

# United Press International

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## Outside view: Supplanting terror

By Jack DuVall  
A UPI Outside View  
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In his "Declaration of War Against the Americans" in 1996, Osama bin Laden charged the United States with "carrying arms on our land" in the Arabian peninsula, and in his first statement after the attacks of 9/11, he said that American allies -- India in its occupation of Kashmir and Israel in its occupation of Palestine -- placed Muslims in "a large prison of fear and subdual." He declared that "our fight against these governments is not separate from our fight against you."

In other words, al-Qaida and the wider network it has energized cast themselves as fighters against oppression. America is targeted because we are seen as bolstering their oppressors, not because they "hate our freedom." In fact Bin Laden acknowledges that the "American people have the ability and choice to refuse the policies of their government and even to change it if they want," which is convenient for him: It's why he says that killing civilians is acceptable.

But would-be liberators are out of business if they don't have movements, and those who sign up are invited not only to embrace a movement's goals but also its strategy for action -- which is why violence is proclaimed by terrorists as the only possible path to power. Bin Laden, sounding like Lenin, has said, "The walls of oppression and humiliation cannot be demolished except in a rain of bullets."

Because violence as a form of liberation has usually failed, that is the voice of historical ignorance, and any movement predicated on ignorance is prone to failure. To expedite that failure, the vulnerabilities of terrorists should be discovered and targeted, and what is most vulnerable is their ideas. Right now the market for their ideas is growing -- the number of violent Muslim fighters targeting Americans is swelling.

We can continue to rely mainly on a military strategy to reduce the supply of terrorists, and try to liquidate the market that way, hoping our tactics don't backfire. Or we can work to shrink the demand. And the demand comes from those who accept al-Qaida's claim that only terror will remove the American roadblock to self-rule in Muslim lands.

But the case for terror is built on false history, infeasible goals, and a form of fighting that only fanatical exhortation can freshen with new recruits. Bin Laden has declared that our democracy "is for the white race only" and declares that the United States had "no mentionable role" in the collapse of the Soviet Union, which he attributes to the Mujahideen in Afghanistan, of which he was a member.

Yet at the same time that bin Laden portrays the United States as cowardly and rotten, he implies we have decisive mastery of Muslims' fate. Two months after 9/11, he recited a poem on videotape, ending in these words: "We will not stop our raids, until you free our lands." Until we free his lands. Not the words of someone who knows how to liberate his people with the power they already possess.

So what is the heart of what he wants from America, which his followers are supposed to die for? There is no heart, there is only a litany of disparate demands: Bin Laden insists that all Americans, civilians as well as soldiers leave all Muslim lands, stop interfering

with traffic in weapons of mass destruction, outlaw alcohol and gambling, ban images of women in advertising, ratify the Kyoto agreement, stop banks from charging interest, quit other religions and adopt Islam, and stop using "bad manners". Unless we do these things, he will destroy us.

To accomplish that destruction, Islamist terror groups need a steady stream of fighters willing to die -- and the lengths to which their language goes, to reinforce that readiness for suicide, approximates the jargon of a cult. In his "Declaration of War" on America, bin Laden said that every Muslim has the "individual duty" to kill Americans "in any country in which it is possible" -- a duty that all but a tiny handful of more than a billion Muslims have entirely disregarded in the six years since it was proclaimed. Indeed, the constant need of terrorists to re-legitimize violence reveals doubt that many followers can reflexively embrace it.

So bin Laden quotes Allah's messenger, "The best of the martyrs are those who do not turn their faces away from battle till they are killed," and he tells Americans that young jihadists "have no intention except to enter paradise by killing you." But this empties the fighter's motivation of any political content, for if the only reason to kill is to be killed, the killer has abandoned concern for the living. Whatever else it may be, liberation is not about the dead.

This decoction of spurious ideas and demented urges can be discredited. We should subsidize a vast new independent educational effort, with the collaboration of governments in the Islamic world, to document in schools and on television the two centuries of our struggle to reform and revitalize American self-government, so that all Muslims know that our dedication to rights and equality is embedded in our soul and more characteristic of who we are than our government's recent patronage of undemocratic governments. And that patronage should end, not because it places us under threat, but because it is wrong.

We can also undermine the culture of suicide in terrorist lore, not by denouncing it as evil, but by demonstrating to Muslims everywhere that it's not necessary, because the young people who kill themselves to attack our country -- which is based on the same idea they prize, the right to govern themselves - can achieve that right without violence. Self-rule is not delivered by self-destruction.

Muslim clerics who condemn terror are not in short supply, but they don't yet have an answer to the claim that no other strategy exists for Muslim peoples to gain the power they believe they lack. We can help them find that answer: the legacy and might of nonviolent movements, the strategy of civilian-based struggle.

Through nonviolent strategies using strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience, mass demonstrations and other disruptive tactics, the grip of the British on India was loosened, Nazi occupiers were stymied in Europe, communist regimes were collapsed in Poland and Eastern Europe, apartheid was made unsustainable in South Africa, and dictators were brought down in the Philippines, Chile and Serbia. And there are specific precedents in the history of Muslim nations for this kind of conflict, among them:

-- In 1929, the Pashtun leader Abdul Ghaffar Khan founded his nonviolent "Servants of God" movement against British rule in what is now Pakistan. He organized hundreds of villages and thousands of people, to boycott state stores and lie down in front of police lines holding the Koran.

-- In 1985, in Sudan, weeks of nonviolent protests in Khartoum and Omdurman against the repressive rule of a dictator was capped by a general strike that paved the way for a bloodless coup.

-- In 1987-88, in the first Palestinian Intifada, tens of thousands of civilians boycotted Israeli products, marched in demonstrations, refused to pay fees, and inspired military "refuse" in Israel to split public support for the occupation.

-- This year in Egypt, opposition parties boycotted parliamentary elections, and civilian dissidents against authoritarian regimes in North Africa are gathering force. The ranks of these and other embryonic campaigns in the Islamic world, to open up closed societies and force governments to observe human rights, are more numerous than the membership of terrorist networks because they stand for people living freely, here and now.

Terror is less a form of war than it is a tactic of insurrection. To the extent it is supplanted by another, more effective strategy to liberate those who are oppressed, it can be diminished. Terrorists kill people, and they must be stopped, but they won't be stopped until their ideas are. Terrorists do not appeal to reason as the basis of rallying consent for a new way to govern. They would compel acquiescence by threatening death, to enforce the agenda of self-appointed saviors. That is why all terror, indeed all political violence, is anti-democratic.

For us, projecting the people's power through encouraging the strategic use of civilian-based resistance throughout the world may be our greatest opportunity, because it can dissolve the oppression that gives terror its rationale and thereby divert millions from the lure of violence as the means of liberation.

Thus the struggle against terror is a political conflict. Only a global political strategy can pull out the roots of terror and rally support for general liberation. If Americans were to organize ourselves, or command our government, to cover the world with the knowledge of how oppressed people can liberate themselves through nonviolent conflict, or to fund international institutions to propagate this knowledge, the cost of effacing oppression anywhere this worked would be radically less, liberated person by liberated person - and thus more realistic as a strategy, if freedom for the world is actually our motive.

Americans should resolve that our people, lost on 9/11 or any other date, will not have died in vain, because we will act to help the two billion people who do not rule themselves to achieve what Abraham Lincoln called "a new birth of freedom" - and that "government of the people, by the people, for the people" shall be universal. This is how oppression will vanish, and with it, the hallucination of violence as a path to power.

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