

Police Actions Won't Defeat Radical Islamism

By **KEN BALLEEN**

In arguing on this page for the separation of democracy promotion from the struggle against radical Islamism, Francis Fukuyama and Adam Garfinkle ("A Better Idea," editorial page, March 27) fundamentally fail to understand the true nature of radical Islamism and its terrorist progeny. The authors posit that the goal of the Bush administration to promote democracy in the Muslim world must be divorced from "neutralizing hard-core terrorists . . . in what will look less like a war than like police and intelligence operations."

The problem with Messrs. Fukuyama and Garfinkle's analysis is that by failing to address the empirical evidence on what empowers global terrorists, the result of their policy prescription will lead to inevitable failure. No amount of even the most adept "police and intelligence operations" will ever succeed in countering the true threat that radical Islamism now represents.

To bolster their thesis that defeating global terrorists can be accomplished by turning back to the failed past policies of police actions, they cite as their principal example the recent victory of Islamist parties in Palestine and Egypt. According to this thesis, Hamas has gained popularity in Palestine not because of its "foreign policy views, but because of [its] stress on domestic social welfare issues. . . ." Hence, we just need to "let them deliver" and when presumably they fail to pick up the garbage on time, they will "face vulnerabilities of their own not far down the road."

But the authors are sorely out of touch with the facts on the ground. A new poll by the non-partisan, not-for-profit Terror Free Tomorrow in the West Bank and Gaza shows that popular support for Hamas's radical views is overwhelming among Hamas voters themselves. Almost three-quarters of voters agree with the Hamas Charter calling for the elimination of Israel, and are against changing any part of the Hamas Charter, including the elimination of Israel by jihad, by more than a three to one margin. Since the poll also showed that 76% of all Palestinians believe in a Western "Crusade" against Islam, it's nothing but wishful thinking to think that a failure of Hamas to deliver social services will result in self-critical Palestinian rejection of radical Islamism, rather than the far more likely blaming of outsiders as part of the larger conspiracy view already accepted by the vast majority of Palestinians.

The problem is not a matter of "neutralizing" a few hard-core terrorists, as Messrs. Fukuyama and Garfinkle seem to assume. Radical Islam has become a mass movement throughout the Muslim world. As Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld pointed out several years ago, new recruits to the cause are being created faster than our ability to capture or kill them. More than the simple number of recruits, however, the degree to

which radical Islamism enjoys popular support hinders our ability to collect vital intelligence from an unsympathetic public. No matter what the price tag we place on Osama bin Laden, for instance, the support he enjoys in the tribal areas of Pakistan provides him with a layer of public protection that makes it exceedingly difficult for even the most sophisticated intelligence to penetrate. Most critically, the growing popular support of radical Islamism destroys the ability of moderate Muslims and friendly governments, who the authors would have the U.S. champion, to successfully occupy the public space necessary to counter the radicals.

Indeed, it is axiomatic that the U.S. military, intelligence and law-enforcement agencies can only do so much. Support for Islamist extremism and its global terrorist progeny has transformed itself into a mass movement, and popular support must be turned away from radicalism to moderation. That's difficult, but not impossible.

America's foremost military leaders agree. The Navy's chief of operations, Adm. Michael Mullen, stated recently that the change of Muslim opinion in Indonesia as a result of American tsunami assistance is nothing less than "one of the defining moments of this new century."

For the first time since 9/11, the first and second most populous Muslim countries in the world, Indonesia and Pakistan respectively, favorably support the U.S. and turned decisively against support for bin Laden and terrorism. Public opinion surveys over the past year by Terror Free Tomorrow teach us a crucial lesson: If the U.S. takes leadership in assistance, then public support in Muslim countries for America soars, at the same time support for bin Laden and terrorist attacks fades away. Indeed, the U.S. fared better in Muslim opinion in both Pakistan and Indonesia than radical Islamist groups or even Islamic countries themselves, all of which trumpeted their involvement.

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