

Beware of Rand Robots

Tahir Ali

For the last three years, *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman has been telling Muslims all over the world: “You either have to have a war within or a war with us.” A call for Muslim “civil war” has become the battle cry of the neo-cons. Using these “civil wars,” Muslims killing Muslims in large numbers, the neo-cons expect to accomplish three goals: (1) the re-creation of Muslim societies in the western image, with or without democratic institutions, (2) long-term control over oil and policies toward Israel, and (3) the reconstruction of Islam on the Biblical model, reformation included.

A while back, the Rand Corporation, a semi-autonomous think tank, issued a report titled *Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources, and Strategies* authored by Cheryl Benard (<http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1716/MR1716.pdf>). American Muslims must take note of this, because it is already being implemented in “letter and spirit” by various agencies and even “private” groups.

Though the author of this report claims: “The United States has three goals in regard to politicized Islam. First, it wants to prevent the spread of extremism and violence. Second, in doing so, it needs to avoid the impression that the United States is ‘opposed to Islam.’ And third, in the longer run, it must find ways to help address the deeper economic, social, and political causes feeding Islamic radicalism and to encourage a move toward development and democratization,” its actual aims are discernable from its policy recommendations, detailed below.

Cheryl Bernard, the author of this report [and wife of Zalmay Khalizad, the American ambassador to Afghanistan], claims: “This approach seeks to strengthen and foster the development of civil, democratic Islam and of modernization and development. It provides the necessary flexibility to deal with different settings appropriately, and it reduces the danger of unintended negative effects. The following outline describes what such a strategy might look like:

Tahir Ali has an M.A. in engineering from McGill University (Canada), and has long-standing affiliations with the American Muslim Alliance and the Islamic Society of Greater Worcester. The author of many articles published in Muslim magazines, newspapers, and websites, as well as of the recently published book *The Muslim Vote: Counts and Recounts* (Wyndham Hall: 2004), he is a frequent speaker at Muslim conventions and conferences.

- (1) “Support the modernists first, enhancing their vision of Islam over that of the traditionalists by providing them with a broad platform to articulate and disseminate their views. They, not the traditionalists, should be cultivated and publicly presented as the face of contemporary Islam.
- (2) “Support the secularists on a case-by-case basis.
- (3) “Encourage secular civic and cultural institutions and programs.
- (4) “Back the traditionalists enough to keep them viable against the fundamentalists (if and wherever those are our choices) and to prevent a closer alliance between these two groups.
- (5) “Within the traditionalists, we should selectively encourage those who are the relatively better match for modern civil society. For example, some Islamic law schools are far more amenable to our view of justice and human rights than are others.
- (6) “Finally, oppose the fundamentalists energetically by striking at vulnerabilities in their Islamic and ideological postures, exposing things that neither the youthful idealists in their target audience nor the pious traditionalists can approve of: their corruption, their brutality, their ignorance, the bias and manifest errors in their application of Islam, and their inability to lead and govern.” (pp. 47-48)

After making these recommendations, the author goes on to say: “Some additional, more direct activities will be necessary to support this overall approach, such as the following:

- (1) “Help break the fundamentalist and traditionalist monopoly on defining, explaining, and interpreting Islam.
- (2) “Identify appropriate modernist scholars to manage a Web site that answers questions related to daily conduct and offers modernist Islamic legal opinions.
- (3) “Encourage modernist scholars to write textbooks and develop curricula.
- (4) “Publish introductory books at subsidized rates to make them as available as the tractates of fundamentalist authors.
- (5) “Use popular regional media, such as radio, to introduce the thoughts and practices of modernist Muslims to broaden the international view of what Islam means and can mean.” (p. 48)

Three key factors are crystal clear about this report: (1) Its author seeks to redefine Islam, (2) find and promote “suitable” Muslim leaders and intellectuals, and (3) involve western governments in reorganizing and transforming Islam, by persuasion when possible and by force when necessary.

The First Amendment reads: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.” Notwithstanding the fact that this report clearly violates the First Amendment, since its publication in 2003, various groups and organizations have implemented its author’s recommendations. A number of Muslims have been co-opted by the neo-cons and various Rand Report implementation teams.

Though it is true that people under assault can always tell the difference between a Nelson Mandela and a Chief Buthe, even if the powers-that-be may label Mandela a “terrorist” and Zulu Chief Buthe a “moderate,” it is still useful even necessary to remain vigilant about these planted agents who are now being programmed like robots to say and to [do] whatever these think tanks want them to say and do.

How can one recognize these Muslim neo-cons and Rand robots? Well, here are a few hints: You will find them

- (1) Trying to trigger multiple civil wars, and promoting conflict among Muslims.
- (2) Attacking any effort or entity promoting unity, clarity of purpose, or Muslim self-empowerment. One of their main assignments is to prevent the emergence of a unified American Muslim agenda.
- (3) Inventing methods to undermine and dilute Muslim identity so that Muslims will participate as individuals, not as a community.
- (4) Using slogans to get American Muslims to shed all support and affinity for issues and causes of freedom and justice in Palestine, Kashmir, and elsewhere. Their assignment is to make the field wide open for the other side.
- (5) Exploiting every fault line within the American Muslim community, for example, by deploying stratagems to create misunderstanding and lack of amity among indigenous and immigrant Muslims.
- (6) Undermining the American Muslim struggle for civil rights and human liberties.
- (7) Refuting the neo-cons but actually working with and for them.
- (8) Creating confusion, hopelessness, helplessness, and purposelessness in the community. You will find them attacking everyone but never taking responsibility for any cause or crisis.

In short, their ultimate assignment is to undermine the American Muslim community by undermining its primary values, main ideas, repre-

sentative institutions, and primary modes of self-empowerment and self-representation.

What these Muslim neo-cons and Rand robots are seeking is not reform, but intellectual and moral surrender. However, there is one important difference between Muslim neo-cons and Rand robots: The Muslim neo-cons do not attack Islam or the Prophet of Islam; the Rand robots do.

Remember that in a war of wits, the mind is the ultimate target. However, it is also the ultimate weapon.