there exists a democratic track record of Islamically oriented candidates who have been elected president of Indonesia, prime minister of Turkey, deputy prime minister of Malaysia, speakers of parliaments in Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, and Sudan, cabinet ministers and parliamentarians in Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, Kuwait, Pakistan, Jordan, Yemen, Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, and Lebanon. The performance of Islamist groups in national and municipal elections defied the predictions of those who had insisted that Islamic movements were unrepresentative and would not attract voters.

An Islamic Democratic Threat?

The wide participation of religiously motivated Muslims (political and apolitical) in Islamic professional associations and other private voluntary organizations has led to the gradual Islamization of society from below, increasingly evident throughout much of the Muslim world. Ironically, the nonviolent participation and apparent strength of Islamists in mainstream society has led to more stringent limits on political liberalization and democratization in the 1990s.

Authoritarian governments and secular elites who fear any significant opposition as a potential challenge to their power and privilege have raised the specter of fanatic fundamentalism and terrorism, charging that radical Islamists were out to hijack democracy, to come to power through ballots as well as bullets. The Algerian military seized power, imprisoned Islamists, and denied them their electoral victory. Tunisia and Egypt backed away from their commitment to open elections and instead crushed (Tunisia) or curtailed (Egypt) mainstream, nonviolent Islamist participation, making little distinction between treatment of moderates, who operated aboveground and within the system, and violent revolutionary extremists. Yielding to pressures from its powerful military, Turkey's government forced Prime Minister Ecevit to resign and subsequently outlawed his Welfare Party. A new, more broad-based Islamic party, Virtue, was created only to have Turkey's Parliament refuse to seat a woman parliamentarian who insisted on wearing a headscarf; finally the party itself was banned.

At best the attitude of many rulers may be characterized, in the words of one Western diplomat, as an openness to "risk-free democracy" or, as another put it, "democracy without dissent." Openness to government-controlled and -dominated change—yes; openness to a change of government that would bring to power Islamic activists (or for that matter to any opposition party)—no. Recent years have shown that, at best, opposition parties and groups, whether secular or religious, are tolerated only as long as they remain relatively weak or under government control and do not threaten the regime or ruling party at the ballot box. However, questions remain. Can the ills of societies be reduced to a single cause or blamed on "fundamentalist fanatics"? Are the activities of a radical minority a convenient excuse for the failure of many governments to build strong and equitable modern states? Does this perceived threat support authoritarian, military or security governments, whose nonelected rulers' primary wish is to perpetuate their own power?

The issue of democratization, like that of authoritarianism, in Muslim societies is not primarily one of religion but of history and political and economic development. Centuries of European colonial rule followed by decades of authoritarian governments have created and perpetuated conditions that are not conducive to democratization. One-man or one-party governments, limited political participation, restricted freedom of speech and of the press, government control of politics, economic, social, educational development, and of the media produce authoritarian political cultures
and values. The absence or weakness of civil society (nongovernmental institutions and associations) contributes to the inevitability that many governments in the Muslim world will follow one of two paths, religious or secular authoritarianism. Despite the odds, however, democratization has increasingly become an issue in Muslim politics.

The political and economic realities of many states continue to foster alienation, opposition, and radicalism or extremism. Despite the growing desire for greater political participation and government accountability, authoritarian governments with limited political participation and freedoms remain the norm in many countries. Regarding the future role of Islam in Muslim politics, the comment of one expert on Egypt is equally relevant to other states: “Egypt’s rulers can expect to see an Islam that faithfully reflects the skill or folly of their own statecraft.”

Democracy is an integral part of modern Islamic political thought and practice, accepted in many Muslim countries as a litmus test by which both the openness of government and the relevance of Islamic groups or other political parties are certified. However, questions about what particular forms democratization might take in diverse Muslim political cultures remain difficult to answer. Muslim political traditions and institutions, like social conditions and class structures, continue to evolve and are critical to the future of democracy in the Muslim world.

Western governments are challenged to balance longstanding relationships with regimes against the principles and values of self-determination, democratization, and human rights that they claim to stand for and support. Governments in the Muslim world are challenged to promote and strengthen the development of civil society—those institutions, values, and culture that are the foundation for true participatory government. They must be willing to allow alternative political voices to function freely in society and express their opinions and dissent through the formation of political parties, private associations, newspapers, and the media. Islamic activists and movements are challenged to move beyond slogans to programs. They must become more self-critical in speaking out not only against local government abuses but also against those of Islamic regimes in Sudan, Afghanistan, and until recently Iran, as well as acts of terrorism committed in the name of Islam by extremists. They are challenged to provide an Islamic rationale and policy that would extend to their opposition and to minorities the very principles of pluralism and political participation that they demand for themselves.

All are challenged to recognize that democratization and the building of strong civil societies in the Muslim world are part of a process of experimentation, necessarily accompanied by failure as well as success. The transformation of the West from feudal monarchies to democratic nation-states took time, trial and error. It was accompanied by political and intellectual revolutions that rocked both state and church in a long, drawn-out process, among contending voices and factions with competing visions and interests.

Global Terrorism and Islam

Terrorism has been a worldwide threat, affecting countries as dissimilar as Italy, Germany, Peru, Japan, and Greece, Israel/Palestine, Egypt, Yemen, Iran, Turkey, and Iraq. Terrorists have targeted local populations often in the name of nationalist groups or governments. In recent years, radical groups have combined nationalism, ethnicity, or tribalism with religion and used violence and terrorism to achieve their goals: Serbs in Bosnia, Hindu nationalists in India, Tamil and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, Jewish fundamentalists in Israel, Christian extremists in the United States. However, the most widespread examples of religious terrorism have occurred in the Muslim world. Al-Qaeda (modern in terms of educational profiles, knowledge and use of modern technology from computers, faxes, the Internet, and cell phones to weapons) represents a new form of terrorism, born of transnationalism and globalization. It is transnational in its identity and recruitment and global in its ideology, strategy, targets, network of organizations, and economic transactions.

Though global terrorism has no single location or source, for the time being it has become associated with Islam and jihad. While
President George W. Bush and other national and religious leaders have distinguished between Islam and terrorism, and many average Americans have proven remarkably supportive of Arab and Muslim colleagues and neighbors, others have not. Although the U.S. administration has remained consistent in its statements, the actions of the attorney general and proposed congressional anti-terrorism legislation, as well as the detention of individuals for indefinite periods without trial or access to evidence, raise deep concerns about the erosion of civil liberties and human rights for Arabs and Muslims, and others as well. The issue goes to the core of what the United States is and stands for, who we are now, and what we might become.

Like all the world’s major religious traditions, Islam has its extremist fringe. However, Osama bin Laden’s steady dose of proclamations and threats has assured that Islam, not just extremism or terrorism, receives special treatment. The climate today is one in which questions can be asked and statements can be made about Islam, not simply about the beliefs and actions of extremists, that would not be tolerated if directed at Judaism or Christianity. The danger of this approach is to overlook the fact that militant jihad movements and terrorism are not just the products of warped individuals or religious doctrine, whether mainstream or extremist interpretations, but of political and economic conditions.

Reacting to Terrorism: American Foreign Policy in the Muslim World

After September 11, the depth of hatred expressed by bin Laden and his al-Qaeda followers along with scenes of some Arabs celebrating in the streets revolted many but also led some to ask, Why do they hate us? The temptation for some government officials and political commentators was to condemn and dismiss, to explain away anti-Americanism as irrationality, ingratitude, jealousy of our success, or hatred for “our way of life.” Slogans to the effect that we are in a war between the civilized world and terrorists; a war between fundamentalists who hate Western democracy, capitalism, and freedom; or a war against evil and merchants of death may reflect the rhetoric of some extremists and be emotionally satisfying, but they fail to get at deeper realities and long-term issues. Similarly, belief that overwhelming force has brought a quick victory and proven an effective answer and message to other terrorists or potential terrorists also overlooks real and future threats. Other bin Ladens exist as do the political and economic conditions that they can exploit to recruit new soldiers for their unholy wars.

Osama bin Laden, like the secular Saddam Hussein and the cleric Ayatollah Khomeini before him, cleverly identified specific grievances against Muslim regimes and the United States that are shared across a broad spectrum of Muslims, most of whom are not extremists. He then used religious texts and doctrines to justify his jihad of violence and terrorism. Anti-Americanism is driven not only by the blind hatred of the terrorists but also by a broader-based anger and frustration with American foreign policy among many in Arab and Muslim societies: government officials, diplomats, the military, businessmen, professionals, intellectuals, and journalists. Many enjoy close friendships with their Western counterparts. They have graduated from and send their children to Western schools, vacation and own property in America and Europe, admire many of the principles and values (political participation, accountability, the basic freedoms of speech, thought, and the press). But they also believe that these principles are applied selectively or not at all when it comes to the Muslim world.

Lost in our litany of slogans and easy answers is the recognition that they see more than we see. In recent years, the United States has become less international-minded and more preoccupied with domestic issues. Many members of Congress see no reason to travel abroad; a prominent congressional leader freely quipped that he had been to Europe once and saw no reason to return. Major media networks and newspapers have cut back on the number of foreign bureaus and correspondents; domestic news coverage has expanded at the expense of public awareness of international affairs. By contrast, and unlike in the past, many in the Muslim world are no longer dependent on CNN and the BBC for news of the world.
International Arab and Muslim publications and media provide daily coverage of foreign affairs. Families sit glued to their television sets, watching daily coverage on al-Jazeera, and see in vivid color live news from Palestine/Israel, Iraq, Chechnya, and Kashmir.

Many see the United States’ espousal of self-determination, democratization, and human rights as disingenuous in light of its foreign policies. While average Americans might see the latest explosive headline event such as a spectacular terrorist attack in Israel, they are not bombarded daily with images of acts of Israeli violence and brutality, the disproportionate firepower, the number of Palestinian deaths and casualties, the use of American weapons including F-16s and Apache helicopters provided to Israel and used against Palestinians, including civilians, in the occupied territories. America’s relationship with Israel has proved to be a lightning rod. While some in the West downplay or deny the significance of the Palestinian issue, surveys continue to verify its importance to Muslims globally. A survey in spring 2001 of five Arab states (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Lebanon) demonstrated that the “majority in all five countries said that the Palestinian issue was the single most important issue to them personally.”

In a Zogby International poll of American Muslims taken in November and December 2001, 84 percent believed that the United States should support a Palestinian state, 70 percent believed that it should reduce financial support to Israel.

The American government’s tough stand (often fully justified) with Yasser Arafat but kid-glove treatment of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s aggressive and brutal policies in the West Bank and Gaza, and America’s long record of relatively uncritical support of Israel—expressed in its levels of military and economic aid to Israel, its voting record in the United Nations, official statements by American administrations and government officials, and votes by Congress (often opposed by administrations in the past) to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in direct contravention of longstanding UN resolutions—are seen by many in the Muslim world as proof of American hypocrisy.

Other critical foreign policy issues include the impact of sanctions on more than a half-million innocent Iraqi children (with little direct effect on Saddam Hussein), and sanctions against Pakistan while failing to hold India and Israel to similar standards for their nuclear programs. The moral will so evident in Kosovo is seen as totally absent in U.S. policy in the Chechnya and Kashmiri conflicts. A native-born American convert to Islam, Ivy League-educated and formerly a government consultant, spoke with a frustration shared by many Muslims: “Every informed Muslim would point to America’s bizarre complicity in the genocidal destruction of Chechnya, its tacit support of India’s incredibly brutal occupation of Kashmir, its passivity in the ethnic cleansing of Bosnia, and even America’s insistence on zero casualties in stopping the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo. These are hot spots in the so-called ‘ring of fire’ around the edge of the Muslim world, where Muslims are throwing off the shackles of old empires.”

To understand the love-hate relationship, the attraction-repulsion toward America that exists in many parts of the world and is widespread in the Muslim world, we must not only know who we think we are and how we view others but try to understand how others might see us. As Paul Kennedy has observed, few of us ask:

[How do we appear to them, and what would it be like were our places in the world reversed. . . . Suppose that there existed today a powerful, unified Arab-Muslim state that stretched from Algeria to Turkey and Arabia—as there was 400 years ago, the Ottoman Empire. Suppose this unified Arab-Muslim state had the biggest economy in the world, and the most effective military. Suppose by contrast this United States of ours had split into 12 or 15 countries, with different regimes, some conservative and corrupt. Suppose that the great Arab-Muslim power had its aircraft carriers cruising off our shores, its aircraft flying over our lands, its satellites watching us every day. Suppose that its multinational corporations had reached into North America to extract oil, and paid the corrupt, conservative governments big royalties for that. Suppose that it dominated all international]
institutions like the Security Council and the IMF. Suppose that there was a special state set up in North America fifty years ago, of a different religion and language to ours, and the giant Arab-Muslim power always gave it support. Suppose the Colossus state was bombarding us with cultural messages, about the status of women, about sexuality, that we found offensive. Suppose it was always urging us to change, to modernize, to go global, to follow its example. Hmm . . . in those conditions, would not many Americans steadily grow to loath that Colossus, wish it harm? And perhaps try to harm it? I think so.\footnote{53}

The war against global terrorism should neither become a green light for authoritarian regimes in the Muslim world to further limit the rule of law and civil society or to repress nonviolent opposition, nor justify a gradual erosion of important principles and values at home and abroad. Many governments use the danger of “Islamic fundamentalism” as an excuse for authoritarian responses and policies, labeling all Islamic movements, extremist as well as moderate (whom they characterize as wolves in sheep’s clothing), as a threat. Many Muslim and Western governments oppose any Islamic candidates’ participation in elections, fearing that they will hijack elections. These fears often obscure the fact that many governments themselves have proven nondemocratic or authoritarian track records.

American, as well as European, responses must remain proportionate, from military strikes and foreign policy to domestic security measures and antiterrorism legislation. A reexamination and, where necessary, reformulation of U.S. foreign policy will be necessary to effectively limit and contain global terrorism. Short-term policies that are necessitated by national interest must be balanced by long-term policies and incentives that pressure our allies to promote a gradual and progressive process of broader political participation and power sharing. Failure to do so will simply perpetuate the culture and values of authoritarianism, secular as well as religious, and feed anti-Americanism. If foreign policy issues are not addressed effectively, they will continue to provide a breed-

ing ground for hatred and radicalism, the rise of extremist movements, and recruits for the bin Ladens of the world.

**Globalization of the Jihad**

What is distinctive about global jihad today? The Soviet-Afghan war marked a new turning point as jihad went global to a degree never seen in the past. The mujahidin holy war drew Muslims from many parts of the world and support from Muslim and non-Muslim countries and sources. In its aftermath, the new global jihad became the common symbol and rallying cry for holy and unholy wars. Most major Muslim struggles were declared a jihad. Afghan Arabs moved on to fight other jihads in their home countries and in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Central Asia. Others stayed on or were trained and recruited in the new jihadi madrasas and training camps.

Today, the term jihad has become comprehensive; resistance and liberation struggles and militant jahads, holy and unholy wars, are all declared to be jahads. Jihad is waged at home not only against unjust rulers in the Muslim world but also against a broad spectrum of civilians. Jihad’s scope abroad became chillingly clear in the September 11 attacks against both the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, targeting not only governments but also civilians.

Terrorists such as bin Laden and others go beyond classical Islam’s criteria for a just jihad and recognize no limits but their own, employing any weapons or means. They reject Islamic law’s regulations regarding the goals and means of a valid jihad (that violence must be proportional and that only the necessary amount of force should be used to repel the enemy), that innocent civilians should not be targeted, and that jihad must be declared by the ruler or head of state. Today, individuals and groups, religious and lay, seize the right to declare and legitimate unholy wars in the name of Islam.

On the other hand, Islamic scholars and religious leaders across the Muslim world such as those at the Islamic Research Council at