

POLITICS & POLICY

Reacting to the Massacre in Paris

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Bullet hole at the offices of Charlie Hebdo

What's the proper response? What should we be reflecting on? Some ideas.

Robert DESTRO

These are premeditated murders, pure and simple. This is no different from the beheadings and other forms of murder and mayhem done in the name of religion in Syria, Iraq, North Africa, and Nigeria (among other places). These murders are like “honor killings”; their perpetrators seek to justify their deeds as

a defense of the Prophet. The truth, however, is that the Prophet is, we pray, with God and needs no human “defense.” These are murderers who must be hunted down, tried, and punished.

That said, I know that much of the commentary in the West will focus on how to get control of “radical Islam.” This is the wrong question. The Koran draws on the Old Testament to speak directly to the issue of murder in 5:32: “Because of this did We ordain unto the children of Israel that if anyone slays a human being — unless it be [in punishment] for murder or for spreading corruption on earth — it shall be as though he had slain all mankind; whereas, if anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he had saved the lives of all mankind. And, indeed, there came unto them Our apostles with all evidence of the truth: yet, behold, notwithstanding all this, many of them go on committing all manner of excesses on earth.” In earlier Suras, the Koran speaks directly to those, like the Islamic State, who are “unlettered people who have no real knowledge of the divine writ [the Old Testament], [following] only wishful beliefs and depending on nothing but conjecture” (2:78).

The correct approach is to ask like-minded Muslims to join us in a highly visible, well-funded, international effort to arrest, try, and punish these murderers *and everyone engaged in the international criminal conspiracy to support them* — from the killers themselves to the people who write and give the sermons purporting to “authorize” murder. I know that leading lawyers and scholars from Iran, Syria, and Iraq are eager to participate in such an effort because I have discussed the topic with them. I met with senior Iranian legal and religious scholars and with Iraqi legal experts from across the range of religious groups (Sunni, Shia, and Izidi, among others) in August, and have been trying to sell the idea on this side of the ocean. American lawyers are eager too, including some very high-profile ones.

In sum, we should not be asking “religious” questions. Our Muslim colleagues constantly remind us that Islam is a religion in which God’s law is taken

seriously. While we may differ on how to interpret that law, or on the qualifications or training of the judges who interpret that law, we can agree on one thing: Murder is forbidden under both God's law and the criminal laws in every civilized country. Let's work together to take down the international criminal conspiracy known as the Islamic State or **Da'esh**.

— *Robert A. Destro is a professor of law at the Catholic University of America's Columbus School of Law in Washington, D.C.*

Andrew Doran

The West endured more incomprehensible violence yesterday. That violence is a physical manifestation of a moral and spiritual violence, which now plagues civilization as a kind of disease. The first step toward fighting a disease is having the courage to diagnose it honestly — something the West's political-academic establishment refuses to do.

The surface-level problem is terrorism, but, delving deeper, we find the denial of reason in favor of violent, extremist fideism. The West, crippled by an admixture of political correctness, secular pragmatism, self-loathing, and Gulf-state wealth (which pays for both the **silence** of Western academic institutions and the **weapons and training** of al-Qaeda and its affiliates), has proved incapable of assigning any non-material, cultural factors to the situation. And so for several decades, as the world has grown smaller, the gap between Western secularism and Islamic fundamentalism has grown larger. Many ISIS terrorists have actually **grown up in the West**, apparently finding there nothing to love and much to loathe.

This kind of attack will become more commonplace, as the modus operandi shifts from 9/11-style attacks to more feasible strikes. But the enemy remains

the same: extremism, terrorism, reactionary violence. This is not ultimately a fight that can be won through force of arms or even through democracy-building (as argued [here](#)). To coexist peacefully, we have to undertake an assessment of commonalities — of the common good, of common reason — beyond what has been proposed thus far (as argued [here](#)). The notion that the Middle East's problems can be solved by improved material conditions fails to comprehend the power of religion and culture. To his credit, General Sisi seemed to acknowledge the need for the Muslim world to undergo a critical self-examination in a [recent speech](#) at Al-Azhar; the West's public culture ought to do likewise.

The encounter between Islam and the West continues to result in reaction and violence. There are some who believe violent extremism to be merely the death agonies of fundamentalism, which cannot survive its encounter with modernity. What we see emerging from the Islamic State suggests otherwise. It would wise for both Western and Middle Eastern intellectuals and opinion makers to shoulder the burden of providing alternatives other than either submission to fundamentalism or submission to a Western culture regarded by many Muslims as hostile and permissive.

For now, there is the matter of bringing to justice [the terrorists](#) (whether in Iraq, Syria, or France) responsible for this deadly attack. Western leaders might also consider what justice to visit upon [those in the Gulf](#) who fund them.

— *Andrew Doran lives in the Washington, D.C., area.*

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David French

What is barbaric to us is inspiring to jihadists and their supporters.

What is extreme to us is entirely normal and conventional within the Islamic world.

We are confronting enemies who do not think like us, who communicate to a culture that is not like ours, and who believe it is glorious to murder cartoonists at their desk. We've been confronting these enemies for more than 13 years since 9/11 and for decades before that.

Yet our leaders and millions of our fellow citizens can't bring themselves to tell — much less face — the truth about our enemies.

The horrifying pictures do not lie. Veterans of our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan — as well as those who still remember the flames and fear of 9/11 — need no reminder of the threats we face. The rest of our nation, however, should take heed.

In Paris we once again saw the true face of our enemy. It's an enemy that saturates much of the Middle East and dominates sections of Afghanistan and Pakistan. And unless we can confront them on their own ground — subjecting them to humiliation and defeat — we will see their face here at home.

Only Muslims can truly reform Islam, but we can effectively defend ourselves. We lack not the means but the motivation. But if your will fails you, look to Paris. Look to London. Look to New York. And remember that the enemy wants nothing more than to repeat those horrors, as often as it can.

— *David French is a senior counselor at the American Center for Law and Justice and a co-author of the book **Rise of ISIS: A Threat We Can't Ignore.***

Clifford D. May

In response to the carnage in Paris, I've been hearing any number of journalists and politicians say how important it is that we screw our courage to the sticking place and defend the right to free speech. I'm not convinced we mean it.

Instead, I think most of the media will now become more risk-averse than ever when it comes to anything that could be interpreted as critical of Islam — or even of Islamism. We will ask ourselves: “Do I really want to risk my life for this story/cartoon/documentary?”

The attack on *Charlie Hebdo* is news, but it's a battle in a war that is by no means new. In 1989, Iranian supreme leader Ruhollah Khomeini issued a fatwa calling for the assassination of Salman Rushdie, British author of *The Satanic Verses*, a novel that, in the ayatollah's eyes, insulted Islam. The response of British and European leaders was hardly muscular.

In 2004, Ayaan Hirsi Ali wrote a film critical of the treatment of women in Islamic societies. Soon after, her producer, Theo van Gogh, was murdered by a Dutch-Moroccan Muslim who left a note on the victim's body — pinned there with a knife — threatening her life as well. She subsequently moved to America, where Islamists and their leftist allies routinely attempt to block her from speaking on campuses.

In 2005, the publication of Danish cartoons satirizing Islamic terrorism led to protests, boycotts, and deadly riots. In 2010, Molly Norris, a cartoonist for the *Seattle Weekly*, was named a “prime target” for death by al-Qaeda cleric Anwar al-Awlaki. Norris had proposed declaring “Everybody Draw Mohammed Day” as a way to assert the right to free expression. She asked the FBI what to do. The FBI advised her to go into permanent hiding. That's what she did.

I could list many similar examples. But let me move on to the fact that in much of what we have come to accept as the Muslim world it is no longer possible for journalists to report without fear or favor. More than a few of those who have attempted to do so — e.g., Daniel Pearl, James Foley, and Steve Sotloff — have been slaughtered by self-declared jihadists.

In Gaza, last summer, Hamas managed to intimidate a herd of reporters into echoing its narrative. And a few days back, French president François Hollande voted in favor of a U.N. Security Council resolution that would have empowered and encouraged Hamas. Perhaps he thought that by so doing he would ingratiate himself with French Islamists. As he and other European leaders should have learned by now, appeasement does not satisfy appetites. It tends to whet them.

— *Clifford D. May, a former New York Times foreign correspondent, is president of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a Washington policy institute focusing on national security.*

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Father Gerald Murray

The murderous actions of cowardly but efficient killers, exacting revenge for real or perceived insults to Mohammed published in the French magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, cast serious doubt upon the likelihood of peacefully and successfully integrating large numbers of Muslims into a Western democratic society such as France. (By a Western society I mean not a simple geographical circumscription, but rather the culture, religions — primarily Christianity and Judaism — laws, customs, and ways of life of a country.) The murderers are unknown as I write, but their allegiance to Islam was proclaimed as they carried out this odious

crime with cold-blooded precision. It goes without saying that the majority of French Muslims have no responsibility for this crime, and are surely horrified by it. Yet the historical and actual hostility of fanatical groups of Muslims to non-Muslims is a matter of record, and that hostility spawns and nurtures any number of violent jihadis who pose a real threat to the peace and freedom of France and the West in general. The cowards who shot down defenseless journalists in their offices, and then executed an immobilized police officer lying helpless on a sidewalk in Paris, are one with those who murder, rape, and enslave Christian adults and children in the Middle East and Africa. These jihadis seek the destruction of what was once known as Christendom and its outposts, and they do so with the demented notion that God is pleased by their crimes. Western society faces a very difficult task in combating and defeating these religiously inspired terrorists. Yet a failure to do so is, in effect, a self-chosen death sentence on Western society.

— *Father Gerald Murray is pastor of the Church of the Holy Family in New York City.*

Michael Rubin

Intellectuals and journalists reacted with shock and outrage to the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* but, even before the rallies and candlelight vigils ended, cowardice and self-censorship reaffirmed just how fragile is the Western resolve to protect free speech. Tony Barber, *Financial Times* Europe editor, wasted no time in **suggesting** that the *Charlie Hebdo* editor and cartoonists somehow deserved their fate by “Muslim-baiting.” Perhaps other editors won’t be so direct, but already newspapers and wire services are self-censoring so as not to offend. This has nothing to do with respecting Islam. After all, depictions of the Prophet Mohammed are commonplace in medieval Islamic manuscript collections. Rather, it conflates all Muslims with the narrow, intolerant vision

spread throughout the Middle East, Europe, and the world on the backs of Saudi, Qatari, and Iranian petrodollars.

No longer can we in the West take our basic freedoms for granted. Long before this latest terrorist attack, such luminaries as Fareed Zakaria **counseled preemptive censorship** so as not to provoke extremists with an *academic* study of the Danish-cartoon controversy, the predecessor of the *Charlie Hebdo* satires. If universities as prominent as Yale can't understand the importance of free thought and speech, then the West truly is foundering. Political correctness has run amok, and while it might protect the feelings of the terrorists, it trades censorship for liberty.

Radical Islamists deserve ridicule and satire. There should be no freedom from insult and no protection from hurt feelings in universities, in newspapers, or on the airwaves. Moral or cultural equivalence is a cancer upon the progress Western civilization has made. If others feel insulted by liberty, let them go to their graves aggrieved while the rest of us value our hard-won freedom.

— *Michael Rubin is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.*

Father James Schall, S.J.

1) This is the French 9/11.

2) It is not just about “free speech.”

3) Probably many such attacks are stopped every day by police and other forces in the U.S., Canada, Russia, the Philippines, India, European countries, and even China. They are not all merely “accidentally” related.

4) The question Pope Benedict posed was “whether Allah approved vengeance or killing in the name of religion.” Twelve French citizens are killed in the name of Allah as enforced by his followers — an act evidently justified in their minds, or in the minds of those who sent them, by Islamic law. Conclusion: The killers are either sincere or insincere, but in either case, the reason given is theological. We are not dealing with mere “terrorists,” as we insist on calling them, but with men who maintain that the whole world should, by right, be subject to Muslim law.

5) The main reason many Muslims are in France and other European countries is demographic: the lack of their own children, the multiplicity of Muslim children. This is another story.

6) Islamic immigrants generally do not assimilate into a new culture but quickly form their own enclaves from which “foreigners,” that is, local police and populace, are excluded. This recurring result means that the political theories that have embraced large-scale immigration have not understood the presuppositions of those welcomed into their midst. 9/11 and now 1/7 require a new political realism that is neither totalitarian nor nationalist, but is capable of understanding what the young men who killed the twelve Frenchmen were shouting as they killed them. Many Catholics and Christians have been learning with their lives this same lesson before our very eyes during the past months in the Middle East. We have paid too little attention.

7) Not a few Muslims, thank God, abhor such things. We all would like to see this abhorrence expressed not just in terms of “It was not I,” but in terms of effective action by Muslims themselves in terms, if possible, of their law and philosophy, not ours. We know that this effort can be lethal for them also. The question many sincerely ask is whether it can be done at all.

— *Father James Schall, S.J., is a retired professor of government at Georgetown University and the author, most recently, of *The Classical**

Moment: Selected Essays on Knowledge and Its Pleasures.

Bing West

First, the murders of the French journalists did partially advance the agenda of the Islamists. In response, AP and several other news outlets decided not to show the satire images or words that provoked the murders. And the White House initially referred to “an act of violence.” Due to fear of being murdered, the Islamic religion is treated with a reverence and sensitivity not shown any other religion or ideology. To a disturbing degree, intimidation works.

Second, the terrorists are heaping suspicion upon all Muslims, leading to a slow but steady cleavage between cultures. Perhaps that too is a subliminal objective of the terrorists.

Third, one backlash from the U.S. Congress is certain. One of the murderers in Paris had been jailed by the French government for abetting jihadism in Iraq, and had been released after 18 months. Similarly, the Obama administration has been releasing Islamist extremists, despite evidence showing that at least one in three returns to the battlefield to kill Americans. The murders in Paris will spur the U.S. Congress to object strenuously to the increasing rate of releases from Guantanamo.

— *Bing West is the author of **One Million Steps: A Marine Platoon at War**.*



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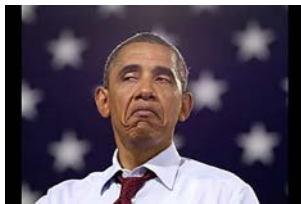
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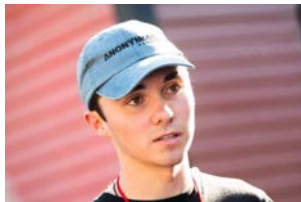
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