

Imagine a Boston Bombing Every Week

I genuinely empathize with the victims of the Boston bombing. They were killed, maimed, injured and/or forever traumatized only because they happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. As they gathered to compete in or watch the marathon underway, they were—like all terrorism victims—the epitome of innocent.

But imagine if this happened again next week at a pizzeria, killing 15 diners; and again a week later on a bus, killing 19 passengers. Then at a discotheque, killing 21 teens. Then at a church, killing 11 worshippers. And so on it goes, with a new bombing almost every week.

Israelis don't have to imagine. They just have to remember. Between 1995 and 2005, each year saw an average of 14 suicide bombings, with 66 victims murdered. The year 2002 was the worst, with 47 bombings that slaughtered 238 people.

That's almost one Boston bombing every week. Adjusted for population differences, Israel's victims in 2002 amounted to the equivalent of three 9/11 tragedies in one year. And these bombing statistics don't include all of the shootings, stabbings and other violent attacks by Palestinian extremists during those years.

Most Americans (and Europeans) who enjoy lives of far greater security can barely recall such attacks because they usually received only scant and perfunctory media coverage, if they were mentioned at all. A few particularly gruesome attacks (like the Netanya Passover bombing that killed 30 and injured 140) were prominently reported, but most attacks were barely and inconspicuously noted, and many smaller but horrific attacks went entirely unreported.

Of course, whenever Israel responded militarily to these attacks, it would be headline news. As *Wall Street Journal* columnist Brett Stephens noted in 2009, “Every Palestinian death receives somewhere in the order of 28 times the attention of every Chechen death.”

When Israel erected its West Bank security barrier, a nonviolent but extremely effective way to prevent Palestinian terrorism, that too was headline news. The fence was even brought before the International Court of Justice in 2004—unlike the terrorism that compelled it. Israel surely had other uses for the \$2 billion spent to build the barrier, but the number of attacks and fatalities dropped so dramatically after its construction that few Israelis doubted its necessity.

Israel’s terrible experience with terrorism has forced it to develop relevant expertise, from more effective security and counterterrorism techniques to emergency medicine procedures that respond better to the mass casualties of terrorist attacks. In fact, Dr. Alasdair Conn, a top emergency doctor at Massachusetts General Hospital, where most of the 183 victims of the Boston attack were treated, noted that Israelis helped train his team to respond to terror attacks.

But managing terrorism is hardly what Israelis want to be experts in; they’d much rather focus on other areas where they’ve excelled: high-tech, medical research, clean tech and other innovative pursuits that improve life rather than stop those trying to ruin it.

As a proud American who was in Manhattan on 9/11, I was horrified by our nation’s traumatic wake-up call to the evil of terrorism and the vulnerability of any open society—even the world’s only superpower. The Boston bombing—and the 24/7 coverage of it across virtually all media—was a disturbing reminder that we are all vulnerable; it was also a tiny (and hopefully temporary) taste of the far greater vulnerability

experienced every day by Israel.

A democracy the size of New Jersey, Israel must contend not only with the continuous threat of Islamic terrorists launching cross-border or homegrown attacks, but also with about 200,000 missiles potentially aimed at it from virtually every direction and an Iran that regularly threatens to destroy it while developing the nuclear means to do so.

With so many constant threats, it's a miracle Israelis can maintain any semblance of everyday sanity, much less win Nobel prizes and get more companies listed on the NASDAQ than any country after the USA and China. How do they do it?

If you talk to Israelis, their approach seems to be a proud and stubborn refusal to let terrorism change their lives and a determination to succeed despite the terrorists—thereby defying them. And that may provide some guidance or inspiration for Americans trying to get back to a sense of normal.

We quickly killed one Boston bomber and nabbed the other. We buried bin Laden in 2011. And we're producing content, technology and ideas that are the envy of the world. Let's keep it that way. Go USA.

Noah Beck is the author of *The Last Israelis*, a military thriller about the Iranian nuclear threat that also explores the impact of terrorism on ordinary people.