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THEY SAID IT

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die;
A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
A time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose;
A time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to rend, and a time to sew;
A time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate;
A time of war, and a time of peace.

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8

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2010: A TIME TO EXPERIENCE CONFUSED LEADERSHIP.

This is the second installment of our annual “Fearless Forecast” issue. It deals with foreign affairs and carries the same caveat as last week’s article on domestic matters, namely that we know better than to think that we can accurately foresee the future. But the need to try is as old as mankind. Moreover, the investment process demands it. And it’s fun. So here goes.

Forecast #1: *Barack Obama will lose control of America’s counter terrorist activities in 2010, first to the Islamic terrorists themselves and then to the American public.*

Immediately upon taking office, Barack assumed a leadership position in the counter-terrorism business by aggressively pursuing a multi-front initiative to convince the worldwide community of Islamic terrorists that he is a good guy and understands their pain. To distinguish his plan from that of President Bush’s “Global War on Terror,” he said that his administration would no longer employ that combative term; that he preferred the oddly ambiguous phrase “overseas contingency operation.” We thought Rodney King’s trademark question “Can’t we all get along?” would have been more descriptive, but then, what do we know?

In any case, Barack kicked off his curious approach to counter-terrorism by announcing, immediately upon taking office, the pending closure of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. He then subtly displayed his repugnance for the entire counter terrorism effort by appointing the airheaded Janet Napolitano to the post of Secretary of Homeland Security, despite -- or perhaps because of -- the fact that her only previous

contribution to this field of endeavor was to warn against the danger to the nation posed by “disgruntled military veterans.” Next, Barack threatened legal action against a number of CIA investigators who had had the audacity to pour water down the nose of Khalid Sheik Mohammed, a self-proclaimed enemy of the United States and mass murderer. And then, of course, he transferred the trial of this same Khalid character to a civilian court in New York, providing the admitted terrorist leader with a global platform to spread his poison throughout the world and increase his chances of acquittal.

There is no way of knowing what motivated Barack to pursue this quixotic, limp-wristed approach to dealing with a deadly adversary. It is possible that he labored under the pathetic belief that he could placate the hatred that Islamic terrorists have for the United States by contrition. Then again, it is possible that he didn’t take the threat seriously, so he used it as a means of demonstrating solidarity with the practitioners of the religion of his youth and to honor numerous implied promises he made during the campaign to the left wing nutters in his party, to whom he owes his presidency.

Needless to say, despite these and various other acts of supplication, the Islamists continued their jihad against the “great Satan.” In fact, the pace of their attack has heated up so much since Barack began his good will drive that he has been forced to publicly acknowledge that at least a few of these killers might not be swayed by his remarkable knack for kowtowing.

Now, the lesson here, at least from our perspective as soothsayers, is that any attempt to peer into the future must focus on America’s enemies, rather than on Barack, who is rapidly trading in his position at the front of the parade for the traditional job at the rear, which involves a shovel and bucket.

So, with that in mind, we must ask ourselves, “What are the Islamists going to do?” Well, our prediction is that will keep trying to kill Americans until they are prevented from doing so by the use of force. And

while we hope we are wrong about this, we believe that they will eventually enjoy successes of various intensities. Or, to put this more bluntly, they will succeed in killing innocent American civilians.

We do not think that the United States will suffer a large terrorist incident of the magnitude of 9/11. We would like to say that we are confident of this prediction. But, of course, we can’t. This prediction is based upon the belief that America’s global counter-terrorism effort is working well enough at the Gucci’s-on-the-ground level to make it extremely difficult, if not entirely impossible, for any terrorist group to successfully pull off such a large scale attack. On the other hand, given the extraordinary ineptitude of the political hacks that Barack has placed in senior positions within the many agencies involved in the counter-terrorism effort, it seems inevitable that the nation will suffer an increase in the number of smaller scale attempts to kill Americans, and that some of these will succeed.

Now, we will readily admit that this projection is based on an old-fashioned, badly out of date contrivance called “common sense,” which does not carry the same weight as that which emanates from the “intelligence gathering” agencies at the command of the Obama crowd. But we must rely upon it because we don’t have the tens of millions of dollars a year that the Obama administration pays for the council of “experts” like the above mentioned Ms. Napolitano and the equally obtuse John Brennan. May God protect us all.

In any case, “common sense” tells us that militant Islam will not easily give up its *jihad* against America, if for no other reason than the confluence of two circumstances. The first is the fact that the global Islamic community includes, quite literally, millions of adherents who have no marketable skills other than their ability and willingness to kill. The second is that the global Islamic community also includes a smaller but still large group of people with a great deal of money who are not only willing to employ these otherwise unemployable killers but to create more of

them everyday via the establishment of a worldwide system of “educational” institutions that specialize in teaching hatred.

This unholy combination provides the soothsayer with a sickening pattern upon which to base his or her projections, that being that the terrorists strike and Obama responds tepidly, the terrorists strike and Obama responds tepidly, the terrorist strike and Obama responds tepidly, *ad nauseam*, until something breaks the pattern.

Why do we assume a tepid response from the nation’s intrepid leader? Because that’s how the poor damn fool responded last week to the panty bomber’s failed attack, and there is no good reason to think that he will respond differently in the future. We made the case for this assumption as follows in last year’s foreign policy forecast issue.

From the perspective of America’s enemies and rivals, Barack has to be the least threatening president to come down the pike since Jimmy Carter. He has a record of sympathy with both leftist and Islamic dogma. He has no apparent chauvinistic characteristics. Indeed, he has an indisputable record of sympathy for those who find nothing in America’s past to warrant pride or patriotism. He has said that he wants to soften America’s image in the world, to heal old wounds, to make new friends. He is not judgmental. Indeed, he has a record of requiring very little of his friends in the way of character or integrity. He is not a “cowboy.” He has none of the macho, American male characteristics that much of the world, including many Americans today, find so objectionable. In fact, he is a prototype of the trendy “metrosexual male.”

So, what will break the cycle?

Our prediction is, as stated above, that the American people will, at some point, take control of their nation’s counter-terrorism activities away from the terrorists, just as the terrorists are currently taking it away from Barack. The timing of this action will depend on the success and intensity of the terrorist actions. But we expect to see a host of candidates for the leadership of a citizen’s revolt against the Obama administration’s ridiculously timid and politically correct approach to protecting Americans to surface in the upcoming congressional races. These individuals will present an assortment of proposed actions, but all will employ some variation of the phrase, “Enough already.”

This effectively concludes the discussion of Forecast #1. But, as you, gentle reader, think about this situation, understand that the *only* long term solution to the terrorism problem is for the nations that create and harbor these terrorists to stop doing so. If America’s current policy of “friendly persuasion” fails to convince them to do this, and American civilians begin to die at the hands of the terrorists, it is inevitable that the American people will demand that other, more direct and punitive methods be used.

It is impossible to know what measures will eventually be taken, but it is worth remembering that when the Nazis began to target British citizens via the blitz of London, rather than concentrate their bombs on that nation’s defense plants, Churchill responded in kind. And German cities burned.

Forecast #2: *Sometime in 2010, it will become apparent that Barack’s decision to make the war in Afghanistan “his” war, by declaring it a “war of necessity” was monumentally stupid, both politically for him and strategically for the nation, and that his later decision to pursue this “war of necessity” in half-assed, “on-the-cheap” manner made things infinitely worse.*

The word quagmire doesn’t even begin to describe the mess that Barack has gotten himself into in Afghanistan. It isn’t that the United States military could not “win” the war there if it really were a “war of necessity.” The problem is that even Barack himself doesn’t believe that it is. If he did, he would

put more muscle and more political capital behind it. As such, he isn't going to be able to convince the American public that the effort is worth the cost, especially during a time when the butter side of the guns vs. butter equation is being rationed.

This is not a new thought from us, of course. We put it this way just a month ago in an article entitled "A Nannyless World."

We will begin by noting that it is hypothetically possible for a nation with America's vast resources to turn a primitive country like Afghanistan into a reasonable facsimile of a civilized one. But it isn't going to happen. The cost of doing something such as that is far beyond the willingness of the American people to shoulder, especially during a time when the United States has virtually exhausted its line of credit, which means that living Americans would have to finance a good part of this effort out of their own pockets rather than simply borrowing the money in the name of their kids and grandkids.

The U. S. military will fight valiantly on in Afghanistan throughout the year, but it will be a bitter, dispiriting exercise, especially when it becomes apparent to anyone paying attention that Barack will eventually sell out the entire effort in a futile attempt to save his own political hide.

Forecast #3: *The mad Mullahs will retain control of the Iranian government throughout 2010 and will continue their program of developing nuclear weapons during this time.*

As Tocqueville noted some one hundred and eighty years or so ago, tyrannical governments are most vulnerable to revolutionary movements when they soften their oppressive policies in an attempt to mollify their critics. The Iranian Mullahs know this from experience because their movement rose to power when Shah Reza Pahlavi made the fatal mistake

of trying to appease his enemies at the behest of his "friend" Jimmie Carter, who sold him down the river when the going got tough.

Because of this, there isn't a chance that the Mullahs will ever let up on their policy of arresting, torturing, and killing members of the opposition. And because of this, there is hardly any chance that the Iranian people can overthrow their government. Think Tiananmen Square. This, in turn, means that Iran will become a proud member of the nuclear club.

For eight years, we thought that the United States would use force if necessary to prevent this from happening, and that if it didn't, Israel would. We no longer believe this will happen. Why won't it happen? We really don't know. As the late great Waylon Jennings put it in a tune written by Steve Gillette and Charles Quatro: "There are songs that birds don't sing to people. There are secrets that keep right through to the end."

As for Israel, it will eventually, if it hasn't already done so, resign itself to the fact that its only practical defense against the acquisition of nukes by the Iranians is the well known concept of Mutually Assured Destruction. And the term "hair trigger" doesn't even begin to describe the vigilance the Israelis will have to employ to feel safe under such circumstances.

Yes, we know that, according to the White House, Barack has dropped his pitiable attempt to befriend the current regime in Iran and intends to step up his existing paltry efforts to apply financial pressure on the tyrants. But, this will prove to be too little, too late. The regime has the full *de facto* support and the partial *de jure* support of both Russia and China, whose leaders understandably sympathize with the problems that the Mullahs are having in their fight against freedom and democracy. In addition, the Mullahs can count on the indifference of most of the rest of the world today to democratic movements that upset commerce. And this brings up . . .

Forecast #4: *Nations all over the world, both friends and enemies of the United States, will wake up, in 2010, to the fact that the United States has finally all but given up on its long campaign to “make the world safe for democracy.”*

As every schoolboy knows, America’s self-appointed role as the world’s nanny began with Woodrow Wilson’s attempt to gain Congressional support for American membership in the League of Nations, which he had helped to create. Truman picked up the baton with his pledge, after World War II, to “support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.” This was seconded at the beginning of the Vietnam War by Jack Kennedy, who promised to “pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty.” Finally, George W. Bush trumped them all by his pledge “to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of *ending tyranny in our world.*” (emphasis added)

Immediately upon taking office, Barack seemed to believe that he could out-nanny the best of them. Indeed, the list of ambitions that he and Miss Hillary compiled was so long and elaborate that it was hard to grasp to what extent they intended to be globally involved.

Among other things, they pledged to eliminate global poverty, global warming, and genocide. Moreover, they said they had plans to implement what “progressive” journalist Bob Dreyfuss calls “a sweeping nation-building and democracy-promotion program, including strengthening the National Endowment for Democracy and constructing a civil-military apparatus that would deploy to rescue and rebuild failed and failing states in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East...” And as if that weren’t enough, Dreyfuss continues, they said America would “provide aid to dissidents and democrats from Africa and the Middle East to Russia and China,” and would “integrate civilian and military capabilities to promote global democracy and development,” including the creation of “Mobile Development Teams (MDTs)

that will bring together personnel from the military, the Pentagon, the State Department and USAID, fully integrating U.S. government efforts in counter-terror, state-building, and post-conflict operations.” And finally, Dreyfuss notes, they said that they intended to establish “‘an expeditionary capability’ for non-Pentagon agencies, including the departments of State, Homeland Security, Justice and Treasury.”

Of course, none of this is going to happen, on any sort of meaningful scale. Indeed, if what Miss Hillary recently said in a speech at Georgetown University is true, one of the most important legacies of the Obama administration will be to have abandoned “human rights” as a criterion for American aid and friendship.

You don’t believe this? Well, here’s what she said.

We must be pragmatic and agile in pursuit of our human rights agenda – not compromising on our principles, but doing what is most likely to make them real . . . We acknowledge that one size does not fit all. And when old approaches aren’t working, we won’t be afraid to attempt new ones, as we have this year by ending the stalemate of isolation and instead pursuing measured engagement with Burma. In Iran, we have offered to negotiate directly with the government on nuclear issues, but have at the same time expressed solidarity with those inside Iran struggling for democratic change. As President Obama said in his Nobel speech, “They have us on their side.”

And we will hold governments accountable for their actions, as we have just recently by terminating Millennium Challenge Corporation grants this year for Madagascar and Niger in the wake of government behavior. As the President said last week, “we must try as best we can to balance isolation and engagement; pressure and incentives, so that human rights and dignity are advanced over time” . . . At the same time, human

development must also be part of our human rights agenda. Because basic levels of well-being – food, shelter, health, and education – and of public common goods like environmental sustainability, protection against pandemic disease, provisions for refugees – are necessary for people to exercise their rights, and because human development and democracy are mutually reinforcing.

Principled pragmatism informs our approach on human rights with all countries, *but particularly with key countries like China and Russia* (emphasis added). Cooperation with each of those is critical to the health of the global economy and the nonproliferation agenda we seek, also to managing security issues like North Korea and Iran, and addressing global problems like climate change

So, Madagascar and Niger get the stick when it comes to human rights violations, while China and Russia get the carrot. Here's what the liberal *Washington Post* said about this in an editorial a few days later entitled "Redefining Human Rights."

This is indeed an important change in U.S. human rights policy – but the idea behind it is pure 20th century. Ms. Clinton's lumping of economic and social "rights" with political and personal freedom was a standard doctrine of the Soviet Bloc, which used to argue at every East-West conference that human rights in Czechoslovakia were superior to those in the United States, because one provided government health care that the other lacked. In fact, as U.S. diplomats used to tirelessly respond, rights of liberty – for free expression and religion, for example – are unique in that they are both natural and universal; they will exist so long as governments do not suppress them. Health care, shelter and education are desirable social services, but they depend on resources that governments may or may not possess. These are fundamentally different goods, and one cannot substitute for another.

Ms. Clinton said that in adding "human development" to human rights and democracy, "we have to tackle all three simultaneously." But there are two dangers in her approach. One is that non-democratic regimes will seize on the economic aspect of her policy as a substitute for political reform -- as dictators have been doing for decades. Another is that the Obama administration will itself, in working with friendly but unfree countries, choose the easy route of focusing on development, while downplaying democracy.

Judging from Ms. Clinton's own rhetoric, that is the approach the State Department is headed toward in the Arab Middle East. In a major speech last month in Morocco, she said that U.S. engagement with Islamic countries would henceforth focus on education, science and technology, and "entrepreneurship" -- all foundations of "development." She made no mention of democracy. If the Obama administration believes that liberty is urgently needed in the homelands of al-Qaeda, Ms. Clinton still has offered no sign of it.

And here's what we said on the same subject last month.

Only time will tell how the world will get along without a global nanny with a big stick. Some small nations are likely to get stomped in much the same way that Kuwait did almost 20 years ago. But unlike Kuwait back then, these new victim nations will stay stomped. Some small nations will have to bend a knee to larger ones like Russia and China. Some, like Israel, Taiwan, and yes, even Japan, will have to prepare to defend themselves without the help of their onetime protector, the good old U.S. of A, but they have almost certainly been concentrating on this effort ever since Barack won the election.

In the meantime, the once noble pursuit of freedom fighters in police states such as China and Russia and Cuba and Vietnam and Iran and North Korea, will find little succor from Miss Hillary's new focus on whether they are getting food and clothing in prison.

Have a Happy New Year, everyone.

Mark and Steve

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