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7. Brett Stephens: OK, Lady Gaga Does Not Cause Terrorism



In a new column for the *Wall Street Journal*, Brett Stephens acknowledges that Lady Gaga is probably not to blame for international Islamic terrorism. Stephens touched off a serious online *skirmish* several days ago when he **posited** that Gaga, and the sexual license she represents, is more abhorrent to radical Muslims than Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The argument elicited a near-unanimous groan among the commentariat. *Cato's Justin Logan* demanded that Stephens look at actual facts: "Bin Laden's 1996 fatwa, after all, was not titled 'Declaration of War against the Americans with their Supple Buttocks and Protuberant Breasts.' Instead, it was called 'Declaration

of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places,' " he wrote. Plus, public opinion scholars have concluded that while "America's image in much of the Muslim world remains abysmal," **"most of the story is opposition to American foreign policy rather than value divides or religious-based enmity."** *Foreign Policy's Thomas Hegghammer* ran through a list of al-Qaida's stated reasons for waging jihad and pointed out that Lady Gaga was not among them. "The fight against secular Muslim regimes (and by extension Westernization) is less urgent than attacking non-Muslims who kill Muslims and occupy Muslim territory," he says. *Writing in the Journal again* today, Stephens refines his thesis. It is not Lady Gaga, or even sexuality, that is so problematic, he decides. It is liberalism to which "the radical Muslim mind chiefly objects, and to which it so often violently reacts." But he's not saying liberalism is a bad thing. In fact, it's changing Muslim societies for the better. "If America wants to tilt the balance of Muslim sentiment in its favor," he concludes, **"it needs to stand up for its principles, its liberties and its friends—Israel, Playboy and Lady Gaga included."**

Read original story in *The Wall Street Journal* | Thursday, April 1, 2010

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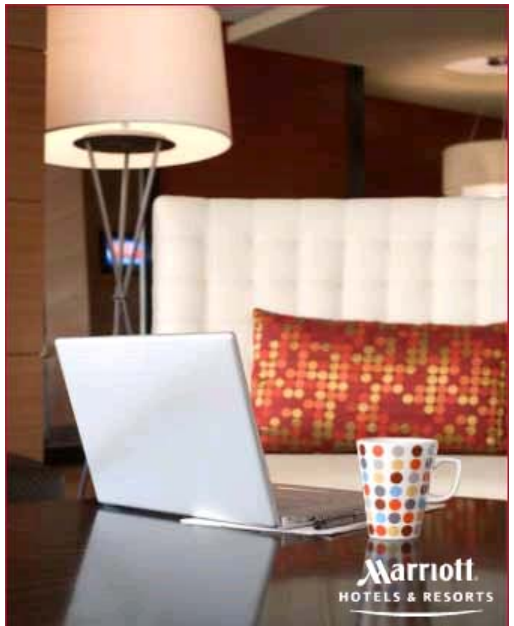
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