

When a Petulant President Presumes to Give Lessons in Language

by Hugh Fitzgerald

And let me make a final point. For a while now, the main contribution of some of my friends on the other side of the aisle have made in the fight against ISIL is to criticize the administration and me for not using the phrase “radical Islam.” That’s the key, they tell us. We cannot beat ISIL unless we call them radical Islamists.

What exactly would using this label would accomplish? What exactly would it change? Would it make ISIL less committed to try to kill Americans? Would it bring in more allies? Is there a military strategy that is served by this?

*The answer is none of the above. **Calling a threat by a different name does not make it go away.** This is a political distraction.*

– Barack Obama, [Speech about the Fight Against ISIL and the Orlando Attack](#), June 14, 2016

Don’t tell me words don’t matter.

– Barack Obama, [“Don’t Tell Me Words Don’t Matter” speech](#), February 16, 2008

After the Orlando massacre by a man who had been born and raised a Muslim, who never showed the slightest wavering in

his Islamic faith, who attended a mosque three or four times a week, whose family was similarly devout, who at the time of his attack pledged allegiance to the Islamic State, and in a 911 call just before his attack mentioned the Boston Marathon bombers whom he admired and whom, he believed, he was about to gloriously emulate, that man, one Omar Mateen, naturally received great deal of attention. For many, he was a puzzlement. What, oh what, might have motivated him? Official brows were furrowed all over Washington. What should he be called? He was a “terrorist.” He was “homophobic.” He was a “lone wolf.” Did I mention he had “assault weapons”? Brows are still furrowed all over Washington trying to figure out what’s going on. We’ve read reports about the terrible threat from “homophobic Christians” with their “anti-queer agenda.” We’ve watched DHS “terrorism experts” on the problem of the putative “lone wolf.” We’ve listened to endless discussions of gun control and the NRA and the Second Amendment. In short, we’ve all endured lots of talk about everything tangential, but very little about the central and most obvious thing – the texts and teachings of Islam.

If we want to ignore Islam, we’ll have to overlook how often Omar Mateen went to the mosque, and how many times he went to Saudi Arabia to perform the Lesser Pilgrimage. We’d have to ignore the reports about the full-throated cries of delight with which he greeted the glad news on 9/11. Instead, let’s find out how many times Omar Mateen visited The Pulse nightclub before the fatal night? Did he make a pass at any male, at any time? Did he go on the homosexual dating site “Jack’d”? Many in the press are having a field day focusing their attention on this theme, using it as the best way to deflect attention from Islam.

But surely we ought to ask ourselves: is it possible that Mateen’s rage, and the murderous way he chose to express his rage at what he called “the dirty ways of the West,” can be traced to specific Islamic texts, not of “extremist” but of

mainstream Islam, anathematizing homosexuality and calling for the death of homosexuals? It was this that justified Omar Mateen's acts of murder at The Pulse to Omar Mateen, whatever other wellsprings of anger he may have had.

Obama is determined, as is his wont, to keep Islam as out of the discussion as possible. In his astonishing tirade of June 14, he self-assuredly reported that some people – he did not identify them – claim that if we use the term “radical Islam,” we win the war against ISIL, and if we fail to use it, we lose that war. All we would be doing, Obama said, would be to “legitimize” ISIS in the eyes of Muslims. But no one has put forth – *pace* Obama – that absurd claim about the magic effect of using the term “radical Islam.” And who in his right mind would think that ISIS seeks or would welcome so-called “legitimation” from Infidels? ISIS has no interest in our views; why should they care what Infidels think a group of Muslims does, or does not, represent? The simple desire to describe things as they are should not be mocked, nor manipulated, but Obama does both. He becomes irked at the suggestion that “radical Islam” or “radical Islamist” are useful terms of description (though not as accurate as they would be without the modifying adjectives) for Infidels left glumly confused by the confusion in our own government.

In the same speech Obama told us about all the military successes that had been made against ISIS in Iraq, and in Syria, and in Libya. “So far we have taken out more than 120 top ISIL leaders and commanders...ISIL continues to lose ground in Iraq...ISIL continues to lose ground in Syria as well...We believe we've cut ISIL's revenue from oil by millions of dollars per month.” And so on. It all sounded heartening. But there was a sting in the tail: Obama wanted it known that all of these victories were achieved without “calling a threat” by a “different name” from the one he wanted – that is, without calling it “radical Islam.”

The one thing we need to know, in trying to understand Omar

Mateen spraying his bullets at The Pulse, is what Islam says about homosexuals.

Robert Spencer the other day [did what someone had to do](#) – he adduced the Islamic texts most relevant to Orlando, from both Qur'an and Sunnah (the Hadith):

The Qur'an says: "If two men among you are guilty of lewdness, punish them both. If they repent and amend, leave them alone; for Allah is Oft-returning, Most Merciful." (4:16) That seems rather mild, but there's more. The Qur'an also depicts Allah raining down stones upon people for engaging in homosexual activity: "We also sent Lot. He said to his people: 'Do you commit lewdness such as no people in creation committed before you? For you practise your lusts on men in preference to women: you are indeed a people transgressing beyond bounds.' ...And we rained down on them a shower of brimstone: Then see what was the end of those who indulged in sin and crime!" (7:80)

Muhammad makes clear that Muslims should be the executors of the wrath of Allah by killing gays. A hadith depicts Muhammad saying: "If you find anyone doing as Lot's people did, kill the one who does it, and the one to whom it is done." (Abu Dawud 38:4447) And: "Stone the upper and the lower, stone them both." (Ibn Majah 3:20:2562)

That is the heart of the matter. That explains the official Muslim hostility to homosexuality. No one in the government, no journalist in the mainstream media, had in the first days after the attack bothered to ask the simple question: what exactly does Islam teach about homosexuality, about how to treat homosexuals? If it is not tolerance but hate, how and why and when and against whom is the hate to be acted on? Are we really not able to look at these texts steadily, grasp their meaning, and make an obvious distinction (that so many don't wish to make) between the historic Christian

“disapproval” of homosexuality and the severe punishments for homosexual acts that Islam counsels and many Muslim states (Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Yemen, and six others) enforce, and even individual Muslims feel themselves able to act on with approval or at least impunity, still today? Isn't this something that we who are trying to grasp the nature of Islam have a right to learn about? Why are we made to feel that some things are being kept hidden from us, for as long as possible, so as to avoid that “clash of civilizations” that will be conducted by the Muslim side no matter what we do?

Whatever Omar Mateen's secret proclivities, had he not been a Muslim, eager to do the (virtual) bidding of the Islamic State, would he have gunned down nearly 50 people? And if those Qur'anic verses and the Hadith, quoted above by Spencer, did not exist? He might still want to murder Infidels, but not necessarily homosexual Infidels. And isn't it conceivable, even to Obama and his advisors, that Mateen's hate was channeled and encouraged by Islam, and he meted out his punishment with such murderous enthusiasm because he realized, as, a True Believer, that he was merely carrying out the commands of the Islamic texts?

The other day, Barack Obama delivered himself of a tirade against all those who wanted to focus on the “Islamic” aspect of the Orlando murders, by holding up for criticism the phrase – *horribile dictu* – “radical Islam.” Obama claimed that **“that's the key, they tell us. We cannot beat ISIL unless we call them radical Islamists.”**

Let's stop right there for a minute. Name names, do tell us please, who said that the “key” to victory over ISIS is to use the phrase “radical Islam”? And are they the same people who, *according to Obama*, tell us that “we cannot beat ISIL unless we call them radical Islamists”? Who has said that? Where? We demand chapter and verse.

And Obama continues, **“What exactly would using this label**

would [sic] accomplish? What exactly would it change? Would it make ISIL less committed to try to kill Americans?"

Obama needs to be challenged on this. The claim that is made by others, and with which Obama finds fault, is a much more intelligible one: to wit, that it is not possible to defend oneself if one is incapable of recognizing or understanding the enemy. We are not being allowed to call things by their right names. Obama presumes, as president, to instruct and protect us, but we are getting neither the instruction, nor the protection, we deserve.

Could we stop there? Using the descriptive term (notice that Obama affixes the pejorative "label") "radical Islam" would do many things. It would sweep away the cobwebs of confusion. It would clear our minds of cant. It would allow people in America (and Europe too) to understand the ideology that is making war on them, and will continue to do so no matter what they do, short of accepting Islam or permanent subservience, as dhimmis, to Muslims.

Obama focused in his tirade on the military campaign against ISIS, where there have been gains, but that is but is only a small part of the war, and looms larger than it should. The demographic jihad in North America and Europe is already underway, and is more of a threat to the advanced West than ISIS ever was. If we keep claiming that there is nothing worrisome about Islam, and continue to make it hard for those, in the government or in the media, who would like to present the contrary evidence, it will be harder to fight. Were we all to be made aware of what Islam teaches about homosexuality, and how that certainly played a role – many would say the decisive role – in Mateen's cold-blooded rampage, how would that make ISIS or any other group of Muslims even more enraged at Infidels? The Qur'an and Hadith are there to whip up Muslims against non-Muslims and to instruct them to act on the path of Allah (*fi sabil Allah*) whenever that proves possible. Nothing we say in America, or in Europe, will change that;

nothing Infidels do will make ISIS either more or “less committed to killing Americans.”

Those who want to properly identify the Islamic sources of the aggression and hatred demonstrated by some – not all – Muslims, do not assume that thereby those wellsprings will dry up. As long as the Qur’an and Hadith and Sira exist, there will be those who take their Islam completely to heart, and it is they – not the “moderate” or bad or unobservant or lapsed Muslims – who will forever remain a danger. But dangers can be mitigated, can be held to a manageable size. That’s all the West, or the Rest (of the non-Islamic world) can hope for in this War Without End. But it requires an unvarnished understanding of Islam, and a willingness to publicly explain what Islam teaches.

Obama thinks it a mistake to make Muslims think that we – America, the West – have something against Islam. Shouldn’t we? Haven’t we – America, the West – been on the receiving end of Muslim aggression, by “states” (IS), or groups (Al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hizballah, Al-Nusra), or individuals (the so-called “lone wolves” who take their inspiration and guidance from Islamic cites on the Internet) practically uninterruptedly the past 16 years? Is there no limit to turning the other cheek? Obama thinks that we must condemn ourselves to public silence about what Islam teaches (which is not the same thing as what every Muslim believes, only what he should believe). Haven’t the American government, and other Western governments, to various degrees, been bending over backwards not to impugn Islam as a whole, and have received no observable benefit in return? Do our textbooks, our clerics, our prayers, talk about Muslims the way Muslim textbooks, clerics, prayers, talk about non-Muslims? Of course not. Do we find Muslims demanding in great numbers that Islam be “reformed,” so that the many offending and dangerous Qur’anic passages, for example, be “interpreted” out of their current meaning? We do not. And it certainly won’t happen if we behave as if there is nothing

that need be reformed. Obama has it backwards: he wants us never to “blame Islam” because “that would only push more Muslims” to “hate us,” and that would mean still more recruits to that “twisted ideology” which, while it appeals only to Muslims, and is directed only against non-Muslims, “has nothing to do with Islam.”

When, in what war, did it ever redound to one side’s advantage not to recognize, but to deliberately fail to recognize, the nature of the enemy? But our government officials, even in DHS, are not allowed to discuss the Qur’an, and Hadith, and are told by a petulant president that he knows best – that talking about “radical Islam” just inflames Muslims who *would otherwise be on our side, or at least not be against us.*

If someone has taken Islam to heart, as Omar Mateen always did, nothing the Infidels do or say about Islam will matter. Representatives of CAIR solemnly declare their horror and outrage and amazement at the latest Muslim massacre of the innocents, but this is merely the stage patter kept up to confuse people and keep them from looking in the right direction. We must study the Qur’an and Hadith and Sira if we want to make sense of Omar Mateen, Nidal Hassan, Mohammed Atta, and the more than 28,500 participants in Muslim terror attacks since 9/11.

Obama deserves the last word, as long as we apply those words correctly:

Since before I was president, I have been clear about how extremist groups have perverted Islam to justify terrorism.

I’ve tried, I’ve googled, but I can’t think of a single time when Obama has “been clear about how extremist groups” have “perverted Islam.” Can you think of any evidence, textual or otherwise, that Obama has presented, to demonstrate that “extremist groups” have perverted Islam? It’s not too late to question Obama. Surely there must be at least one intrepid

interviewer or reporter who can ask him exactly in what way Islam has been “perverted.” Let Obama tell us what parts of the Qur’an, what stories in the Hadith, what details in the Life of Muhammad, are evidence that Omar Mateen, and all the other tens of thousands of Muslim terrorists who since 9/11 have been plying their terrifying trade, have “perverted one of the world’s great religions.” He should be asked to do this, so that his own confusions and prevarications are put on undeniable display.

And let Obama have the last word(s), as long as we can apply them to Obama himself:

“Don’t tell me words don’t matter.”

“Calling a threat by a different name does not make it go away.”

Iipse dixit.