

# Is It Worse to Be a “Global Threat” with Fascist Links or a “Stone Cold Loser”?

by Hugh Fitzgerald



When Donald Trump described London Mayor Sadiq Khan as a “stone cold loser,” this was dutifully reported as an unprovoked attack by our unhinged president. What the mainstream media often failed to mention was that Sadiq Khan and Donald Trump have a history of exchanging insults, and that the current exchange was begun by Sadiq Khan.

Khan has not always been accurate in his charges.

Just before Trump’s first state visit to the U.K., Sadiq Khan published in The Observer on June 2 an article in which he described Trump as “one of the most egregious examples of a

growing global threat.” He added that Trump’s “divisive behavior flies in the face of the ideals America was founded upon – equality, liberty and religious freedom.” How does Trump’s “divisive behavior” fly in the face of these ideas? When has Trump threatened either “equality” or “liberty” in America? We know that Sadiq Khan is thinking of Muslims in the U.S., and perhaps believes the CAIR-promoted tales of victimhood, but Trump, who is rightly worried about Muslim terrorism, has not in any way restricted the “religious freedom” of Muslims. Perhaps Sadiq Khan would care to supply us with a single example of how his behavior “flies in the face of religious freedom”? Did Trump shut down a single mosque, censor a single verse in the Qur’an, prevent the observance of Ramadan or of Friday Prayers? He hasn’t done a single thing, not one jot or tittle, to restrict Muslims in the free exercise of their religion. Sadiq Khan should know this. But in his haste to score points against Trump, he did not bother to inform himself properly. He deplored the so-called “Muslim ban” thus: “I think this ban on people from seven Muslim-majority countries” is cruel and shameful. Khan had simply assumed they were all Muslim-majority countries, when two of the seven, Venezuela and North Korea, were non-Muslim. One minute of Internet searching was all he needed to discover the truth.

And Sadiq Khan also did not understand the criteria for what he calls, inaccurately, the “Muslim ban.” That ban was placed on countries whose citizens, in the opinion not of Donald Trump, but of the Department of Homeland Security, an elevated risk of terrorism, and whose governments had demonstrated poor cooperation with U.S. officials on monitoring their own citizens. Most significant was the fact, almost never mentioned, that 95% of the world’s Muslims remained unaffected by that “Muslim ban.” Again, a few minutes of searching would have given Sadiq Khan all this information and saved him from egregious error.

Sadiq Khan went on to declare in his Observer article that “In years to come, I suspect this state visit will be one we look back on with profound regret and acknowledge that we were on the wrong side of history.” “The wrong side of history” – a favorite phrase of Barack Obama – suggests a preening moral certainty, and belief in a predetermined trajectory for mankind (the “moral arc”; he wants us to believe that, merely by hosting Trump for a 2-day state visit, the UK, in Sadiq Khan’s heated rhetoric, has put itself on the same “wrong side of history” as Trump himself.)

Khan then added to his blistering attack on Trump, linking him to a number of leaders – such as Marine Le Pen in France – whom Khan describes as “far-right” (the epithet now routinely affixed to all those who are most alarmed about the encroachments of Islam in the West, including such leftists as the late Oriana Fallaci and Pim Fortuyn), who are “using the same divisive tropes of the fascists of the 20th century to garner support.” Here Khan links Trump to “far-right leaders” and, through them, to 20th century fascists. It’s a circumlocutious way to describe Trump as a “fascist.”

Calling Trump in a single article an enemy of “liberty and religious freedom,” someone on the “wrong side of history,” a “global threat” akin to “20th century fascists” – for all that vitriol Sadiq Khan gets an admiring pass, while Trump is raked over the coals for calling Khan “a stone-cold loser.”

If there is no truth to Sadiq Khan’s hysterical charges against Trump – he is not an enemy of religious freedom, nor a “global threat” linked to 20th century fascists, nor the enemy of equality, liberty and religious freedom, is there any truth to Trump’s claim about Khan? Has Khan’s record as London’s Mayor been a good one?

Sadiq Khan ran on three main issues: crime, transport, and housing. How has he done? Since he became mayor in 2016, London has experienced a crime wave. Crime overall is up by

about 20 percent since he took office, with a far bigger rise in murders. In 2018 135 people were killed in the city. This represented a 24 percent increase since 2016 and is the highest number of fatalities since 2008. Knife crime attacks, non-fatal but causing severe injuries, have also spiraled upward. Conservative councillors in London released a report on crimes during Khan's mayoralty, showing even steeper rises in crimes of property. Residential burglary has increased 37 percent and robbery by almost 60 percent. The London papers routinely lament what they correctly call a "crime wave."

The report of the Conservative councillors blames Mr. Khan of adopting a "not me guv" attitude in an attempt to void blame, even accusing "drill music, the middle classes and even boredom" for the massive increase in crime rates on his streets.

The report continues: "One of Sadiq Khan's flagship policies in his manifesto was to make London a safer and more secure place. Unfortunately for Londoners, it is quite clear that this has so far been an outright failure."

Khan has blamed the crime wave mainly on the shortage of police, which he says is purely in the government's hands. But that's not true: like any London mayor, he has the power to conduct a campaign for more funds from the national government. His attitude seems to be "there's nothing I can do about it" (the decrease in the numbers of police). Nonsense; he has a bully pulpit from which to fight for more money for the police; that's part of a mayor's most important tasks.

What about improving London Transport? Khan originally claimed that he could both freeze fares and invest record amounts modernizing London's transport infrastructure. Fares have, in fact, only been frozen for some travelers. But the impact of even that partial freeze, together with a cut in government grants, has left TfL (Transport for London) so short of money that it can no longer pay the interest on its debt. TfL has

now been forced to suspend routine road maintenance, stop many investment programs, and make serious cuts to the bus network. Even the first phase of this has reduced services by 7 percent overall, and on some routes by 50 percent.

For the first time in 25 years, public transport use is falling, with tangible impacts on congestion. The drop might, of course, have been greater without the fares freeze, but in London it is the quality and quantity of service, more than its price, which has driven usage. And each year, the revenue foregone, and the damage to services, will compound. As service worsens because of cuts in revenue, ridership further declines, leading to further declines in revenues, and the downward spiral cannot be halted as long as Khan sticks to his foolish pledge to freeze most fares. The folly of this policy is now clear to everyone – except to Khan himself and his clique.

Khan's promise of both real-terms fare cuts and increased investment exemplifies his greatest weakness – his wish to have it both ways, or as many in the U.K. now describe it, his long-standing inability to make decisions. Khan has listed between two and six different "no. 1 priorities." As an MP, he once went straight from voting in Parliament for post office closures to a public meeting where he protested against post office closures. He reversed his position five times on Boris Johnson's Garden Bridge proposal. He was against the expansion of Heathrow, then in favor of it, and now he is again for it – but for how long is anyone's guess.

London Transport remains a mess because Khan will not recognize the necessity of raising fares. Meanwhile, until he does allow himself to do so, service will continue to deteriorate. He keeps a solid base of Muslim voters who will support him no matter what. Eventually reality will have to break in; for now, his transport policy remains a colossal failure.

The third area where Sadiq Khan promised to improve things was affordable housing. When he ran for mayor, he said he would “support housing associations...to ensure a minimum 80,000 new homes a year, more than in any year, save one, in London’s entire history.” Most people knew he could not possibly meet that pledge, but they thought he would do something significant. In his first year, he didn’t provide 80,000, or 800, or even 8 new homes year – not a single home with a social rent (subsidized for the poor) was started. When Boris Johnson was London’s mayor, in his first year 7,439 homes with “social rent” were started; the next year, after the financial crash, Johnson still managed to start 1,687 social rent homes. As for Sadiq Khan, in his second year he managed to start 1,263 social rent homes – a far cry from the 160,000 homes he had promised to build by the end of his second year.

Khan has hardly made a dent in the number of homes for social rent (which means affordable housing). He has been demolishing existing council estates (public housing projects, with subsidized below-market rents for the poor), and building unaffordable housing using billions of pounds of public money. Instead of this, he could spend less money by refurbishing the existing estates. So far, on housing, Khan has performed miserably.

Whether one looks at Sadiq Khan’s record on battling crime, improving transport, or building affordable housing, he has a solid record of failure. Crime rates, for burglary, robbery, assault with a deadly weapon, and murder, have skyrocketed. London Transport continues to decline in quality and, as a consequence, in ridership and revenues, yet Khan refuses to unfreeze many fares. His housing policy, which he promised would produce a great increase in social rent housing, has failed spectacularly.

Note to mainstream media: why not examine Sadiq Khan’s achievements, or lack of them, in the three areas – crime, transport, housing – that he claimed would be the most

important of his administration? Even if you are not fond of Trump, isn't it just possible that when he called Khan a "stone-cold loser" – and however impolitic he may have been – he just might have been right?

And a note to Trump: the next time you decide to comment on the impressively underachieving Sadiq Khan, how about employing a most telling, *echt amerikanische* saying that fits the bill: "Sadiq, as we say in America, you are all hat, and no cattle."

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