

## TRANSCRIPT

MARGARET WARNER: With me is the foreign affairs columnist for The New York Times, Thomas Friedman. He covered the Middle East as a Times reporter in the 1980s, winning two Pulitzer prizes and writing an award-winning book, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*. His latest book is *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*. He just returned from a trip to Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Gulf and Brussels and is with us now.

MARGARET WARNER: Welcome, Tom.

THOMAS FRIEDMAN, The New York Times: Good to be here, Margaret.

MARGARET WARNER: First, your thoughts on Elizabeth's piece. And I'm particularly interested, of course, Osama bin Laden has wrapped himself or as tried to in the Palestinian cause. What do you think is the likely fallout in terms of our war on terror if this downward spiral that Elizabeth has been chronicling in the Israeli- Palestinian conflict continues?

THOMAS FRIEDMAN: One of the things that really struck me from the trip I just took, Margaret, was it was really the replay of a trip I took about six weeks ago right after September 11. I didn't go to Afghanistan then but I went to Pakistan, the Persian Gulf and to Europe. On that first trip, what really struck me was the iron curtain of misunderstanding between America and the Arab-Muslim world today. There is still, or there was then, a widespread feeling that bin Laden didn't do this, that there was no proof and, if he did do it, maybe we deserved a little hit, you know, which people might tell you privately. Six weeks later, the Taliban have fallen, Afghanistan has been liberated by

American troops. I went back to the same region. And what was really striking to me was the extent I heard the exact same thing. We have won the war. We have not won the hearts and minds of the Arab-Muslim world at all. There's still a lot of people there quietly rooting for bin Laden. Some of that is related to their own frustration with their own governments, we know. A lot of it is related to what we just saw as well. This is their way of getting a little bit of revenge on us for what is perceived to be our unwavering support for Israel. By not granting us our victory, in a sense, by not acknowledging that victory, this meat grinder of people that is being... Whose lives are being destroyed every day in this conflict is aired across the Arab world every night in news footage in a very tendentious way to be sure, in a way that often doesn't show the Palestinian provocation only the Israeli reaction, but it has an enormously corrosive effect on American standing in that part of the world. That's just a fact.

MARGARET WARNER: You have written frequently since September 11 that when the President called it a war on terror, it was really a misnomer, that terror is a tool, that it's really a war on what you called religious totalitarianism throughout the Arab and Muslim world. Explain what you mean by that.

THOMAS FRIEDMAN: What I was really trying to highlight was what I call the circle of bin Ladenism. There are kind of three parts to this story. There is bin Laden. Bin Now Laden in my view, Margaret, is a combination of Charles Manson and Jack Welch. Okay. He is a cult leader with the organizational skills of an American corporate titan. You don't find these guys very often. This is a unique character. That's over here. Over here is what I would call "bin Ladenism." Why do people who wouldn't even maybe condone or endorse the mass murder that he did nevertheless have a little bit of support for him? That has to do with, I think, three interwoven factors that produce this bin Ladenism.

One is authoritarian Arab-Muslim regimes. We have an Arab-Muslim world today that does not have a single democratically elected government save for Turkey from Morocco to the border of India – authoritarian government. These authoritarian governments because they are illegitimate and unelected need to legitimize themselves. And what they've done is strike bargains basically with the religious authorities, a bargain, which basically says, "You legitimate me and I'll let you kind of do whatever you want." That was Zia el Huk in Pakistan. And the same bargain is across the Arab-Muslim world. You have authoritarian governments, anti-modernist religious leaders who often indulge in anti-modernist religious education. That produces the third part of the wheel, which is poverty. So the three parts in this wheel all reinforce each other. The poverty reinforces the authoritarian government, the authoritarianism reinforces the anti-modernist religious education and the anti-modernist religious education reinforces the poverty.

MARGARET WARNER: But you've written again several times that the U.S. could go after bin Laden and his killers, but the U.S. cannot kill bin Laden's ideas, that leaders in the Arab-Muslim world have to do that. You're saying they're part of the problem. How do we get them to do that?

THOMAS FRIEDMAN: Well, the only way we're going to do it is with partners. You know, I've written many times that Saudi Arabia is a big part of this problem. They're also essential to the solution. It's impossible for me to imagine us solving this problem without the help of Saudi Arabia. They have too much religious legitimacy within the Islamic Muslim world and too much money. I mean, you go into schoolrooms and madrasses, these Islamic schools in Pakistan

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MARGARET WARNER: As you have.

THOMAS FRIEDMAN: As I have — and there's a sign on the wall: "This room brought to you by the kingdom of Saudi Arabia." That's true from Morocco to Indonesia. So Saudi Arabia is part of the problem and they are also essential to

the solution. We need partners. The reason I was so excited about Pervez Musharraf – the President of Pakistan’s speech over the weekend is that he’s the first leader who has really kind of broke out and said, “You know what? We have a problem. And it starts with me. I am the problem. My name is Pervez Musharraf and I am part of the problem. And the problem is that in the ruling deals we’ve cut with our people, in the case of Pakistan the military and the mosque alliance, and the kind of education we are providing,” and basically said, “I’m going to break that cycle. We’re going to offer a different alternative, progressive Islam and we’re not going to have a military mosque alliance, but a military mainstream alliance.” Whether he’ll be able to pull that off, I don’t know. But I think it was... It’s a great opportunity for somebody to really lead a way out of this.

MARGARET WARNER: But as you pointed out throughout the rest of the Arab-Muslim world I mean, or rather in the world, the only two leaders to give speeches saying Islam is a religion of tolerance were George W. Bush and Tony Blair. You didn’t hear that from any Muslim or Arab leaders.

THOMAS FRIEDMAN: There’s been a real dearth of leadership. These guys are scared. They’re frightened. The truth is they’re frightened of Osama bin Laden still. You haven’t seen many American Muslim leaders give that speech either, and they live in America. I think they’re frightened, too. I think that, you know, the reach of bin Laden is far and wide. And when you have these illegitimate regimes and these leaders know that their people are quietly rooting for bin Laden, you see, say one thing for bin Laden, Margaret; he’s an authentic character. He’s a Saudi millionaire who gave up a life of riches in Saudi Arabia to go live in a cave in Afghanistan and first fight the Soviets and then fight the Americans. I detest the man, but he is an authentic character. Well, you only defeat that kind of authenticity with another kind of authenticity, okay, and that is somebody has to articulate an authentic, progressive Islamic message, I think, you know to face up with that. These guys aren’t ready to do to do that because they struck

their bargains with these other mullahs and these other characters in their own country because they need them because they're unelected, they're illegitimate.

MARGARET WARNER: So then who is going to bring about what you've called this war within Islam, not a war against Islam by the West but a war within Islam, a war for enlightenment or reform?

THOMAS FRIEDMAN: It can only come from Arabs and Muslims themselves. We can engage in the... One of the worst things about American policy toward that part of the world we really only talk to them about two things: Oil and Israel. Our basic policy is on Israel: Just be nice to the Jews. Just be nice to the Jews, and you can do whatever you want at home. Okay? That's one thing. And oil: Just keep the price between \$22 and \$28 and you can do whatever you want at home. And our view was what we don't know won't hurt us. What we discovered on September 11 is what we didn't know did hurt us because back in the gas station behind the pumps people were hatching plots directed very much against us.

MARGARET WARNER: Afghanistan where you've just been, what does the... What does the U.S. role have to be now to make sure that Afghanistan doesn't revert, as you said in your column yesterday, to "Mr. Bin Laden's neighborhood" again?

THOMAS FRIEDMAN: Well, you know, first of all you can't imagine how broken this place is. I mean, my wife asked me when I, you know, "What does Kabul look like?" I said it looked exactly like ground zero. Half of Kabul looks exactly like ground zero, not because of what we did, but because of what they've done to themselves through 22 years of civil war. My wife collects postcards. She said, "When you're in Kabul get some postcards." Where am I going to find postcards in Kabul? Well, sure enough, I went to the Intercontinental Hotel and they have a bookstore that's still open there, and I just grabbed all the postcards that I could and paid for them, came home and I— when I got home, I

discovered one postcard is of rubble. I looked on the back, it says the destroyed Afghanistan National Museum. Now when you are selling postcards of rubble, you've been at war a long time. And these people have been at war so long that they have destroyed this country. I mean, there is... It is nation building on the moon. That's what we are talking about. And so at two levels, what do they need? They need, first of all, someone to provide security. And what was striking about all the Afghan officials I spoke to there was whether it was the education minister, okay, or the interim president, everyone starts out by saying "We need security and we don't trust any of these warlords to provide it. We need you to come in and do that." And, secondly, they need money. But the two go together. The idea that you can just pour in money and stir and you get a resurrected country, not going to happen.

MARGARET WARNER: When they say we need you, do they mean we need you Americans to be part of the force?

THOMAS FRIEDMAN: Absolutely. Everyone wants us. They don't trust anyone else.

MARGARET WARNER: Not even the Europeans.

THOMAS FRIEDMAN: Not even the Europeans. I think that you can have a situation where you galvanize a force, where we have a lead role; we have maybe a symbolic role and others play a more visible role and we're in the background. I think our role could take many forms. But the idea that you'll have a sustained and credible force there without us, you know, listen to the report you had earlier, you know, Kandahar, people are already firing on the Marines there. I took off from Bagram military base, hitched a ride on an American military transport as we were leaving. And they told us people are firing tracer bullets at the end of the runway. This place is totally untamed outside the city. We went to Pakistan where we were at the American military base in Pakistan and we talked to the American pilots there, they told us we do not fly a mission from Pakistan to

Afghanistan where we are not fired on over Pakistani territory by small arms fire. This place is wild. And the idea of pacifying it, you know, is going to be a huge, huge effort. I say it with a heavy heart because I don't want to send, you know, my neighbor's son to go do this. It's going to be really hard. All I know is if we don't do it, the place is going to go right back to Mr. Bin Laden's neighborhood. If we do do it, it still may not work.

MARGARET WARNER: Finally, just briefly but something you've written about and you have a lot of experience having lived in Beirut and Jerusalem, how do Americans learn to live now with a level of personal risk that we've never felt before?

THOMAS FRIEDMAN: Well, Margaret, I always think of when I lived in Beirut I had a Lebanese friend to used to tell me every time she traveled on a plane she carried a bomb in her suitcase because the odds of two people carrying a bomb on the same plane were much higher. And it's that kind of mind game that people played in a place like Lebanon. And we're going to have to do the same thing basically because we're not going back to normal. We're going to have to redefine normal. Either that or you become paralyzed and you basically sit at home in your basement. I don't want to do that. Now redefining normal is going to mean that we're going to have to go out and we're going to have to travel, and we're going to have to accept risk at one level, but I also think it means being smart about it. How many times have you been in line at the airport lately and you see someone raking an 80-year-old lady up and down with a metal detector? You sometimes have got to say, "Wait a minute. I don't think this lady is the person we're looking for." Okay? So at one level we have to be smarter and another level we're going to have to be personally much braver.

MARGARET WARNER: Tom Friedman, thank you.

THOMAS FRIEDMAN: A pleasure.

