

How the World Could Thrive in the Future

Confession: I was recently sitting at my desk at Maoz Israel Ministries in Tel Aviv, and I was only half-working. While I was getting my work done, I had open on my computer screen a live feed of the Israeli Presidential Conference.

It's an annual event, started a few years ago by Israeli President Shimon Peres, held here in Israel.

The nickname of the gathering is the Tomorrow Conference. The goal is to expose Israelis to the greatest minds in the world and to expose the greatest minds in the world to Israel and Israelis.

It's a three-day event that only grows in stature and impact each year. The topics discussed at the conference include business, finance, technology, the arts, societal issues, science, medicine, government and so forth.

This year's lineup of speakers was incredible! It included former U.S. President Bill Clinton and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, as well as actress and singer Barbra Streisand and actor Robert DeNiro. This is an A-list conference with truly the top figures in each field.

How do you top David Axelrod when it comes to discussing politics? The guy just got Obama elected ... twice! How do you top Larry Summers and Stanley Fischer for discussions on the global economy? They are the former U.S. treasury secretary and Bank of Israel governor, respectively.

There were CEOs from Fortune 500 companies and new startups, artists, entrepreneurs, researchers, leaders in nearly every industry, presidents, foreign ministers, ambassadors and mayors from almost every country. Even Sharon Stone and Dr.

Ruth gave lectures.

Now, that was a conference!

A panel on the afternoon I was watching featured an Arab-Israeli actor who stars on a hit TV show in Israel and an Iranian-Israeli singer who has become popular all over the world. It struck me as they were speaking that they probably don't have conferences like this in Iran. I'm only guessing.

So much of the Muslim world has become so focused on twisted theology, nuclear technology and jihadist ideology that it spends no time conferring on things like art, music, education, hi-tech, startups, cures for diseases or solving the world's problems. Instead, it spends most of its time plotting how to *be* the world's problem.

I'm reminded of Afghanistan before the U.S. invasion. Music was outlawed, and education for women was outlawed.

In the West Bank today, people are arrested for "liking" posts on Facebook that criticize Palestinian leader Abbas. In Gaza today, they are closing Christian schools. In fact, they're closing all schools that teach boys and girls together or that have male and female teachers working side by side.

In Egypt, they are arresting comedians who make fun of the Muslim Brotherhood government. In Iran, they arrest journalists who appear on American television shows.

And when it comes to religion, forget about it. Most Muslim nations don't even allow Bibles to enter their borders or churches or synagogues to be built on their land.

Is it any wonder our nations are at war?

It's not that the Arab people or Muslims are without creativity and ingenuity. It's that their governments shackle them in theocratic prisons. They are people yearning to be free and yearning to engage the world.

Look at the Iranian elections this past week. The people of Iran turned out by the millions to cast their ballots. They know their country is ruled by the murderous dictator, the Ayatollah. They know he banned all but a handful of candidates that he deemed "appropriate." They know he outlawed women from running for office.

But still they turned out to make their voices heard. They chose the best of the awful options of candidates put before them. The winner was someone that we in the West consider extreme. But to the Iranian people, he was the only one who gave the tiniest glimmer of hope that he might not be as awful as his predecessor, Ahmadinejad.

You could feel the desperation of the Iranian people with every vote that was cast. They so want to be free.

The people of Egypt are planning more protests on the upcoming one-year anniversary of their Muslim Brotherhood President Morsi taking office. They are not satisfied. They want something more. They want true freedom.

The people of Syria continue to fight for it and shed their blood for it.

Our enemies are not the Arab people, the Palestinian people or Muslims in general. Our enemies are their dictators—the jihadists who control governments and armies and school curriculum and television shows and summer camps. Our enemies are the indoctrinators of hate and anti-Semitism and sexism.

Our enemy is ignorance.

This week, we in Israel were privileged to have some of the world's great teachers here in our country to share their ideas and to listen to ours—to dream, together, about tomorrow.

I pray that one day soon our Arab neighbors will be free to

dream with us.

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