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A New Model of Islam with Less Bark and More Bite

By **Robert Small**

Andrew Bostom's September 25th blog likens my "True Story of Moderate Islam" to a Rudyard Kipling "Just So Story." From his position up there on the watchtower, he apparently can't see that he's guilty of promulgating his own "just so" tale.

Bostom insists that there may be moderate Muslims, but Islam is by definition extreme. His story is long in describing the problem, but short in offering a solution because A) Islam isn't simply going to go away or change on its own, B) even the most moderate Muslim isn't going to completely reject his Islamic heritage, and C) Islam isn't some bad neighborhood of the globe we can avoid; it's 1.6 billion people bound by a common heritage dispersed across many sovereign nations. What's more, the problem more precisely defined is Islamism and its goal of establishing a global Islamic state. Bostom's simple model surrenders Islam to the Islamists, which is ultimately self-defeating because it offers no counter-strategy except resistance.

The best solution is to increase the proportion of moderates to extremists; however, Bostom and other proponents of the simple model are quick to "correct" anyone who dares pair the word "moderate" with "Islam" or give moderate Muslims a measure of relevancy. In my last article, Bostom's targets were the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and its former head and one-time president of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid. Never mind that Andrew McCarthy, in his excellent book *The Grand Jihad*, wrote of my "much ballyhooed" Wahid that "by any estimation, he is an authentic moderate who urges interfaith tolerance." McCarthy also cites George Cardinal Pell, Catholic archbishop of Sydney, Australia, who describes Wahid's brand of Islam as "synchronistic, moderate, and with a strong mystical leaning" that "thrives because it is reinforced in schools established by Wahid's [NU]." Establishing schools sounds like building infrastructure for moderate Islam to me, but to Bostom, I guess it's just more "uninformed and heavily redacted apologetics."

Don't get me wrong: we need our guard dogs inside the fence -- sniffing out Islamists on our soil, baring their teeth and barking loudly about creeping sharia (Islamic law). But that's not nearly enough to counter the threat in our own backyard, much less on the other side of the

fence. We also need a more sophisticated model of Islam that offers a framework for both distinguishing moderates from Islamists (Bostom's mainstream Muslims) and swelling their ranks to help stop the advance of sharia here and abroad.

When Reagan called the Soviet Union an "evil empire," he demonized the tyranny of the Communist state, not the people forced to live in it. I think that citizens of the region today will agree that the Russian Federation is moderate by comparison, and it didn't require a direct strike on Moscow to get it there. It took winning at a kind of chess-boxing: physically beating back Soviet expansion outside the USSR by supporting resisters, while playing ideological chess with its central government between rounds. Islam is more complex in many ways, but America could lead the way to similar success against Islamism by identifying Mecca and Medina as representing the geopolitical capital of the Islamic state and opposing the ideology of conquest and subjugation that rules the Middle East.

Unfortunately, our leaders subscribe to an even worse model than Bostom's, erroneously identifying the enemy as "borderless terrorists" and treating militant Islamists like homeless trespassers rather than expeditionary units from an empire. Their counter-strategy has been simple eviction. Worse still, their faulty and superficial definition of "moderate" as anyone who isn't an Islamic militant has permitted Islamist agents to use our institutions to spread "religion of peace" propaganda and lecture us about "Islamophobia."

Religion (peaceful or otherwise) is irrelevant to a Reaganesque doctrine targeting tyranny in any form, and we're losing against the Islamists because political correctness has blinded Western governments to the parallels between communism and Islamism. As Eric R. Staal, in his January article "A 'Containment' Policy for Islamist Expansionism," points out, "[i]f anything, the predominant view is simplistically that Islam is one of the world's Great Religions, morally equivalent to Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism."

Bostom and others have certainly been working to correct the predominant view, and we can all agree that Islamic governments based on sharia law are stuck in the dark ages. However, just because they still burn witches in Saudi Arabia (figuratively speaking -- I know they actually behead them) doesn't mean we can't find moderate Islam in places where they've put away their torches and are trying to keep others from getting lit.

As McCarthy concludes in his chapter on Islamism (emphasis mine),

The stubborn fact remains that there are hundreds of millions of Muslims who either *do not wish to live under the tyranny of sharia* or are so indifferent that, even if they would abide by sharia in a Muslim country where it applies, they *do not support converting non-Muslim societies into sharia enclaves*.

A great many of them are concentrated in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country. Bostom frequently cites a 2007 World Opinion Dynamics poll reporting that about half of Indonesian Muslims favor living under Islamic law and think the rest of the world should, too. Conversely, his data demonstrates that the other half (over 101 million, based on a 2009 Pew Foundation population report) *don't*. As I argued in my last article, the NU with its 50 million members is certainly a better alternative to the Islamist wolves in sheeps' clothing we've been partnering with who *do* support establishing sharia enclaves in non-Muslim societies, including our own.

The flaw in Bostom's model isn't so much its absolutism as that it ignores all those moderate Muslims it acknowledges "may" exist. My model starts with the hypothesis they do exist and determines to find them by defining moderate Islam as follows:

- Respects our principle of separation of church and state;
- Resists movements within its borders to create an Islamic state;
- Allows other religious faiths, including Christians and Jews, to practice openly within its borders;
- Rejects blasphemy laws and protects freedom of speech;
- Does not seek to establish sharia enclaves in non-Muslim countries or promote the establishment of a global caliphate (unified Islamic state);
- Does not harbor recognized terrorists or support terrorist groups operating within its borders or abroad; and
- Supports Israel's right to exist.

A model with clear definitions would both allow us to sort out the willing subjects of the Islamic state from those who want no part of the empire and lend itself to a Cold War strategy to contain the empire.

Most presidential hopefuls invoke Reagan, but Herman Cain seems to also understand the power of definitions, telling interviewers:

Reagan's philosophy, as you know, was peace through strength. My philosophy is peace through strength and clarity. We need to clarify who our friends are, clarify who our enemies are, stop giving money to the enemies and make sure that our enemies know who our friends are, that we are going to stand solidly behind.

If Iran can't be stopped from obtaining nuclear weapons, and it's probably already too late, then Saudi Arabia will be sure to follow. As the Cold War parallel becomes more obvious, it's also becoming clear that the world needs a U.S. president who isn't afraid to dust off the Gipper's playbook.

Taking the Cold War to Islam, however, will require at least one new play: a vigorous domestic energy policy designed to deprive the Islamic state of the petrodollars that fuel its expansionism. If we can find the will, we may be able to help moderate Islam achieve the critical mass necessary to pull the rest of Islam into the Enlightenment.

http://www.americanthinker.com/2011/11/a_new_model_of_islam_with_less_bark_and_more_bite.html#ixzz1eM7ceyaO