

Gun Control versus ISIS Control?

In the wake of Orlando, the partisan lines are clearly drawn. Democrats cry that it is about gun control. Republicans demand ISIS control. Is it possible that both are correct?

Thomas Friedman, the former Brandeis College radical, turned self-promoting advisor to Presidents, virtually admitted as much in a recent column in *The New York Times*. Friedman devoted two paragraphs of his op-ed to the grotesque facts surrounding Muslim, mostly Arabic, fundamentalist hatred financed by many Arab governments and wealthy Muslims.

Perhaps the incredibly diverse and democratic State of Israel provides a model. My daughter's friend served three years as a combat soldier in the Israeli Army. When he wanted to obtain a gun permit, it was a five-month ordeal. Israel makes sure that those who hold gun permits are emotionally and mentally sound, well trained, and understand the dangers of gun ownership. The fees to obtain a gun permit in Israel are relatively high, since the recipient of the permit must pay the government for its efforts to ensure that only competent and stable people are running around with weapons.

Israel, along with other enlightened nations, fully understands that making sure maniacs do not have assault rifles is not the answer to preventing fundamentalist Muslims from wreaking havoc. The civilized world has every right to demand a change in the attitude, education and financing promoted by Islamic nations and wealthy individuals around the world. Those who targeted the World Trade Center were primarily well-to-do Arabs who fully understood the Wasabi concept of World War against the evil West.

Even the dictator of Egypt, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, recently noted that Islam needs a religious reform. It is current chic to blame the internet for Muslim radicalization. The internet is not alone to blame, and efforts to find such an easy excuse are hogwash.

Hatred of the West, antisemitism, and the attempt to create a worldwide fundamentalist caliphate are not an idiosyncrasy of the internet out of control. The internet is merely one vehicle utilized as a recruitment tool by those who hate the freedom, diversity and democracy of Western civilization.

We need to ask ourselves why countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, many of the Gulf states, Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and the Palestinian authority on the West Bank of the Jordan River celebrate and encourage destruction of Western values? The answer is that there is a putrid degenerate form of behavior which has found a home, substance and legitimacy under the rubric of Islam. Responsible leaders in the Muslim community must be on the front lines of rooting out those who defame what was once called Mohammadism.

It may be surprising to many today, but at one time, after Mohammad conquered by the sword and slaughtered his enemies, Islam was a bastion of art, tolerance and human

advancement. The great Jewish physician and scholar Maimonides rejected an offer by Richard the Lionheart of England to become Richard's Court Physician. Maimonides wrote that he would rather be a subject of the sultan than a victim of the Christians. Such were the conditions for Jews in the Middle Ages.

All that has changed. Christianity has reformed itself, and Islam has failed to restrain those within its midst who practice a distorted form of the religion.

As Ronald Reagan famously said, no one needs an assault rifle to go hunting for deer. One of my farmer relatives in Cogan Station freely admits that, "why shouldn't I have a license to own a gun, just like I have a driver's license?" The answer to our national cancer is not President Obama's fear of alienating "good Muslims," and it is not as a result of Republican paranoia. Rather, the two sides must come together to demand legitimate and serious regulations on assault rifles and must further make sure that firearms are kept out of the hands of dangerous people. Yes, there are ways to guarantee "due process" and Second Amendment rights.

At the same time, it is the necessity for the United States to take actions both here and abroad to make it clear that we will not tolerate virulent Islam as an instrument of state policy. We can do that through sanctions, foreign aid alterations and coalitions with other civilized nations. We have very good information in this country as to who finances, encourages and promotes the destructive practices of Islamic fundamentalists. This is not a First Amendment issue. It is a foreign policy issue. The United States has a right and a responsibility to safeguard its shores and population from those who would destroy us. This is a war, whether we like it or not.

There seems to be great angst among some that calling out Islamic extremism will alienate the good guys and be a marvelous recruiting tool for the bad people. Making nice to Ted Kaczynski or Charlie Manson was not going to prevent their behavior. Look at Israel again. The Druse are Muslims who are fiercely loyal to the State and fight side by side with Israelis to safeguard this beacon of democracy in the Middle East. The Druse reject the Islamic notion that the religious ideology comes before family and national loyalty. Fighting Islamic terror will never drive the Druse into the hands of extremists. Our national foreign policy needs to make clear that we will take concrete steps to be intolerant of any debasing extremism, whether in the name of Mohammad or anyone else.

It is frequently argued that if the Jewish population of Europe during World War II had guns, the Holocaust would have been prevented. Balderdash! The Holocaust occurred because of 1,800 years of carefully bred antisemitism. The six million Jews spread across Germany and Eastern Europe included two million children. When the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto rose up against the German occupiers and achieved a semblance of independence for a short time, the Western world turned its eyes away from those freedom fighters. The Polish underground did its best not only to deprive the Jews of weaponry, but to sell them out.

In sum, both Democrats and Republicans are correct. Nobody will like hearing that, but the truth can sometimes be hard to swallow, just like good medicine. With a reasonable and sensible approach to weaponry and ammunition in our country, conjoined by a domestic and foreign policy, that, with respect for the rule of law, addresses the funding and promotion of radical Islam, we can safeguard our population and protect our shores. The time has come to act and not to complain.

Not every issue has to be about whether we are Democrats or Republicans. Perhaps the sleeping mass in the middle will wake up and demand that our candidates and legislators bend to the will of the people.

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