

## Winning The New Cold War on Terrorism

By Larry Diamond

Since September 11, the United States and its allies have been at war against an evil and evasive enemy. That war has vital military and operational components, which will proceed in different ways for months and probably years to come. But force alone cannot win this war. Victory requires a longer-term, *political* strategy as well. We must rob the new Bolsheviks, masquerading as religious warriors, of the popular support, political sympathy, and state sponsorship they need to threaten civilized countries.

Like Lenin himself and most of the most important communist revolutionaries of the twentieth century, the leaders and strategists of the Islamic Bolsheviks are well educated and come from middle- or upper-class backgrounds. But they mobilize growing reservoirs of sympathy and commitment among lower-class people who feel deprived, disempowered, and humiliated. In their time, Marxists-Leninists were able to convince broad popular followings that the causes of their suffering, and of the obvious injustices in their societies, were capitalism and imperialism.

The new Bolsheviks similarly focus their political indictment on the leading capitalist nation, the United States, and the alleged imperialism of Israel, with U.S. and Western support. And like so many communist revolutionaries of the twentieth century, they denounce numerous existing regimes—allies (however superficial) of the United States— as corrupt and exploitative. The problem for the United States is that many of the regimes we now depend on are precisely

that. From Morocco to Egypt, from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan and Indonesia, predominantly Muslim populations are increasingly receptive to revolutionary and hateful appeals because they are fed up with the oppression, inequity, (in most cases) poverty, and extravagant corruption in which their societies have been mired. Disgusted with their rulers, despairing of the prospect for peaceful and incremental change within the existing order, they are looking for an explanation of their personal torment and societal degradation. Like Hitler, Lenin, and other charismatic demagogues before him, Osama bin Laden offers an alluring, Manichean explanation: It is the fault of the Jews, of the international capitalist system, and of the United States and the globalizing order it is imposing.

This twisted logic is resonating emotionally among large and growing numbers of the one billion Muslims who stretch from Morocco to Indonesia—and even some who live or reside in Europe and the U.S. With time, force, vigilance, and some luck, we might substantially destroy and disrupt the existing global infrastructure of terrorism. But no amount of military force, law enforcement vigilance, and operational genius can contain an army of suicide bombers that stretches endlessly across borders and over time. We must ultimately undermine their capacity to recruit and indoctrinate new true believers.

Moreover, we should not assume that this new Cold War will draw its line at the boundaries of the Muslim world. Disillusionment with capitalism and democracy is mounting in much of Latin America, Asia, and the former Soviet Union. Fear and resentment of “globalization,” of the democratic West—and of a United States that is portrayed as domineering and contemptuous of global sensitivities—is spreading around the world like a virus. If that virus mutates beyond its current religious boundaries—if a new anti-democratic and anti-

globalist ideology takes root in Latin America, Africa, and non-Muslim parts of Eurasia—we will be in far greater danger than we already are.

It is vital to our national security that we comprehend the real causes of this global backlash and respond wisely to them. This is not—or at least not yet—a war between civilizations. It is not simply or fundamentally a clash of values or beliefs. Indeed, it stems most fundamentally from the fact that peoples around the world share some of the same goals. They want to live in dignity and prosperity. Both as individuals and as members of a group—a nation, and even a religion—they want to be respected as of equal worth. Billions of people want globalization to deliver on the promise of a better life for them and their children. Most of them want freedom as well as development.

The fundamental obstacle to these aspirations is of course not capitalism or Israel or the United States. Neither is it foreign debt, the World Bank, or the legacy of colonialism or slavery. It is the venal, rotten, and incompetent governance that these peoples' rulers have visited upon them. In the Middle East and Africa, in Latin America and the former Soviet Union, and even in large parts of East Asia, no factor stands more fundamentally in the way of development, stability, and human progress than the endemic corruption of weak, unaccountable, ineffectual states. Unless this problem is addressed in a serious, aggressive, and visionary way, we are not going to win the political war on terrorism.

Ironically, even as this awful confrontation has been gathering in the past decade, we have learned a lot about what is needed to improve governance and develop societies. The challenge is to build the institutions of democracy, transparency, and participation in both the state and civil society. Sweeping reforms are needed to develop a capable, professional state bureaucracy, and independent agencies that can hold government officials—the judiciary,

counter-corruption commission, audit agency, ombudsman's commission, economic regulatory bodies, and parliamentary oversight committees. Power must be decentralized, and local government structures must be given training and resources. Citizens need not only access to power but education to know their rights and organization to assert them in independent associations. Free and independent media must be empowered to scrutinize what government does and expose wrongdoing. Ultimately, free and fair, multiparty elections are needed to further discipline government, by enabling the people to remove leaders who do not perform. If multiparty democracy is to be effective, political parties must mobilize support, engage with civil society, and seek accountability in their own structures as well as in government.

In many countries, it makes sense to institute competitive elections as soon as possible, both to generate incentives for reform and to provide part of the institutional means for sharing power in order to manage deadly conflicts. However, where political instability is acute and democratic forces extremely weak and battered relative to extremist alternatives, free and fair multiparty national elections will be more viable if introduced later in a sequence of reforms to develop the structures and culture of democracy and good governance. Only such a sequence can work today in Pakistan, where the main parties and leaders of the overthrown democracy are utterly discredited.

Similarly, in Egypt and much of the Arab world, reform-minded leaders will first have to modernize the state, control corruption, build a rule of law, and open space for moderate alternatives in politics and civil society if truly competitive elections are not to lead to an Islamic fundamentalist takeover. It is true in the short run, as Lawrence Kaplan writes, that we have no alternative to these repressive regimes. But it is sheer fantasy to assume that these regimes can stagger on indefinitely through sheer repression, while their bureaucracies groan under the

pressure to manufacture ever more useless jobs for exploding numbers of young people who will earn nearly worthless salaries. Unless these regimes begin to deliver real development through serious governance and market reforms, many of them are going to fall, sooner or later.

Over the past two decades, through the work of institutions like the National Endowment for Democracy and the U.S. Agency for the International Development, we have learned a lot about how to foster democratic and accountable governance. But political assistance is labor-intensive to manage and monitor, and it cannot be successful without adequate funding and clear coordination with our other tools of international engagement, such as diplomacy. Currently we spend about \$700 million annually in democracy and governance programs in AID, and we allocate another \$30 million to NED's international grant-making program (as well as some additional funds through State Department programs). This may sound like a lot of money, until one considers that more than 100 countries in the world need assistance to improve or generate democracy, and a respectable program just to strengthen the rule of law in a medium-sized country can absorb several million dollars.

If we are serious about getting at the roots of international terrorism, and of the spreading international sympathy it enjoys, we must get serious about fostering development that gives people hope and dignity and improves the quality of their lives. In real terms, levels of U.S. development assistance have fallen dramatically since the 1970s and especially since the end of the last Cold War. As Jeffrey Sachs recently observed, "the United States now spends only 0.1 percent of GNP in foreign assistance, and only 0.02 percent of GHP in assistance for the poorest countries." This is by far the weakest effort of any of the wealthy democracies.

It will not work to just throw money at the problem in some new "Marshall Plan." No infusion of economic resources, no matter how massive and sustained, will in itself generate

development, because the problem (unlike in Europe after World War II) is not simply a lack of resources or functioning infrastructure. The problem is a more fundamental shortage: of the institutions of democracy and good governance. Unless we help to develop states that collect taxes, limit corruption, control crime, enforce laws, secure property rights, provide education, attract investment, and answer to their own people, countries will not develop and the violent rage against the West will not subside. Neither will we stem the proliferating threats of state collapse, international crime, drug trafficking, environmental disaster, and infectious disease, all of which breed in the swamps of economic failure and rotten governance.

This is why we must not only substantially increase our foreign assistance budget but also devote a much larger portion of that budget to democracy and governance programs, while deploying more aid workers with training in political development.

We can win the immediate war against the Taliban. We can and must help the people of Afghanistan to free themselves from this Medieval tyranny. But that victory will only provide us a narrow window of opportunity to begin gaining ground in a far more difficult and elusive struggle. We must help societies to build the *political* institutions that foster human progress. Only then can we achieve a lasting victory in the war on terrorism.

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