

Can Democratic and Economic Reforms Reduce the Appeal of Terrorist Ideology?



Counterinsurgency Perspective

- **War on Islamist terrorism – a global insurgency**
- **Political and economic measures an essential component of counter-insurgency strategy**
- **Some evidence that lack of political and economic opportunity in Moslem states has helped terrorist recruitment**

Islamist Terrorism

- **Islamism not synonymous with terrorism**
- **Global jihadists justify terror on religious grounds**
- **Al Qaeda and affiliated groups' ideology not likely to be moderated by political and economic reform**

A Strategy of "Disaggregation" – breaking the links with global jihad

- **Critical role of good governance**
- **Islamism and democracy can co-exist**
- **Role of non-violent political Islamists**
- **Global jihad or defensive jihad**

Accommodation with Political Islamism – a risky approach

- **Ambiguity of Islamist agenda**
- **An accommodation with terrorism?**
- **Backlash by authoritarian regimes**

Practical Limitations on the Impact of Political and Economic Reform

- **Length of time for political and economic impact**
- **Deep suspicion of “Western” motives**
- **Current approach to war on terror is one of “aggregation”**

Conclusions

- **Political and economic reform process will take decades**
- **Ideology of Al Qaeda will not be undermined by political and economic reform**
- **Civil society, education and media reform just as important**
- **Ultimately Muslims themselves must reject extremism**