

Century Marks

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Declare victory: Though the war in Iraq has not gone well, James Fallows argues that the war on terrorism has: there has been no attack on American soil since 9/11, the Taliban have been routed, the terrorist training camps have been destroyed, many of Osama bin Laden's lieutenants have been eliminated, and the surveillance of al-Qaeda's activities has limited its operations. It is time to declare "that the 'global war on terror' is over, and that we have won." The greatest terrorist risk for the U.S. is that the country will remain in a permanent state of war, spending money ineffectively on security and damaging its moral credibility internationally. Fallows thinks that the U.S. should use its "soft power" as it did in aiding victims of the tsunami in South Asia and of the earthquake in the Himalayas (*Atlantic Monthly*, September).

Strategic planning: The inability of the United States to win the war in Iraq and of Israel to dominate Hezbollah is evidence that Western military might is no longer able to control the Middle East, according to Andrew J. Bacevich of Boston University. The reason is that radical Muslims have learned effective tactics of resistance that involve not just terrorism but humanitarian and political action—a sophisticated strategy designed not for conquest but to deny decisive victories to conventional

armies and powers. This calls for a new strategy on the part of Western powers—one based on the assumption “that the problem posed by radical Islamists has no military solution.” Western powers need to revive and revise the cold-war principles of containment and deterrence. Also, a major project should be launched to develop alternate sources of energy that decrease U.S. dependence on oil from the Persian Gulf region, a dependence which not only sends wealth to that region but ends up subsidizing Islamic radicalism (*Boston Globe*, August 27).

True believers: A growing number of Westerners, reared in no faith or other faiths, are converting to Islam. Although exact numbers are hard to ascertain, the reason for these conversions seems to be a reaction to an increasingly secular world in which moral rules have become amorphous. For young males especially, conversion to Islam is a form of rebellion. While not all converts become extremists, converts do tend, as they do in all religions, to be very devout. A few are candidates for terrorism, like Richard Reid, the so-called shoe bomber; Jose Padilla, who was allegedly involved in an al-Qaeda plot to detonate a dirty bomb; and Germaine Lindsay, a Jamaican-born Briton involved in the suicide bombings last summer in the London Underground (*Time*, August 28).

Limits of diversity: Georgetown is known as a Roman Catholic university that promotes religious diversity—it has full-time Jewish and Muslim chaplains. But evangelical groups like InterVarsity have recently been told by the Protestant chaplain on campus that they are no longer welcome. A spokesperson for InterVarsity said that the group had signed a requisite covenantal agreement in which it pledged not to proselytize on campus and expressed respect for the Catholic faith as a legitimate expression of Christianity. But InterVarsity will no longer be able to organize worship services, hold retreats or Bible studies, or participate in an open house that introduces Georgetown students to various religious groups on campus. The university says that this move is not intended to squelch diversity but is an administrative move to build a Protestant ministry from within the university, instead of relying on outside groups (insidehighered.com).

Evening news: In the week in August when John Mark Karr claimed to have been present when JonBenet Ramsey was murdered nearly ten years ago, the story about the six-year-old beauty pageant performer from Boulder, Colorado, topped the news on the three major networks. Even the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah and the war in Iraq took a backseat to this tabloid story. Karr has since been released by authorities; there’s no evidence to implicate him as Ramsey’s murderer (

tyndallreport.com).

Pro-life legislation: According to research conducted by the Guttmacher Institute, nearly a half million unwanted pregnancies, including 200,000 that would end in abortion, could be prevented each year if Medicaid coverage were expanded to include contraception for low-income women. Previous research by the institute showed that the unintended pregnancy rate for poor women went up 29 percent between 1994 and 2001, while it decreased 20 percent among more affluent women. The institute says that “a poor woman in the United States is now nearly four times as likely to have an unplanned pregnancy, five times as likely to have an unintended birth and more than three times as likely to have an abortion as her higher-income counterpart.” Legislation to support the proposals from the Guttmacher Institute, the Unintended Pregnancy Reduction Act of 2006, has been introduced in the U.S. Senate by Hillary Rodham Clinton and Harry Reid (guttmacher.org).

Minnie’s house: Jerry Stackhouse, a guard for the Dallas Mavericks of the National Basketball Association, did what many professional athletes do with their large salaries: he bought his mother a house. In this case the building is a house of worship in Kinston, North Carolina, for the House of Hope Free Will Baptist Church. Stackhouse’s mother, Minnie, is the pastor. “She has been dedicated to serving the community as long as I can remember,” Stackhouse said (AP).