



Trump, not ISIS, is America's greatest existential threat

We have had a U.S. Education Department for 37 years and seen program after program fail to produce any discernible improvements.

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Who is more dangerous to the American way of life: ISIS or Donald Trump?

The answer is obvious: Trump.

This is not some bit of clickbait. I realized anew during Thursday's press flagellation that Trump can wreak far more havoc on America, its vaunted institutions and its people than a terror group on the other side of the world.

First, the facts: Alex Nowrasteh's much-cited Cato Institute [analysis of terror attacks on American soil](#) between 1975 and 2015 reveals that an American has a 1 in 3.6 million chance every year of being murdered by a foreign-born terrorist. The rate of death for victims of ISIS is even lower.

"The annual chance of being murdered by somebody other than a foreign-born terrorist was 252.9 times greater than the chance of dying in a terrorist attack committed by a foreign-born terrorist," Nowrasteh writes.

You're also 19% more likely to be killed because your clothes catch fire than to be killed by a terrorist in this country.

So let's dispense with this notion that our way of life is under siege by ISIS. Terror attacks are horrible and unjustified, but random acts of violence have zero potential to destroy our country.

President Trump on the other hand...

He's not a murderer. He isn't advocating beheading his opponents (yet). But his early moves — and his [obvious mental instability](#) — threaten our way of life. Let us count the ways:

His fake 'fake news' obsession

In an otherwise self-laudatory and narcissistic press conference, Trump made it clear that he [does not value a free press](#) — a major pillar of American democracy. The press, he said, "has become so dishonest that if we don't talk about, we are doing a tremendous disservice to the American people. ... The press honestly is out of control. The level of dishonesty is out of control."

That's right out of the totalitarian playbook: demean the press — and add in enough fake news like the "Bowling Green Massacre" or his lie that his 306 electoral voters represents the biggest landslide since Reagan — into the mix until the public doesn't know, and no longer cares, what's true and what isn't. But truth matters. Without it, a leader can claim that the Earth is not warming, that Russia did not steal Crimea, that illegal immigrants are all criminals — and draft policies that will reflect the lies.

Lost in the fusillade of executive orders is a Trump-supported bill moving to his desk that would overturn an Obama Administration move to bar roughly 75,000 mentally incapacitated people from purchasing guns. These aren't people who should own guns; they are people whose schizophrenia, psychotic disorders and other mental health problems are so severe that they receive federal disability pay — "people who have conditions that make it impossible for them to work (or) manage their own affairs," as the Times put it. In other words, people who should not have guns. The rule was drafted in hopes of preventing another mass shooting like Newtown — committed by a person with severe mental incapacity.

Raping the environment

With a few strokes of his pen, President Trump has weakened basic environmental safeguards, meaning in the next few years, your water and air will be more toxic. On Thursday he signed a bill allowing mining companies to pollute waterways. His appointee to head the Environmental Protection Agency head spent most of his previous career suing the agency to prevent it from undertaking the first two words of its name. And Trump has signaled that he will undo other efforts to battle climate change — an irony considering that he's simultaneously building higher seawalls to protect an Irish golf course. Taken as a whole, Trump's disregard for the environment can have disastrous, lasting consequences on our way of life. The World Health Organization estimates that there are 847,000 deaths annually in the Americas from "unhealthy environments." That's far more people killed by ISIS.

Judging the judges

Every president loses some rounds in court — but only Trump has singled out judges in an attempt to undermine faith in America's independent judiciary and attack this other pillar of our democracy. "Just cannot believe a judge would put our country in such peril," Trump tweeted about the "so-called judge" who suspended his travel ban. "If something happens blame him and court system. People pouring in. Bad!" Trump's attack on judges have been so vicious that even his pick for the Supreme Court called it "demoralizing." It's worse than that. If Trump can convince more Americans that the judiciary is an unfair referee, he will have no one to stop him when he does something truly dangerous.

Alien concepts

Trump's coming mass deportation of undocumented immigrants — which has begun in major cities — also threatens our way of life. I get a lot of hate mail depicting illegal immigrants as criminals and job-swipers, but statistics show they are far less likely to commit a crime (beyond being here without documentation) and far more likely to perform jobs that American citizens want. Major cities can't operate without undocumented immigrants — and agriculture needs

laborers to pick the crops. "The truth of the matter is that illegal immigrants are important to the U.S. economy," reported The Hill. Even Texas — hardly a hotbed of progressive thinking — knows it depends on so-called illegal immigrants. "Without the undocumented population, Texas' work force would decrease by 6.3%" and its gross state product would decrease by 2.1%, said state Comptroller Susan Combs.

So who is the greater threat to our way of life — a group that has killed a few handful of Americans or a President who will undermine our democracy with lies and attacks, poison our air and water, hurt our economy and ensure that mentally ill people get guns?

To me, it's obvious.