

DAILY NEWS

Two candidates, two bad responses to terrorism: Both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton are overreacting in ways that would hurt American security

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The arrest of Ahmad Rahami, a naturalized American citizen from Afghanistan who moved to the United States with his family when he was 7 years old, has poured new fuel on the debate about immigration and national security. On Monday, Donald Trump argued that “These attacks, and many others, were made possible because of our extremely open immigration system . . . Immigration security is national security.”

Hillary Clinton, meanwhile, warned against indicting an entire religion but promised to “smash ISIS” through intensified airstrikes.

Tragically, neither presidential candidate is offering solutions that make much sense.

Trump’s tough talk feels good when emotions are running high, and in the aftermath of a terrorist attack, Trump’s calls to use profiling, to halt immigration from Muslim-dominated nations and to increase police surveillance on Muslim neighborhoods sound reasonable to many people. Trump’s son, Donald Trump, Jr., probably summed up how many people feel about the threat posed by refugees and immigrants when he compared it to a bowl of Skittles. If he had a bowl of Skittles and three of them were deadly, he asked on Twitter, would you take a handful?

Though clever, the poisoned candy analogy is overly simplistic and highly misleading. As a recent study published by the Cato Institute makes clear, the Skittles bowl in this case contains millions of candies — in the past 41 years, 28 million foreigners have entered the country for every one who has managed to kill someone in a terrorist attack.

Throwing away millions of candies because a few of them are dangerous might sound reassuring, but it comes at far too high a cost. Tourism and immigration bring tremendous benefits to the United States including billions of dollars in economic activity. Americans routinely take far greater risks in their daily lives even just for entertainment purposes. If the right answer to every risk were to eliminate it entirely, the United States would have to ban driving tomorrow.

Further, the idea that the United States could successfully monitor foreign-born residents and/or Muslims living in America is ridiculous. There are 40 million foreign-born people living in the

United States. There are roughly 1 million police officers in the United States, most of who presumably are pretty busy as it is.

Even if it were constitutional to single out one group of citizens for such scrutiny, how exactly would it work?

Efforts to limit the problem through profiling won't work either: There is simply no way to know who will become radicalized or carry out a violent act in the future. Moreover, since statistics show that immigrants are less likely than American-born citizens to commit violent crimes, any effort to focus attention on immigrants would inevitably give other would-be criminals more room to operate.

Hillary Clinton's proposed solution to the situation — smashing ISIS over in the Middle East — is unfortunately no better. First of all, though it may turn out that Rahami himself had some connection to an Islamist terrorist group, since 9/11 it is almost entirely lone wolves who have conducted terrorist attacks in the United States. These people have drawn inspiration from Islamist groups, but they have had no direct connection to Al Qaeda or the Islamic State. Thus, although there is no question that these lone wolves represent a threat to the safety of Americans, attacking the ISIS stronghold in Syria and Iraq will do nothing to reduce their number here in the United States.

In fact, many have argued that it is the American intervention in the Middle East that provides a great deal of the motivation and justification for these attacks in the first place. If this is the case, then Clinton's approach would simply result in more angry people and more domestic terrorism.

The hard truth is that there is no perfect solution to the problem of domestic terrorism. Terrorism remains thankfully rare, but perfect safety is an illusion that can warp national security policy in dangerous ways. Neither harsh homeland security measures nor aggressive military action abroad can ensure that a single citizen — of whatever background or religion — won't detonate a bomb on a crowded city street.

Instead, Americans should develop a realistic and resilient mindset regarding terrorism. We must accept that a few attacks will succeed despite the best efforts of intelligence and law enforcement agencies. And when attacks do occur, the correct response is not the panic or overreaction that terrorists seek but instead the calm determination to apprehend and punish those responsible.

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