

Why We Must Name, Identify and Combat the Ideology of Radical Islam

This week's tragic terrorist bombing in Manchester, England, reminds us that we cannot just combat radical Muslims, seeking to make our borders secure and fighting them overseas. We must also combat the ideology of radical Islam.

In 2005, after the horrific London train bombings, many Brits were shocked to learn that three of the four terrorists were born in England. The fourth, born in Jamaica, was raised in England from the age of 5.

Potentially, these four men had access to the best England had to offer, and they were raised in an environment of religious freedom. Yet they ended up murdering children, women and men in cold blood. And they did it in the name of Allah. Why?

We now know that the Manchester bomber, Salman Abedi, was also born and raised in England after his parents fled to the U.K. from Gaddafi's Libya. As for Abedi's family, they were reportedly "devout and well-known to be against Isis and Islamism. Abedi's father, known as Abu Ismael, was described in glowing terms at the Didsbury Mosque where he and the family worshipped."

According to a friend of the family, Abedi's father used to lead early morning prayer calls. "And his boys learned the Qur'an by heart."

But, according to this friend, the father, Abu Ismael, "will be terribly distraught. He was always very confrontational with jihadi ideology, and this Isis thing isn't even jihad, it's criminality. The family will be devastated."

If this report is accurate, these were devout Muslims who repudiated violent Islamic theology. How, then, did the son come to embrace it? Or was his embrace of radical Islam the direct result of him memorizing the Quran as a child?

There are some who argue that there is no such thing as radical Islam, only Islam. Islam itself is evil and, by nature, a violent religion.

Others argue that violent Islam is not Islam at all, and that Islam, by nature, is a peaceful religion.

My position has been that both the peaceful and violent expressions of the faith can be found within Islam. That is why I use the qualifying term "radical Islam."

But putting that debate aside for a moment, we can all agree that there is a barbaric and violent ideology that justifies its actions using Islamic texts, traditions and history. It is that ideology that is commonly called "radical Islam." It is that ideology that must be combatted.

The Obama administration argued that this terrorist ideology had nothing to do with Islam and that to associate it with Islam was to offend the Muslim world. But that strategy was doomed to fail.

First, it paralyzed intelligence and law enforcement agencies, since they had to purge any references to "Islam" from their manuals. How can you combat something you cannot name?

Second, since we were not allowed to identify radical Islam, we could not identify its roots and its appeal. How, then, could we stop people from being radicalized by Islam if Islam (in any form) is not the problem?

For eight years, our government avoided offending the Muslim world by refusing to say "Islamic terrorism." How did that strategy pay off in terms of intelligence dividends? Did

Muslims across America come forward in large numbers to help uproot radical Islamic terrorism? Not to my knowledge.

What we need to do now is what we should have been doing all along.

We need to ask who is getting radicalized, and we need to ask how they are getting radicalized.

What ideology appeals to them? What type of individual is likely to get recruited? Why do they hate us so deeply?

Let us profile in the best sense of the word, the way Israeli airline security profiles passengers and the way behavioral analysis units profile criminals. (Think *Criminal Minds*.)

But the goal is not to profile Muslims. The goal is to profile people who are likely to be radicalized. If 99 percent of them are Muslims, then that is part of the profile. How do we identify that small percentage of the Muslim population likely to be recruited for terror? Peace-loving Muslims should lead the way in helping to expose and uproot these dangerous weeds growing in their midst.

We need to ask who is doing the recruiting and how they are succeeding. Which leaders or groups are doing the work? How are they doing it? To what extent is it happening in mosques or Islamic centers or prisons or online?

And we need to call on Muslim leaders across the world to denounce Islamic terror and to combat it, without caveat or qualification. That means if a Muslim suicide bomber blows up people in Israel or England or France, the action must be condemned unequivocally.

Islamic theologians and political leaders must unite and say, "That is not Islam, and that is a hell-bound murderer, not a martyr."

While some Muslim leaders have done this with consistency

(although, more rarely when it comes to attacks against Israelis) all too many others have not.

In his book *111 Questions on Islam*, Samir Kahlil Samir pointed to “the final document released at the end of the summit held in Beirut in January 2002, in which more than two hundred Sunni and Shiite *‘ulemā’* [Islamic scholars], coming from 35 countries, participated.” They were discussing suicide attacks in Israel and whether those could be justified in the name of Islam, which otherwise opposes suicide.

The document stated this: “The actions of martyrdom of the *mujāhidīn* are legitimate and have their foundation in the Qur’ān and in the prophet’s tradition. They represent the most sublime of martyrdoms because the *mujāhidīn* accomplish them in full conscience and freedom of choice.”

This is heinous and despicable, yet it was the verdict of a wide range of multi-national Islamic scholars.

In 2001, another prominent Muslim leader, Yusuf al-Qaradawi of Egypt, claimed that “nobody can declare that it is unlawful to fight with all means against the [Israeli] occupation.” He wrote that “*jihād* on the way to God and in the defense of the country, of homeland, and of sacred things is today an obligation for all Muslims more than in any other period in the past.” And this did not only apply in “Palestine.” It also applied “in Kashmir, and in other hot spots in the world.”

Only Muslim leaders can end this debate. If Islam is not, by nature, a violent religion, then the top Muslim voices across the world must denounce it and combat it. And they must help the West combat it. Is this too much to ask?

When a demented Christian kills an abortion doctor, Christian leaders immediately denounce the act, calling it murder. We disassociate ourselves from the crime, we rightly state that it has no basis in our faith and we re-affirm that we are pro-life (not pro-murder). That’s why these violent

“Christian” acts are so few and far between, despite our passionate stand against abortion.

And what if, God forbid, there were a wave of violent attacks in the name of Jesus and the New Testament? We would speak out all the more and do our best to expose the false, murderous, unbiblical ideology: “This has nothing to do with Jesus!”

Why shouldn’t Muslims do this around the world when it comes to their faith? And why shouldn’t they join forces with non-Islamic governments to combat Islamic terror? (This is what President Trump called for in his speech in Riyadh.)

If, in fact, real Islam is violent Islam, then it is Islam we must combat. If, to the contrary, radical Islam is a deviant form of Islam, then mainstream Muslims must work with us to uproot it.

Either way, the time for pussyfooting around the obvious is over. The blood of slaughtered British children is crying out from the ground. {eoa}