



Deepening America's Response to Terrorism

by Patrick M. Cronin

Hidden away in President Bush's trip to Asia, especially his short stopover in Bali, are clues that the administration may be finally broadening and deepening its counterterrorism strategy. Unveiled during the president's trip is an investment of \$157 million over the next six years to improve the quality of secular basic education and moderate the influence of extremist views in Islamic day and boarding schools – *madrasahs* and *pesantren*, respectively. The president's trip to the world's largest Muslim-majority country may not be remembered for education, but it should be.

More than two years after Sept. 11, the administration is still seeking to build an arsenal of hard and soft policy instruments in the campaign against international terrorism. The bedeviling complexities of post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as America's bruised reputation around the world (especially in the Muslim world, as testified to most recently during the world summit of Islamic countries), underscore the need for new approaches that at once signal America's values and protect America's long-term interests in a manner that respects global diversity.

The new education initiative, coming after a period of decline in the quality of education in Indonesia, adds a dimension to U.S. policy that has been percolating since the day Chief of Staff Andrew Card whispered into the president's ear, "America is under attack."

Thanks to a few persistent individuals in the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the National Security Council staff, the administration is moving to integrate good development policy into our national security priorities.

The trip allowed the president not only to shore up a leader who is clamping down on terrorism, but also to institute major increases in education programs designed to dampen support for extremists and bolster the moderate majority. Undoubtedly the bombings in Bali and the Jakarta Marriott gave greater salience to much-discussed plans for improving the quality of education in Indonesia's public and religious primary schools.

Beyond Afghanistan and Iraq, heretofore the Middle East provided the one area where there was an alignment of needs (poor Middle East governance), means (existing economic support funds), and ways (the organizational simplicity that comes with an issue falling into a single governmental bureau's jurisdiction). Secretary of State Colin Powell announced the result less than a year ago, the Middle East Partnership Initiative, whose objectives roughly correspond to the major "deficits" identified by Arab intellectuals: improving

political and economic freedom, education, and women's empowerment.

USAID conducted a comprehensive review of lessons learned in governance, economic growth, and education, and provided a catalog of potential development programs that could be expanded in support of counterterrorism. Many ideas represented low-cost, creative projects – from working with Muslim clerics in Bangladesh to study human rights and women's issues, to providing Egyptian children with an Arabic version of Sesame Street named *Alam Simsim*.

But a catalog of well-intentioned projects does not a strategy make. Development assistance can be a complement to other policy tools by helping to stabilize areas emerging out of conflict and building indigenous institutional and personal capacities. Of all development tools, however, there is probably no better long-term tool than education for bolstering a modern majority's leadership at both the national and local level.

The president should now direct the same officials who worked on the Indonesia education initiative to consider the following steps:

- X First, carefully monitor and evaluate the results of each facet of the education program in Indonesia to better determine what works best.
- X Second, augment the basic education focus with more higher education programs that can relate to jobs and leadership. USAID and U.S. higher education successfully built a cadre of economic-growth-oriented leaders in the 1960s, and it can do so again.
- X Third, open or expand a strategic dialogue with key donors, especially Japan and Australia, to expand these development programs.

The Bali and Marriott bombings will not be the last terror attacks in Indonesia. To expect aid and other policies to eradicate a loose-knit organization like *Jemaah Islamiyah* is to expect far too much from any instruments of policy. But by traveling to Indonesia in the manner he did, the president's road to Bali may open a new chapter in countering terrorism in the mid to long-run by successfully weaving development programs into our foreign and security policy.

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