

NATIONAL REVIEW

Don't Give In to the Terrorists

ISIS can't conquer America. But, if we let it, it can make us less than America.

Michael Tanner

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The terrorists are winning. They are not winning because of our inept performance on the battlefields of Iraq and Syria. They are not winning because a pair of Islamic extremists killed 14 people in San Bernardino, as tragic as that was. They are winning because they are succeeding in terrorizing us. (That is why they are called terrorists, after all.) And, in terrorizing us, they are making America something less than America.

The latest example, unsurprisingly, comes from Donald Trump, who has called for barring all Muslims from entering the United States — not just would-be immigrants, but also students, tourists, and businessmen. He would even go so far as to bar the reentry of Muslim Americans who are out of the country for vacation or other reasons. This comes on top of Trump's proposals to shut down mosques and establish a database of Muslim immigrants.

Even that is not enough for some Trump supporters. Trump's New Hampshire state campaign co-chair favorably likened Trump's proposal to Franklin Roosevelt's internment of Japanese-Americans. Trump himself has refused to answer questions about whether he believes the Japanese internment violated American values.

There is no doubt that a small group of radical Islamic extremists want to do us harm. (The Democrats who engage in verbal gymnastics to avoid using the term "Islamic" are simply being ridiculous.) But as one Facebook meme correctly noted, there are 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide. If every one of them were a terrorist, we'd all be dead by now. Or perhaps we should simply remember Humayun Saqid Muazzam Khan, Ayman Abdelrahman Taha, Kareem Rashad Sultan Khan, and James Michael Ahearn. Those four brave Muslim-American servicemen, among the 14 Muslim-American servicemen killed in action since 2011, are buried in Arlington National Cemetery. Trump's proposal effectively spits on their graves.

And it's not just about Trump or his latest outrageous proposal. Benjamin Franklin warned us that "Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety." But politicians today seem to be in a mad rush to give up our liberties in pursuit of security.

Lindsey Graham wants to use drones to kill U.S. citizens in America who express support for ISIS. Marco Rubio, Chris Christie, and Jeb Bush want to reestablish government authority to collect phone-record meta-data without a warrant. In fact, Rubio has been attacking Ted Cruz over Cruz's opposition to NSA domestic spying. And several Republican candidates have called for banning "end-to-end" encryption of communications or for allowing the government a "back door" to access private e-mail or text messages.

And let's not let Democrats off the hook. The Obama administration's biggest anti-terrorism proposal is to take away Second Amendment rights from individuals on the no-fly list, an error-filled list established, not through legal due process, but by arbitrary bureaucratic fiat. To put someone on the list, the government does not have to prove that that person has committed a crime or that he is likely to commit crimes in the future. The no-fly list clearly violates the presumption that a person is innocent until proven guilty. Democrats would use it to strip Americans of their gun rights.

ISIS and its supporters are dangerous, indeed barbarous, and will almost certainly strike us again. Americans will die. But it remains true, despite San Bernardino, that your odds of dying in a terrorist attack are about one in 20 million. Your odds of dying in a car crash are roughly one in 37,000. If you want safety, ban automobiles.

I say all this as someone who drives to work every day in a city at or near the top of the terrorist hit list. Of course the possibility of a terrorist attack concerns me. But what truly frightens me is the danger that America will abandon our history of tolerance and liberty. America should be "the land of the free and the home of the brave," not the land of the security state and the home of the terrorized.

ISIS is not going to conquer the United States. But it can make us change our way of life — if we let it. It can make us give in to fear and bigotry. It can make us different from the country that I love. If ISIS succeeds in that, it will have won. That's something every American should fight against.

*Michael Tanner is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and the author of **Going for Broke: Deficits, Debt, and the Entitlement Crisis**. You can follow him on Twitter @mtannercato, or on his blog, TannerOnPolicy.com.*