

Islamism: If You Can't Say It, You Can't Fight It

While the world was reeling from last month's terror attacks in Paris, there was finally some acknowledgment of the one-sided religious war being waged against the West, as French officials identified the perpetrators as radical Muslims and called for international solidarity against Islamist extremism.

After turning a blind eye for so long – and after enabling extremist organizations such as Hamas and facilitating resurgent anti-Semitism – Europeans finally spoke truth over political correctness. Whether they have the fortitude for sustained confrontation with theological totalitarianism is another matter, but for at least a brief moment in time they recognized the threat for what it is.

In contrast, the Obama administration continued to ignore any connection between terrorism and radical Islam, instead referring to the perpetrators as extremists without identifying their motivating beliefs. In a recent interview the president actually referred to the attack on the kosher market in Paris as “random.”

This refusal to acknowledge the obvious may be political, but it is also myopic – and it undercuts any serious effort to combat global terrorism. Just as the government's characterization of the Fort Hood shootings and Oklahoma beheading as “workplace violence” ignored the national ramifications of the terror threat, the president's refusal to concede the doctrinal roots of the Paris tragedy showed an astonishing failure of world leadership.

Whether this willful blindness is a matter of policy or timidity is beside the point.

The left seems to have no problem accusing Republicans of fascism, racism or any other malignant "isms" that come to mind, but they simply cannot speak the truth regarding radical Islam. And by dialoguing with organizations suspected of having extremist ties, by treating the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas as political organizations, by supporting those who delegitimize Israel, and by providing safe harbor for progressive anti-Semites, the left has actually helped advance the Islamist agenda.

Progressives seem compelled to excuse Islamism or pretend it doesn't exist, even when doing so compromises their commitment to constitutional principles. Whenever radical Islamists strike, the progressive impulse seems to be to defend Islam before comforting the victims. In response to beheadings of westerners in Syria, Mr. Obama lectured the American public that ISIS was not Islamic, and after the attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* and the Jewish market in Paris, Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean said the perpetrators were not Muslim. On what exactly do they base such assertions?

They are misinformed at best and disingenuous at worst. Though certainly not all Muslims support ISIS, it does represent a militant form of Islam similar to that which sparked an era of jihad across the Mideast, Asia, Africa and Europe starting in the eighth century. Moreover, the Paris attacks were motivated by a fundamentalism that endorses violence against blasphemers and infidels.

While ISIS, Hezbollah, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood do not represent the views of all Muslims, their beliefs are certainly grounded in scripture and theology. It defies logic to say that such groups are not Islamic simply because other Muslims think differently or disagree with them. The same people who hold thus seem to have no problem blaming all conservative Christians for the acts of a minority of anti-abortion zealots. The inconsistency is glaring.

This is not to say that all Muslims condone the actions of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, or that all supported the terror attacks in Paris, the massacre at Fort Hood or the attacks of 9/11. Many Muslims, particularly those acculturated to western democratic values, publicly condemn attacks against non-Muslims. But the question remains whether the wider Arab-Muslim world is philosophically or morally opposed to religious extremism.

Although millions, including Muslim clerics, turned out for the French solidarity march, it remains to be seen whether the event signaled an organic rejection of all forms of terrorism or instead was limited in time and scope. The question hangs heavy in the air amid reports that members of the French government attempted to dissuade Binyamin Netanyahu from attending, but thought it appropriate to invite Mahmoud Abbas.

Abbas's attendance at the rally received front-page coverage, but the press failed to discuss his unity government with Hamas, whose charter calls for jihad and genocide, or to mention that the Palestinian National Covenant continues to delegitimize Israel and the Jewish People. Likewise, the media did not discuss the PA's continuing support of terrorism, anti-Semitic incitement, and glorification of those who kill Jews. The image of Abbas lauding free speech was surreal considering that the PA and Hamas routinely stifle expression and quash dissent in territories under their control. That Abbas was invited at all suggests a failure to recognize or acknowledge these incongruities. He subsequently praised Hezbollah after its recent terror attacks in the north of Israel.

Those who understand the concept of taqiyya (deception of the infidel) have to wonder how much of the anti-terror sentiment expressed by clerics in Paris was genuine. It does not matter what they say in public before the western media; what matters only is whether they intend to preach tolerance, respect and acceptance in their schools and mosques, and whether

reformative change will be reflected in the streets.

The desire for true reformation will only be impeded by those in the west who are more concerned about protecting the sensitivities of a global religious community that numbers more than a billion strong and characterizes outsiders as infidels. Change will not be motivated by those who blame all friction between the West and Muslim society on western chauvinism, but who ignore the historical role of jihad and Islamist supremacism. Neither will it be facilitated by politicians who reflexively deny any connection between radical Islam and terrorism, but who nevertheless accuse their domestic political opponents of the worst kinds of fanatical excesses and malign Israel as a colonial occupier.

Democrats are not all in the leftist camp, but their party has been tilting that way since Barack Obama was first endorsed in 2008. The party's more progressive elements seem compelled to empathize with nonwestern ideologies they consider to be expressions of indigeneity, but to disparage political opponents who advocate freedom of speech, belief and worship. It is ironic that some progressives accuse Republicans of fascism while giving political cover to extremists whose ideology is truly thuggish and totalitarian. This hypocrisy stems from a traditional affinity for radical ideologies and statism, whether expressed as fascism in the early to mid-twentieth century, or communism until well into the Cold War.

Indeed, as well-documented by author Jonah Goldberg in his book, *"Liberal Fascism,"* there were many progressive admirers of fascism before Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935 and Germany attacked Poland four years later. Mussolini's supporters included H. G. Wells, who in the 1930s exhorted fellow progressives to be "liberal fascists" and "enlightened Nazis," and who wrote of being struck by fascism's "relentless logic." Muckraking journalists adored Mussolini, among them Lincoln Steffens and Ida Tarbell. So did influential publishers, such as Samuel McClure, who described Italian

fascism as "a great step forward," and George Soule, editor of the *New Republic*, who commended the Roosevelt administration for "trying out the economics of fascism."

Other progressives expressed admiration for Hitler, including W. E. B. DuBois, co-founder of the NAACP, who described the rise of Nazism in Germany as "absolutely necessary to get the state in order" and who asserted that the Nazi rise to power afforded more democracy than Germany had seen in years.

If statism can be defined as the belief that economic and/or social policy should be left in the exclusive control of government, then the left's affinity for any kind of totalitarianism should not be terribly surprising. When progressive anti-Semitism and hatred for Israel are factored into the mix, the left-wing's reluctance to condemn Islamists whose world outlook is totalitarian, or to acknowledge their connection to terrorism, seems quite logical.

Those who preach empathy for Islamists never hesitate to condemn conservative Christians for their views or traditional Jews for their adherence to observance. Yet, they refuse to challenge a supremacist theology that is antithetical to the liberal ideals they claim to hold dear. Liberals often cite the U.S. Constitution to justify perverse political correctness, but the First Amendment does not mandate acquiescence to religious extremism or the acceptance of pernicious dogmas. Though freedom of belief is absolute under the Constitution, freedom of practice may not be when it infringes on the rights and liberties of others. Government has a legitimate interest in monitoring ideological movements that threaten public safety and order, whether comprised of white supremacists who preach racial hatred or radical Islamists who believe in jihad and genocide.

Throughout his presidency, Mr. Obama's media acolytes have drawn false comparisons between activist conservatives and Islamists, implying that the former are just as prone to

violent terrorism as the latter, and perhaps even more so. Such comparisons, however, are dishonest and purely partisan.

A common ploy for minimizing the peril of Islamism is to claim that Christian fundamentalism is a greater threat in the United States. But if Christian radicalism can be measured by opposition to abortion, a review of law enforcement statistics shows that it simply is not comparable. Although there has been occasional violence against abortion providers and clinics in the U.S., including arson and a few murders since 1993, such acts – reprehensible though they are – pale in frequency and severity to those of Islamist terrorists, who have attacked and killed tens of thousands of Jews, Israelis, westerners, and even their own people.

Moreover, extreme anti-abortion violence is generally condemned by mainstream Christians, who prefer to express themselves through the political process. In contrast, terrorism against infidels and blasphemers is often celebrated in the Muslim world. It seems ironic that progressives prefer to tarnish all conservative Christians for the acts of a very few, but refuse to condemn supporters of real terrorism.

If President Obama were serious about confronting global terrorism, he would acknowledge the ideology motivating much of it and the historical antecedents that make it possible. This can certainly be done without impugning all Muslims, particularly those who wish to eliminate extremism in their own communities. The president's failure to do so, and his apparent willingness to appease extremist sensitivities, does not auger well for the war on terror or the continued relevance of American foreign policy.

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