

# The Washington Times

## Pushing back against Islamist aggression

Free speech and economic warfare are powerful weapons

By Richard Rahn  
Feb. 24, 2015

How would you feel if you had to have bodyguards anytime you moved about — not because you were a voluntary celebrity, such as a presidential candidate or movie star, but merely because you exercised your free speech right by publishing cartoons that some found offensive? Danish journalist Flemming Rose published cartoons of Muhammad in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten back in 2006, which led to many violent riots by Muslims around the world. He has written a book, “The Tyranny of Silence: How One Cartoon Ignited a Global Debate on the Future of Free Speech” (the English edition was just published by the Cato Institute Press).

Mr. Rose, rather than hiding, even though a fatwa has been leveled against him calling for his death, has traveled and spoken widely in his unrelenting advocacy of free speech and against the tyranny of silence. He has argued that “the lesson from the Cold War is: If you give in to totalitarian impulses once, new demands follow. The West prevailed in the Cold War because we stood by our fundamental values and did not appease the totalitarian tyrants.” Mr. Rose also argued, “It is discriminatory toward Muslims to say that we should not make fun of their religion when we are making fun of everybody else’s religion.”

There are thousands of different interpretations of the New Testament, yet these various versions of Christianity accept certain core beliefs, including turning the other cheek rather than forcibly trying to convert or kill those who do not believe. Not so with Islam. There are passages in the Koran that speak of the need to kill the unbeliever. A majority of Muslims, according to public opinion polls, reject those interpretations. However, opinion polls in the major Muslim countries show that there are substantial minorities that endorse at least some radical versions of Islam. After reviewing many of these polls, Middle East analyst Joshua Muravchik concluded that perhaps 20 percent of the world’s Muslims support terrorism “often or sometimes,” which amounts to some 300 million people.

President Obama and other leaders frequently make the statement that the Islamic State, or ISIS, and other Islamic terrorist organizations are not Muslim. The facts do not bear them out. The Islamic State and the others can and do point to specific passages in the Koran that support their interpretation rather than those of the moderates. Most non-Muslim-majority countries have increasingly protected the rights of minority religions, while almost all majority Muslim

countries have not. Few Muslim majority countries even pretend to be democracies, and many argue that their religion is incompatible with democracy. It should be made clear to the moderate Muslims (those who are tolerant of others' beliefs and practices) that they are welcome in the United States and elsewhere, provided they do not seek or expect special privileges (restrictions on others' speech or dress, new holidays or the imposition of Shariah law). That is, they should adapt to the majority culture, not vice versa. The act of putting a Koran in the toilet should not be considered a hate crime while doing the same with a Bible is labeled "art."

At the same time, the United States in particular needs to step up its economic warfare against the Islamic State and the other violent Muslim groups. It is distressingly ironic that the U.S. government engages in asset forfeiture — that is, seizing the assets of U.S. citizens and business people who have not been convicted of any crime (merely on suspicion by some government employee) — yet rarely seizes the assets of foreign terrorists or those advocating violence against Americans. Even the Islamic State must use bank accounts in order to sell oil and other assets and buy supplies — and its bankers by necessity need to have accounts with other banks in order to clear transactions and, ultimately, with banks that have accounts at the Federal Reserve.

The U.S. government has the capability to trace virtually every non-cash transaction anywhere in the world. Even the cash used in low-cost terrorist acts came from a bank at some point. It takes some considerable effort to follow the money, but it can be done. Shutting down the chain of corresponding bank accounts and even emptying the bank accounts of terrorist organizations and those directly involved, including friends or family who supply cash, are far less expensive than many weapon systems and can be far more effective. The same techniques can be used against countries that directly or indirectly support the terrorists. It has the advantage of often being invisible, and innocent children do not get killed as "collateral damage."

The 20 percent or so of the world's population that calls itself Muslim should be made to understand that it will be treated no worse or better than others, provided it is tolerant of the beliefs and actions of non-Muslims. Those Muslims who advocate or inflict harm on others should expect their ability to engage in financial transactions, to travel or to communicate electronically to be severely impaired.

Salman Rushdie, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Flemming Rose and others have shown great courage in not allowing those in the name of Islam to silence them. The more who speak out, the faster Islam will evolve from destructiveness.

*Richard W. Rahn is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and chairman of the Institute for Global Economic Growth.*