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**Under Secretary Glassman on How to Win the War of Ideas**  
**Wall Street Journal op-ed on efforts to divert negative sentiments**

The following op-ed by Under Secretary of State James K. Glassman, "How to Win the War of Ideas," first appeared in the June 24 edition of the *Wall Street Journal*, and is in the public domain. There are no republication restrictions.

(begin byliner)

How To Win The War Of Ideas  
The Wall Street Journal  
By James K. Glassman

Military action against insurgents, terrorists and those who give them safe harbor is essential. It is working now in Iraq, and has helped keep Americans safe since 9/11. But as President Bush's National Strategy for Combating Terrorism put it two years ago, "In the long run, winning the War on Terror means winning the battle of ideas."

Many of the strongest supporters of ideological engagement can be found in the Department of Defense, starting with Secretary Robert Gates, who reminded senators earlier this year that the Cold War was "as much a war of ideas as it was of military power." Unfortunately, since the rise of Islamic terror, we haven't done enough on this front.

That's changing. Throughout the government and the private sector, the war of ideas is in early renaissance. The enthusiasm is bipartisan, and we have the opportunity to leave a robust legacy for the next administration.

But what kind of war of ideas will fit the terrorist threat today? First, we need to get the goal straight.

While educational exchanges and other such efforts seek over the long term to encourage foreigners to adopt more generally favorable views of the United States, the war of ideas today should have a different, specific focus. The aim must be to ensure that negative sentiments and day-to-day grievances toward the U.S. and its allies do not manifest themselves in violence. We want to create an environment hostile to violent extremism, especially by severing links between al Qaeda and like-minded groups and their target audiences.

For starters, we should confront the ideology of violent extremism directly. The most credible voices here are those of Muslims themselves – especially Islamists – who have publicly disavowed al Qaeda's methods and theology. Lately such apostates include Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, also known as Dr. Fadl, who laid the foundation for the movement's bloody ideology and has now repudiated it, and Noman Benotman, a Libyan close to Osama bin Laden who rebuked al Qaeda bluntly last year.

Our public diplomacy efforts should encourage Muslims, individuals and groups, to spread the denunciations of violence by these men and others far and wide. But non-Muslim Americans themselves should not shrink from confidently opposing poisonous ideas either.

A second approach to the war of ideas may, in the long run, be even more effective. Call it "diversion."

The ideology that motivates al Qaeda and similar groups is based on the notion that believers have a duty to carry out the excommunication (and execution) of unbelievers, or even of those who collaborate with unbelievers, or refuse to resist them. This ideology posits a Manichean world, divided into two camps: one practicing the terrorists' version of Islam, the other not.

This is a fantasy, but a distressingly powerful one. Our vision is a pluralistic world

with many peaceful and productive choices on how to order one's life. The task is not to persuade potential recruits to become like Americans or Europeans, but to divert them from becoming terrorists.

We do that by helping to build networks (virtual and physical) and countermovements – not just political but cultural, social, athletic and more: mothers against violence, video gamers, soccer enthusiasts, young entrepreneurs, Islamic democrats. For example, there is an emerging global network of families of Islamic victims of terrorist attacks. While winning hearts and minds would be an admirable feat, the war of ideas needs to adopt the more immediate and realistic goal of diverting impressionable segments of the population from being recruited into violent extremism.

Unlike the containment policy of the Cold War, today's diversion policy may not primarily be the responsibility of government. My own job, as the interagency leader for the war of ideas, is to mobilize every possible American asset – public and private, human and technological – in the effort.

Where does Iran fit in? The pool of future suicide bombers and insurgents is sustained by people like the leadership of Iran. Both of the approaches I have outlined – ideological confrontation and diversion – should appeal to a proud and sophisticated Iranian population that is open to pluralistic ideas.

What we seek is a world in which the use of violence to achieve political, religious or social objectives is no longer considered acceptable, efforts to radicalize and recruit new members are no longer successful, and the perpetrators of violent extremism are condemned and isolated.

Military success is necessary, but it is not sufficient – for the simple reason that we face as an enemy not a single nation, or even a coalition, but a stateless global movement. Without a vigorous war of ideas, as we kill such adversaries others will take their place.

(Mr. Glassman was sworn in on June 10 as under secretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs.)

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