

What terrorists are really angry about

By John Mueller

🕒 Updated 11:03 AM ET, Thu February 26, 2015



56 photos: The ISIS terror threat

Smoke rises above a damaged building following a U.S.-led coalition airstrike against ISIS position during a military operation to regain control of the eastern suburbs of Ramadi, Iraq, on Saturday, August 22, 2014.

1 of 56

Story highlights

John Mueller: It's assumed that the central motivation for terrorist violence is ideological

He says for those who become radical, boiling outrage at American foreign policy is the driving force

Editor's Note: John Mueller is a political scientist at Ohio State University and a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. He is co-author of both "Terror, Security, and Money: Balancing the Risks, Benefits, and Costs of Homeland Security" and the forthcoming, "Chasing Ghosts: The Costly Quest to Counter Terrorists in the United States." The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of the author.

(CNN)—We will not know for some time exactly why [three men who were arrested on Wednesday](#) in the United States wanted to join ISIS in Syria.

But what we do know is that it has become common, even routine, to argue that there exists a process by which potential terrorists become "radicalized." The concept, which has become something of a buzzword, suggests that the central motivation for terrorist violence is ideological.



Related Video: FBI: Three men attempted to join ISIS 03:08

However, Islamist terrorists in the West have generally been set off not so much by anything theoretical but rather by intense outrage at American and Israeli actions in the Middle East and by a burning desire to seek revenge, to get back, to defend, and/or to make a violent statement expressing their hostility to what they see as a war on Islam.

This can be seen in the story of one of the shooters in the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris. If he was "radicalized" by anything, it was by news about the way prisoners were being treated by the United States at Abu Ghraib in Iraq. He spent years trying to get to Iraq to fight the Americans there, finally finding a target closer to home.

The same observation arises when one looks over a [collection](#) of case studies of terrorists or would-be terrorists who have sought to do damage in the United States. The overwhelming driving force in these cases has been simmering, and more commonly boiling, outrage at American foreign policy.



Related Video: Report: French terror attacks coordinated 02:14

It was not that the plotters in these cases were motivated solely by a coherent ideology or had a burning urge to spread Islam and Sharia law or to establish caliphates. Rather, it was the desire to protect their religion against what they perceived to be a concentrated war upon it in the Middle East by the United States government and military.

At the same time, these cases -- from the shoe-bomber to the underwear bomber -- show that there is remarkably little hostility to American culture or society. For example, the infamous Times Square bomber, a Pakistani-American who tried to blow up a car in New York, specifically mentioned U.S. drone strikes that killed civilians in Pakistan. The Boston Marathon bombers, similarly, explicitly cited the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as motivating factors. Almost none of the terrorists or would be terrorists

had any problem with American society itself.

This is particularly impressive because many of them (though certainly not all) were misfits, suffered from personal identity crises, were friendless, came from broken homes, were often desperate for money, had difficulty holding jobs, were on drugs, were petty criminals, experienced various forms of discrimination, and were, to use a word that pops up in quite a few of the case studies and fits even more of them, "losers."

As terrorism specialist and former CIA officer Marc Sageman points out, "radicalization" principally happens because of perceived injustice against one's group -- a perspective the Washington Post's [David Ignatius finds](#) "worth a careful look," but calls "contrarian."



The standard "radicalization" misdirection process can be seen in a Seattle case in 2011 in which two men were picked up for planning to shoot a machine gun and lob grenades at a local military processing center. According to news reports, the perpetrators said that they were motivated by a desire to retaliate for crimes by U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan and that they wanted to kill military personnel to prevent them from going to Islamic lands to kill Muslims. The official Department of Justice [press release](#) on the case, however, merely says that the men were "driven by a violent, extreme ideology."

Related Video: The threat of terrorism since 9/11 04:52

Similarly a [former FBI counterterrorism analyst](#) was asked recently on PBS NewsHour about why people are drawn to violent extremism. He stressed that there are "ideological issues" as well as "local grievances" including "access to education and job

opportunities" and whether one feels that one is fully accepted in society.

Outrage at American actions in the Middle East scarcely entered the discussion.

Speakers at the recent White House summit on countering violent extremism typically found some of the "root causes" of terrorism to lie in ideology, the ministrations of propagandists, the influence of the Internet, poverty, inadequate job opportunities and alienation from society. Those may well be contributing factors, but perhaps the most prominent motivating force is anger at U.S. foreign policy.

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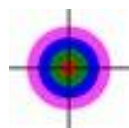
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TheIntegral Mar 17, 2015

What makes Americans think that they can drop bombs on peoples heads and nothing bad will happen? Americans have dropped a lot of bombs on a lot of people - more than the rest of the nations in the world combined. Americas heavy handed use of firepower has dragged us into a conflict that we cannot win, since there is no definition of victory. The fact that the US allows Israel to become nuclear armed while doing everything in its power to prevent Iran from attaining a nuclear balance is hypocrisy in its purest form.

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truebob Mar 23, 2015

[@TheIntegral](#) Silly rabbit, the people attacking the US are bottom feeders. No definition of victory, maybe, but no real possibilty of losing either. I'm driving down the road and all i see are new highways, new cars and thousands of people prospering. We're doing something right.

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miscreantall Mar 17, 2015

It's about fear which leads to hate and intolerance which leads to violence.

They are not the only ones that suffer with this disease.

What makes it worse with them is that they are fueled by their devolved 6th century ideologies and the tools of the 21st century at their disposal.

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nerdrage Mar 12, 2015

CNN's usual inch-deep analysis, with an obvious agenda. Read The Atlantic if you want actual insight: <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2015/02/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>.

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Greatestgrandmama Unsdorfer Mar 7, 2015

NO NO NO that is not the reason, hate is the reason, this was not because of anything but hate of Jews. Once you people realize your shortcoming and ask why do we hate, you will realize that all the its all boils down to intolerance, I cant take a Jew, for what reasoning, because it was enbossed from your youth via priest IMAM who ever so don't blame anyone but yourself for hating your old enough to take control of your being and if you don't this is what the world looks like. HATE brings distruction. Period.

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ToddMargaret Mar 5, 2015

Sure they stone women and kill gays because of US foreign policy..... ok
I would not suggest reading CNN for why people choose to kill other people.
Best idea is to listen to what they are saying to get a complete picture.
just a suggestion.

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[Like](#)**nerdrage** Mar 12, 2015

[@ToddMargaret](#) Yeah I gotta wonder about people who complain about Gitmo and says it creates terrorists. If terrorists are so concerned with human rights abuses, why aren't the all working for Amnesty International instead of being on Amnesty International's Worst People in the World lists?

[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#)**SuperPax** Mar 23, 2015

[@ToddMargaret](#) There are nearly as many motives as people. The normal human response to anger seems to be violence.

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It's funny though isn't it? How all of these guys want "revenge"... yet never desire to strike at a single Muslim target in seeking that revenge. The Taliban wreaks havoc on Afghan society for years, bringing poverty, violence - and a ban on music, dancing and kites (?!) - but no, let's blame the Americans for "targeting the Muslims in Afghanistan."

There is something so profoundly dumb about Muslim extremism. It may often be committed by educated Muslims, but it's as if the cro-magnon brain takes over and the desire for a club or weapon grows - it's just funny that they simply NEVER blame a Muslim for a single thing that happens to Muslims or in the Muslim world.

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nerdrage Mar 12, 2015

[@userdj12](#) . They strike a lot of Muslim targets, especially if they're Sunni and striking Shiite targets or vice versa. Also Sunni Arab attacking Sunni Kurds, etc etc.

This is really about tribalism. Not US foreign policy, not even Islam if you dig down deep enough. It's a bunch of barbarians right out of a show like Vikings. My tribe will kill your tribe. No more thought going into it than that.

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LumpyPumpkin Mar 1, 2015

so let's go back in time?

apathy is the answer?

I want real, thought out alternatives instead of some kind of "culture of complaining".

I am not saying in any way that disagreeing with actions of our own government is wrong. but know yourself, know your ideals (beyond conforming to some political groups ideals) and then come up with some kind of alternate timeline.

[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#)**oneoarout** Mar 3, 2015[@LumpyPumpkin](#)

The root of the matter is the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Does continued settlement building in the West Bank foster peace?

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And I suppose that when they chopped the heads of the two Japanese journalists, they were mad about Japan's foreign policy? And the terrorist in Denmark a couple of weeks ago who walked into a meeting about free speech and opened fire was mad about Danish foreign policy, I'm sure. And the ones who shot Malala in the face were made about what, exactly? Pakistani foreign policy? I hope that your academic colleagues are intellectually honest enough to treat this as the nonsensical drivel that it is.

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Radicalization is the process where by individuals turn there dissatisfaction into violent activities against society. People of all races religion and socio-economic status are unhappy about a lot of things; they don't all blow up buildings or shoot people. This article is completely off the point.

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Clowns around Feb 27, 2015

The author is missing the point.

Muslims being outraged at perceived grievances isn't an explanation of Islamic terrorism. That point hardly negates the claim the author was addressing.

As many people point out, most people with grievances don't engage in terrorism.

Islamic terrorists seem to think that Islam justifies the murder of random people in retaliation for perceived aggressions.

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DJRickyV Feb 27, 2015

Well they have to blame somebody for their c---y life. The USA is as good a punching bag as any.

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mkhello Feb 27, 2015

Right on the money.

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player7 Feb 27, 2015

John Mueller, thanks for a sensible article and a coherent narrative.

You are wrong in arguing that its not 'ideology' that is the motivation. What you are actually saying is that is is not 'religious ideology' that is the motivating factor, and in that you are mostly correct.

Your belief and the belief of so many in the west is that the US and its allies are promoting democracy, freedom, and all those nice-sounding words in their foreign-policy and the actions that stem out of it. The reality is that the only policy that the US has is 'commerce trumps everything else, commerce that benefits us and not necessarily them'. This is the overriding 'ideology' that fuels all the 'foreign policy' of us in the so-called First World. The goal of this, and its problem too, is that it seeks to erase the 'otherness' of the other, seeks to cookie-cut the cities and nations of the world into an American suburb, with all its inherent inequities, over-consumption economics, and blind destruction of the environment.

Inchoate and incoherent, without the eloquence or narrative to describe this lemming-rush, disenfranchised, powerless to alter anything at all, those who see this state of affairs have nothing left but rage.

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oneoarout Mar 3, 2015

[@player7](#)

Well said. The West is imperialist by nature. No wonder people strike back in any desperate way they can.

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HoppingMad2 Feb 27, 2015

With few (very few) exceptions, the US Military are in these countries by invitation.

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mkhello Feb 27, 2015

[@HoppingMad2](#) Iraq and Afghanistan were not invitations, and those are the only two countries mentioned.

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fatrabbiting Feb 27, 2015

Moral of the story - leave them alone - they'll leave us alone! If you want an example of just how screwed up our foreign policy is - here's an article on how US is now basically supporting Shia militias - that we were fighting for last decade! - to fight IS!! <http://www.theworldweekly.com/reader/i/other-jihad/3315> So basically when IS are finished, we'll have to deal with this lot next!!! (does it ever end?????)...

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oneoarout Mar 3, 2015

[@fatrabbiting](#)

All to sell a McDonald's hamburger and drain they're oil.

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Joe American Feb 27, 2015

www.libertyforjoe.com

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Alan Wang Feb 26, 2015

I think it has a little to do with the culture, too. Instances of "honor" killings occur more often in the Middle East and South Asia and people from those countries. All it takes is a family member (usually female) to go against the will of the head of household and in some cases, that's grounds for that person getting killed. I'm not saying that's normal for cultures of the region (like terrorism isn't normal for cultures in the region), but the frequency of that type of activity occurring is probably higher in these cultures.

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oneoarout Mar 3, 2015

[@AI2002](#)

But who are we to dictate cultural values to them? We may think they're barbaric, and I agree, but who put us in charge of others' cultural values?

This, however, misses the point. The West is imperialist by nature and Islamic extremism stems from that.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

Obama still can't admit that some of the people he worked with in his own administration painted themselves as reformers but they are in fact radicals and extremists of the worst kind, people who are on terror lists in other nations if not our own. This is well documented.

While Obama was trying to whitewash the background of the Muslim groups he took money from, they were trying to create chaos and disorder in Muslim states around the world, with great success.

Obama's blinkered blindness in his own foreign policy has been disastrous for stability and safety. Some of these people are not trying to "reform" their home governments at all, they are extremists who support radical Islam just as dangerous as anything ISIS talks about. The Muslim Brotherhood is not a harmless academic movement, memo to Team Obama. They are violent pan-Islamists on par with ISIS who credit them with inspiration.

So Obama is a huge part of the problem and his liberal administration that brought an "every Muslim is sacred" mania to the White House and left out all critical thinking or history. Anyone who challenged them was "Islamophobic." What do they call the guys who chop off heads though? Team Obama never talks about that phobia.

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Richwood49 Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) Are you on drugs...and not prescription kind?

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Picturamadoj Feb 27, 2015

[@Richwood49](#) [@Phillyalley](#) Phillyalley is a troll, and not a fun one at that.

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avalanchbear Feb 26, 2015

There are billions of people in lots of countries that do not like US foreign policy or Russia's foreign policies or some other country's foreign policies and they do not cut off people heads, burn them alive, fly airplanes into buildings or do any of the things islamic terrorists do.

Cubans do not like US foreign policy. A lot of Latin American countries do not like US foreign policy. Most Chinese do not like US support for Japan or South Korea. and on and on.

Ukrainians living in the US do not like Russia's policies, but they are not committing acts of terrorism.

Blaming Islamic Redicalism on US foreign policy is just too simple. It doesn't explain why these other groups are not terrorists.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@avalanchbear](#) Because it is not the foreign policy. It is a life of indoctrination. They are fed hate spew. So of course they grow up twisted. If you ever saw what they portray on most TV in Muslim states,

the average liberal would be shocked. No one could defend it. See Memri.COM for example.

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iwlnilla Feb 27, 2015

[@avalanchbear](#) White Americans have killed people because they don't like US policy.

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oneoarout Mar 3, 2015

[@avalanchbear](#)

At the root of U.S. foreign policy is imperialism. That's the cause of Islamic extremism. In the other instances you mentioned, imperialism isn't a factor.

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peterkguitar Feb 26, 2015

Clearly Muslims are angry about Deflategate, and Pats fourth Super Bowl victory :-)

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

There are concerted movements of private citizens in the oil rich arab state who support ISIS who contravene their own governments. Until those governments

start doing what we do and jailing those people for long terms, there is going to be significant money and men funneled to ISIS.

It is time to cut the head of the snake off.

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peterkguitar · Feb 26, 2015

@Phillyalley Ouch! Not something males like to think about :-)

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

We have been freezing their assets. It is not enough. These funders who operate in the safety of Kuwait, Dubai, the UAE, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, all need to go into prison, something all of these nations have hesitated to do. It is still politically risky to put Islamic extremists in jail there.

They can jail fortune tellers, stone adulterers. They can whip someone criticizing Islam. But someone who is a rabid pro-Islamist, they are afraid to prosecute for terror activities.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

And who won't call them out? Silent Obama. Silent Barack.

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IAmAnAtheist Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) As I recall, Bush never called them out either. If we go by your logic that would mean Bush never called out those people when they supported Al-Qaeda.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@Phillyalley](#) Bush tried to drag the Arab world kicking and screaming into the 20th century. But what is Barack doing with his legacy? Encouraging a retrograde slippage back to the 7th century.

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IAmAnAtheist Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) [@IAmAnAtheist](#) Bush tried? Yeah that is quite a fallacy you are living there.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@Phillyalley](#) You don't know much about what Bush negotiated with the Middle East then. Your dogma prevents you from seeing the results of the Obama retrenchment. We grasped reforms from people like the Saudis. They were not interested in making them. But Obama has simply tossed it out the window. His Muslim Brotherhood Arab Spring was a delusion.

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IAmAnAtheist Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) [@IAmAnAtheist](#) I know quite a bit of what happened in the ME during the Bush years. Part of ISIS are former Iraq soldiers that were loyal to Hussein. Some even joined Al-Qaeda so how did that negotiating help any of our soldiers?

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peterkguitar . Feb 26, 2015

[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@Phillyalley](#) Bush was an evangelical who called the war on terror a Crusade. Which comes from Cross Aid, come to the aid of Jesus. Evangelicals and Muslims all heard that, you obviously did not. His invasion of Iraq was war on Islam.

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rat13 Feb 27, 2015

[@peterkguitar](#) .

Nonsense.....you give guitarists a bad name.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

The way to save ourselves from this sick mindset that wants to impose sharia upon us by force is to live without their oil. We have to build new clean nuclear plants apace. Fracking is key. Our energy policy will have to include real and not

crunchy feel good measures that are paper tigers, but significant quantities of growth producing energy sources.

We now no longer need their oil. Let the price bottom out. Their caliphate will collapse. And the forces of reason will reestablish themselves in their lands in their way.

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IAmAnAtheist Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) We aren't buying oil from ISIS so what is this comment all about?

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@Phillyalley](#) We buy oil from the oil rich Arab states that have within them unchecked extremist movements that support ISIS. Citizens have funneled money to ISIS, and have sent fighters to ISIS.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@Phillyalley](#) If we want to stop ISIS, we are going to have to do more to stop the oil rich Arab states from doing this - they are not doing the work themselves.

That means freezing the assets of their citizens, which the US does, and the EU started to do, and limiting travel by suspect citizens.

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IAmAnAtheist Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) [@IAmAnAtheist](#) And countries militaries in the ME are attacking ISIS. What exactly are you getting at? You seem to be holding quite a tinfoil hat on your head.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@Phillyalley](#) I suppose you can't teach someone who simply won't grasp the news of the day. This all comes from magazines covering the issue. There are OFFICIAL GOVERNMENTS who fight ISIS, and there are PRIVATE CITIZENS who support ISIS in those countries who are EXTREMISTS.

GOT IT NOW?

Was that TOO HARD FOR YOU? Read it slowly.

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IAmAnAtheist Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) [@IAmAnAtheist](#) And what is your point? You conveniently keep avoiding answering that.

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[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@Phillyalley](#) DUH Are you really that simple?

It is to CUT OFF THE HEAD OF THE SNAKE. The oil rich Arab states have to PUT THESE PEOPLE IN JAIL like the US does.

We put the extremists in our country in PRISON. That is what Saudi, the UAE, and the rest, don't do.

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[@Phillyalley](#) [@IAmAnAtheist](#) So what are you stating we should do to force another country to do it?

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[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@Phillyalley](#) We have to stop buying their oil. That can't be any more clear.

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[@Phillyalley](#) [@IAmAnAtheist](#) So you would then put the global economy into a serious situation. It also would not stop those people from selling their product to other buyers.

[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#)**Phillyalley** Feb 26, 2015

[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@Phillyalley](#) The world of reasonable people will join in. The movement is already on. Europe wants to buy less oil. With us and Europe buying less oil from these Arab oil states, then things will change.

They will come to the table to cope with their internal problems more readily. With no buyers, there is no cause to fight.

It is not the duty of the West to prop up these oil rich Arab states. It is for them to sort out their problems like reasonable people.

They will either sort it out or collapse.

With energy independence in the US we will survive it either way.

[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#)**peterkguitar** Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) [@IAmAnAtheist](#) The US buys no oil from the Mideast, Europe and China do.

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peterkguitar · Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) This has nothing to do with oil, and never has. Jefferson fought the Barbary Coast war against Muslim pirates and white slavers. About 150 years before people used oil.

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Richwood49 Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) They have to be quarantined like any other fatal disease. With no morals, no ethics and no soul, put a wall up and keep them out. Israel is the only nation with a brain in its head, it is the only nation that recognizes Islam is a disease, a sickness NOT a religion.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

Far from us having this horrible policy that is so evil to Muslims, we committed the worst blunder that may be our undoing when we first discovered oil just before WWI in the Middle East, at the time of Lawrence of Arabia. We wrote contracts with these fledgling nations we helped to form to BUY the oil.

What we should have done was to have stolen the oil. We should have set up colonies, like we were accused of doing, but real ones, imposed our laws, like we were accused of doing, but really should have done it, and compelled these savages to live like men for 100 years until they got used it.

Then we would have their art in our museums, and have taken care of it. Christians would be protected as would all religious minorities. Freedom of religion would be the law of the land. Free speech would be sacrosanct. Israel

would not be the only democracy in the Middle East. And all the West would have budget surpluses.

Why? Because Arabs will resist change. Islam's sharia opposes change and development. Religious innovation is harem, or forbidden. So is the mindset that permits it. This prevents them from having a banking system and caused the Ottoman Empire, the last, caliphate, to topple. Sharia had its day. It is a failed legal system. But no one told the Muslims that, and no one can.

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IAmAnAtheist Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) Resist change? One example that proves your statement inherently wrong. UAE.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@Phillyalley](#) That the UAE sends so much money and so many fighters to ISIS proves what I'm saying right. You've never been to these oil rich Arab states. They are at war with themselves on every front in every aspect of themselves. Their war is inside their minds.

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IAmAnAtheist Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) [@IAmAnAtheist](#) Why would the UAE (a democratic nation) supply the ISIS, who hate Democracy? It would also harm tourism in their country, since it is their

number one source of income if they were dealing with the UAE. You are really throwing out assumptions.

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peterkguitar · Feb 26, 2015

[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@Phillyalley](#) Democracy means NOTHING. It's just majority rule, slavery could still exist under those laws. And Sunni majority can persecute Shia minority, or vice-versa. With your name you should know this: the US is a republic, not a democracy. The First Amendment protects us from rule by our Christian majority, or else we would not be free.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@Phillyalley](#) They so want to be conservative, Islamic, tribal, and family oriented, and feel under siege in every regard. The UAE is not this bastion of democracy. There are many in the country who have lent their support to ISIS. Haven't you read that? The UAE is a huge supporter via fighter and money - more so than the US.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@Phillyalley](#) You don't seem to have any idea where ISIS gets its men or material. The oil rich Arab states made ISIS. Without ISIS supporters from extremists in the oil rich Arab states like the UAE, there would be no ISIS.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@Phillyalley](#) Where did the UAE get its money to give to ISIS?

FROM THE WEST WHICH BUYS ITS OIL. QED.

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IAmAnAtheist Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) [@IAmAnAtheist](#) Yet the UAE is assisting in attacking ISIS as is the country of Jordan. You seem to blind yourself purposely.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@Phillyalley](#) No you seem to not understand that there is an official government of the UAE that is attacking ISIS, and an extremist movement that is supporting ISIS within the UAE.

It is like they are fighting a civil war in Iraq. But it is a civil war for control of the Arab states, make no mistake. It is a war for the oil rich Arab states - they are next on the agenda.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@Phillyalley](#) Try and keep up, seriously. This has only been going on for years now.

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IAmAnAtheist Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) [@IAmAnAtheist](#) You do realize that the ISIS is a small group of extremists. You seem to think you can eliminate a terrorist organization, but that is quite a fallacy in its own right.

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peterkguitar . Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) By "we" you mean the Brits. The US had NO presence or influence in the Mideast before I was born in 1950, none.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

Radical Islam is an incredibly destabilizing and decivilizing force in the world today. All because we bought the oil instead of stealing it. Let that be a lesson for you in world affairs. The next time we need something from a Sharia country, let's not do that again.

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peterkguitar . Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) Absurd. Oil was not discovered in the Mideast until the 1920s. The US was the world's top producer until 1973, and it and Russia still produce more than Saudis. Islam was more powerful

BEFORE oil was discovered, the Ottoman Empire. Natural resources make nations poor, island England and Japan became rich because they have none.

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Maxxx Flynnn Feb 26, 2015

Morally rationalizing behavior doesn't mean one became radicalized via policy backlash, overriding ideology. The author may be well informed on terrorism, but his armchair psychology is horrible.

Holding a position of cognitive dissonance does NOT negate extreme ideology. In fact, it's one of the hallmarks.

I like how he even has to twist and replace what was said by others in order to fit his view. This was worst can confirmation bias: he didn't only examine evidence that supported his premise, he actively distorted information to support his premise.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@Maxxx Flynnn](#) Yes it seems Westerners simply can't hear what the Muslim extremist is saying. It really is about MY Islam, and MY Islam says to kill you. Simple folks.

Sorry if that offends the Left, the Democrats, CNN, Team Obama, and the BBC. Sorry if it is not your form of Islam. It is their form of Islam however.

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IAmAnAtheist Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) [@Maxxx Flynnn](#) Simple fact if what you say is true then how is it that we haven't been attacked by a billion Muslims? Oh, right, because your little fantasy that all Muslims are out to kill you is just that; a fantasy.

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peterkguitar . Feb 26, 2015

[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@Phillyalley](#) [@Maxxx Flynnn](#) About 100K US soldiers fought in Afghanistan, out of 300M of us. It's actually 1.6B Muslims, which by same proportions would attack us with an army of about 550K soldiers - or more than the total of US soldiers who died in WWII. And easily enough to conquer the Mideast, or the US. Very few of ANY group actually have to become soldiers, to conquer others.

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peterkguitar . Feb 26, 2015

[@Maxxx Flynnn](#) Cognitive dissonance is based on reason, and faith is the opposite. In fact faith aka denial is the result of cognitive dissonance. "I'm a Christian/Muslim, I'm good and don't commit terrorist acts. Therefore the religion must be good."

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psychbob Feb 26, 2015

Its not our foreign policy, its not any threat to their religion, its not anything they complain about. It is just another group of sociopaths who managed to use an excuse to manipulate people for their own gains...thats it, plain and simple. So, stop blaming the victims.

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Trytobegood Feb 26, 2015

U mean kinda like rich osama bin laden gained followers and created his terror organization in an attempt to create a sharia country, most likely underneath his rule. Though ironically the isil spilinter group who claim to represent muslims has killed and assaulted more muslims then others. Heck if u dont count the iraq war im pretty sure we have killed less civilians thenbisil..... Even if u count it assad has killed more of his own people in less time then the estimated civilian casualties of iraq.

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peterkguitar . Feb 26, 2015

In the Old Testament book Deuteronomy, God CLEARLY commands us to kill all non-believers. It's the basis for Judaism, Christianity and the Koran. None of those religions ever repealed it.

It's not "extremism", it's fundamentalism. Observing the Old Testament, the Bible's fundamentals.

"For me the Jewish religion like all other religions is an incarnation of the most childish superstitions." -- Albert Einstein, 1954

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@peterkguitar](#) . But the Muslim fundamentalist carries his book's call to kill the infidel with perfect literalness. Millions of Muslims agree. Millions more agree that the punishment for religious freedom, or leaving Islam, should be death.

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Maxxx Flynnn Feb 26, 2015

[@peterkguitar](#) . "None of those religions ever repealed it."

Ah, yeah they did.

Perhaps you haven't heard, but there were new prophets in two of those traditions that in fact led to entirely new religions.

Jesus with Christianity and Muhammad with Islam.

You seem to be a couple thousand years out of date. There are two new sot of important writings that came out. One was the new testament and the other was the Quran.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@Maxxx Flynnn](#) [@peterkguitar](#) . Yes the last words of the Gospels state "and the curtain was rent asunder," or the fabric was torn in half. The fabric of the old world, the old contract, that divided the world into distinct religions and never the twain shall meet was no more. Christians, Jews, and Greeks, Romans, and others could all join together to follow one faith informed largely by Judaism without having to follow Leviticus. It came to be known as "Christianity," but Jews called it a sect of their own faith for a time.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@peterkguitar](#) . And those words are superceded by the New Testament, just as new law supercedes the old. That is why you have to do a check on what laws have passed or have been decided to see the status of the law as it stands.

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Quarky77 Feb 26, 2015

Excellent piece in the March edition of Atlantic Magazine on what motivates ISIS. There really is no possible way to deal with an entity that is determined to turn back the clock to the 7th century and then push the button on an apocalypse. We just need to exterminate them so let;s get on with an unpleasant task.

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khandahar Feb 26, 2015



I no longer care what they are angry about. This is past any rational solution and we all know it. Kill them all.

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Jenne777 Feb 26, 2015

[@khandahar](#) You sound like them.

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khandahar Feb 26, 2015

[@Jenne777](#) [@khandahar](#) What, are you so naive you think they are going to change? Do you think you are going to convince them to play nice. Perhaps negotiate? Give them jobs at Walmart and they will be happy? It's not going to happen. What's more, they are telling you it is not going to happen..

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IAmAnAtheist Feb 26, 2015

[@khandahar](#) [@Jenne777](#) You realize that your statement of "kill them all" is one reason why so many turn to terrorism, because they feel they need to take you out first before they take them out.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@khandahar](#) [@Jenne777](#) You can't reason with Goebbels. You can't make sense to Himmler. You are not going to "get through" to Hitler.

[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#)**IAmAnAtheist** Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) [@IAmAnAtheist](#) [@khandahar](#) [@Jenne777](#) Who said anything about reasoning? I'm just stating the obvious fact that one of the reasons they join extremist groups is because they feel like outcasts, especially with people like Khandahar stating "kill them all."

[Flag](#) [Share](#)1 [Like](#)**Phillyalley** Feb 26, 2015

[@Jenne777](#) [@khandahar](#) No he doesn't sound like them. He's not raping children and selling women into slavery and smashing ancient statues for predating Islam altogether.

[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#)**rwilde** Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) [@Jenne777](#) [@khandahar](#) And neither are "all" of "them".

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[@rwilde](#) [@Phillyalley](#) [@Jenne777](#) [@khandahar](#)

But these ones are...Here, take a look.....

<http://sharebitemag.blogspot.it/2015/02/raw-footage-isis-releases-video.html#axzz3RnTZtind>

[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#)**mateo1234** Feb 26, 2015

[@khandahar](#) I agree, if they had their way they would have already killed all of us. Every last person of western origin; every Christian, Jew, Hindu, Atheist . . . LITERALLY EVERYONE, after that they will kill each other. (Like they are doing now.) So, yes, we should kill them all.

[Flag](#) [Share](#)[2 Like](#)**rwilde** Feb 26, 2015

[@khandahar](#) Please define "all".

[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#)**pogicraft** Feb 26, 2015

wow John Mueller tries to stay relevant in an ever changing world.... what he says may have been true years ago when we went into Iraq and Afghanistan for political reasons and many innocents with varying degrees of disagreement were killed defending their land but now we're mostly out of both these countries and ISIS is waging a war while simultaneously making threats to the US and killing our citizens. ISIS doesn't care what we did 10 years ago and they're smart enough to know that we've evolved as a society since then (great reduction in support for torture and foreign interventions for example). They might still tug at grievances that resonate with people but you don't join ISIS to change US foreign policy and in fact I can go as far as to say you join ISIS to change middle east domestic policies. ISIS wants more western nations killing arabs, they're baiting us to do it -- so if your goal is to stop US intervention in the middle east, you'd do the exact opposite of supporting ISIS.

[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#)**Trytobegood** Feb 26, 2015

While i mostly agree u have to remember there were alot of civilian deaths in the iraq war....about over 130k so they can still use that hate. Especially considering the time passed. A 8 or so year old back then and now an adult could join just to get some kinda revenge.

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[@Trytobegood](#) They are ex Baathists from Saddam's era who could not put together a viable political party that could win elections. It was ISIS or agree to be ruled by others. The should have simply agreed to be ruled by the fellow Iraqis. They destroyed their country just to reimpose Sunni only rule.

[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#)**Trytobegood** Feb 26, 2015

Good point but i was refering to the ordinary citizens who unfortunately got caught in the crossedire of the war. Saddam's buddies and isil deserve a drone where the sun don't shlne

[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#)**Jenne777** Feb 26, 2015

I'll tell you "what terrorists are really angry about." They are angry that Barack Obama was elected President, twice. They are angry that President Obama was

able to get the Affordable Care Act passed. And they are angry that they just can't seem to get their candidate into office, even when they nominate a Viet Nam war hero, and female governor from Alaska.

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pogicraft Feb 26, 2015

[@Jenne777](#) ? so the GOP is joining ISIS?

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Rudy72 Feb 26, 2015

[@Jenne777](#) Yawn. How pedestrian

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mateo1234 Feb 26, 2015

[@Jenne777](#) That's a ridiculous comment. The day James Foley was beheaded, Obama spent the day golfing with a group of Muslims. There was ZERO priority put on having a high-level American diplomat attend the Hebdo Solidarity march . . .

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rwilde Feb 26, 2015

[@mateo1234](#) [@Jenne777](#) Alonzo Mourning, Cy Walker, and Glenn Hutchins are Muslims? Wow, you jumped off the way high nut bar on that one.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@Jenne777](#) Wow the Left so does not get it. You are fiddling while Iraq burns. This must have been what happened in the last genocide.

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rwilde Feb 26, 2015

[@Phillyalley](#) [@Jenne777](#) So why are you here, Philly? Why aren't you in Iraq doing something? And please don't give me the "I already served" cop-out. If you are that concerned, get over there.

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JoBeck18 Feb 26, 2015

Of course it's about religion. People don't blow up women's clinics in the name of better cable service. No, it's in the name of Jesus. They don't fly planes into building for cheaper airfares. No, it's in the name of Allah. It IS religion and as soon as we accept that, the sooner we can start to fight the terrorists. It wouldn't hurt if some of the so called "valid" religions would open their mouths and denounce the violence.

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Trytobegood Feb 26, 2015

How bout you get off your high horse and stop trying to say every conflict in The Me is a holy war of some kind

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@Trytobegood](#) Or you can listen to what they are telling us, and they are telling us yes IT REALLY IS ABOUT ISLAM YOU DINGBATS. Their words, not mine.

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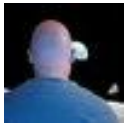


Rudy72 Feb 26, 2015

[@JoBeck18](#) It is about moral superiority and that comes in all forms religious and secular

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Andrew Page Feb 26, 2015

This piece reads like sarcasm. "They're not specifically angry at US Culture they just want to blow pieces of it up and kill its citizens."

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iwlnilla Feb 26, 2015

[@Andrew Page](#) That wasn't what he said. He said that the terrorists, in some cases, lived among US culture just fine, but were angry with our government's actions.

Sound familiar?

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Andrew Page Feb 26, 2015

[@iwlnilla](#) [@Andrew Page](#) Yes but they're not limiting their attacks to the organs of the US Government are they? Times Sq, the Marathon Bombings, the shoe bomber, the

panty bomber ALL aimed at purely civilian targets. Oh... and what's that other great weapon against democratic systems... voting, protesting? How much picketing was done in front of Charlie Hebdo before AK47s were resorted to?

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Maxxx Flynnn Feb 26, 2015

[@iwInilla](#) [@Andrew Page](#) Actually, that's pretty much word for word what he did say. In fact, he's made this statement all over the place recently in the media, even though almost no one in the field agreed with him.

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Phillyalley Feb 26, 2015

[@iwInilla](#) [@Andrew Page](#) They love our culture when they have the benefits card.

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Jenne777 Feb 26, 2015

[@Andrew Page](#) These "terrorists" are merely deeply religious. We claim to respect religion in this country. Why don't you respect religion?

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pogicraft Feb 26, 2015

[@Jenne777](#) [@Andrew Page](#) we respect religion in the confines of the law... if your religion is to kill Obama, we cannot simply sit back and let you exercise this non-existent freedom.

[Flag](#) [Share](#)1 [Like](#)**mateo1234** Feb 26, 2015

[@Jenne777](#) [@Andrew Page](#) Jenne777, you must be a Muslim . . . right ??

THE ONLY INVENTION TO COME OUT OF ISLAM IN THE LAST 100 YEARS IS THE SUICIDE BOMB VEST . . . AND YOU CALL IT 'MERELY DEEPLY RELIGIOUS'

[Flag](#) [Share](#)1 [Like](#)**Phillyalley** Feb 26, 2015

[@mateo1234](#) [@Jenne777](#) [@Andrew Page](#) And the use of a propane tank as a projectile in a howitzer. Credit where it is due.

[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#)**chessnutz58** Feb 26, 2015

I remember there was a time the King of England was concerned about terrorists in the 13 colonies in America.

[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#)**iwlnilla** Feb 26, 2015

[@chessnutz58](#) Yep, and a well-known conservative movement was named after rioters who destroyed private property in Boston :)

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Jenne777 Feb 26, 2015

[@chessnutz58](#) Yep. And the conservatives wanted to remain with the King of England, while the liberals wanted to be free from England.

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Trytobegood Feb 26, 2015

And there were no liberals or conservatives at the time just patriots and loyalist. God people like you should stop reaching so far back to start left and right arguments

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Rudy72 Feb 26, 2015

[@Jenne777](#) There weren't liberals back then. The founding fathers actually believed in God

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Steven Szirotnyak Feb 26, 2015

Somehow I had a feeling it would be all our fault.

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Jenne777 Feb 26, 2015

[@Steven Szirotnyak](#) That is like saying, "somehow, I has a feeling it would be colder on the North Pole.

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Rudy72 Feb 26, 2015

[@Jenne777](#) No Jenne777 it is not. It is not the fault of the West. It is the fault of radical Islam.

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Rudicker Feb 26, 2015

Wow. This article is completely depressing for the state of political discourse from major news organizations and American intellectuals. I guess the Williamsization of news is not limited to untruths but also includes intellectual laziness. The problem is NOT what terrorists are angry about. I actually think the writer knows this and is being dishonest in his overall assessment in an effort to enact change in American foreign policy. I am upset that I don't make enough money. I am unhappy that there is a cold snap in the Northeast. I don't like people not in my professional determining how I practice it. I could go on and on with a long list of grievances from small to large. The point is that most people are perpetually unhappy about certain things. Why certain individuals seem to express there unhappiness with mass slaughter is the problem. This article makes no acknowledgement of this portion of the problem and this is what is truly meant by individuals becoming "radicalized".

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Jim37 Feb 26, 2015

This article is just wrong. They radicalize because that is what they are taught in the religion of peace. If not, why would Sunnis and Shias be killing each other, why would they be attacking Jews and Israel, why would they be attacking and killing the Kurds. Are drones and the wars in the Middle East motivating factors for some, yes. However, it is Islam that plants the seeds that killing is the

appropriate response. That much should be clear by now. Look over the world, show me where Islam gets along with other ideologies. Go ahead, I'll wait.

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jako62 Feb 26, 2015

[@Jim37](#) I've been searching. I haven't found a place yet where there are no Islamists that get along with other ideologies. Everywhere may have Islamists that don't get along with other ideologies, but everywhere has people of every religion that do not get along with other ideologies. Radicals use religions to exploit their ideas, not the other way around.

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iwlnilla Feb 26, 2015

[@Jim37](#) "They radicalize because that is what they are taught in the religion of peace. If not, why would Sunnis and Shias be killing each other..."

See, you discredited yourself right there. Pretty sure the Quran does not say Muslims should kill other Muslims.

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Trytobegood Feb 26, 2015

Nope, not a word bout killin each other

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peterkguitar Feb 26, 2015

[@Jim37](#) Why do you believe Islam is a "religion of peace"? It doesn't recognize Jesus except as an inferior prophet to Muhammad. There is

NOTHING peaceful about the Old Testament. It's the Ten Commandments, with orders from God to stone people to death for adultery, working on the Sabbath and eating shellfish. All the mercy comes from the words of Jesus, but Muslims don't recognize that.

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Monahan51 Feb 26, 2015

I think this article is saying that everything will be fine soon because unemployment is down? I just done see that halting the beheadings, rapes and destruction occurring but we can always hope I guess. Sounds a bit like Neville Chamberlin in 1930's Great Britain just before the blitz. .

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iwlnilla Feb 26, 2015

[@Monahan51](#) Not even close. It's saying many terrorists radicalized out of anger at the US (and other) government(s).

I realize our entire nation supports the actions of our current elected leaders 100%, but not everyone around the world does.

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ThereUppy Feb 26, 2015

“The apocalypse is not something which is coming. The apocalypse has arrived in major portions of the planet and it’s only because we live within a bubble of incredible privilege and social insulation that we still have the luxury of anticipating the apocalypse.” -Terence Mckenna

[Flag](#) [Share](#)2 [Like](#)**Steven Szirotnyak** Feb 26, 2015

A bubble of liberty, opportunity and achievement for the vast, vast majority in our brand of civilization. Or a bubble of privilege, if you're prone to apology.

[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#)**StoneCutters** Feb 26, 2015

This author and this article are a joke. So let me get this straight, its the fault of the US and all western countries? Thats why they kill? Thats somehow justification? If you feel like the police are brutalizing your community you dont go out and start blowing up police stations. The argument made by this author is asinine and destructive. The US could have absolutely no interaction with Islamic countries and we would still have this problem.

[Flag](#) [Share](#)3 [Like](#)**snakedog1** Feb 26, 2015

[@StoneCutters](#) I think you did not grow up in the Vietnam era when there were plenty of patriotic Americans who were ready to overthrow the US government violently for what we were doing in Vietnam. I emphatically agree with the author. We need to go to the cause of terrorism and solve it, not the symptom. I think many responders here missed that most of these terrorists actually like America, they just hate what we appear to be doing to their religion overseas. I think the bulk of terrorism could be solved by a more tolerant foreign policy and a massive PR campaign establishing that our enemy is not Islam but those of any religion who plan to hurt us. This may be true now but we are not

making it sufficiently known. The problem is not a few nut jobs but a huge Islamic population that believes the American government hates Islam, not without reason.

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md2575 Feb 26, 2015

That may explain some individuals but, as a group it's pure ideology. Hatred at Us policy doesn't explain increasing acts of terror in several non aligned countries including China and Russia.

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MrZaphod Feb 26, 2015

I think it starts with a basic fear of not being in control of everything around them. Life cannot be contained or controlled. There is a certain lack of inner peace in a terrorist because it is everything around them that is wrong which starts the horrible chain of events that lead to terrorist attacks. Terrorism starts first and foremost on beliefs which if history has taught us anything about beliefs is that they are subjective. I think once an individual reaches a terrorist state of mind it is difficult for them to come back from the brink. Terrorism at the end of the day is nothing more than pure anger. To be a terrorist IMHO is just a blink away from being a nihilist. The only difference is that everyone is rejected except for the small few in the circle that hold on to the vestiges of what corrupted religion that once was in the belief system that got them there which eventually led them over the edge.

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