

## Thrashing not swimming: Bombing Islamists in Syria won't stop terrorism

Written by Craig Murray on 18 November 2015



**A reaction to events in Paris was inevitable. However, argues Craig Murray, are the actions being used to create an impression of an effective response?**

David Cameron relies on the complicity of mainstream media and the gullibility and disinterest of the British public to get away with an extraordinary switch. Two years ago he was strongly urging military action in Syria against the forces of President Assad.

Now he urges military action against the enemies of President Assad. That includes against groups and individuals who were initially armed and financed by western intelligence agencies, and are still being financed by our Saudi "allies".

Indeed one of the many extraordinary features of this fervid political period is that the neo-cons (be they Tory or Blairite) who are so actively beating the drum for war, are the ones who absolutely refuse to acknowledge that the source of the poison is Saudi Arabia.

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Cameron today told Westminster that the head of the snake is in Raqqa. That is plainly untrue. The head of the snake is in Riyadh. But if your God is Mammon, that is blasphemy.

It is also fascinating that the same people who triumphantly warned Putin he would get blowback from bombing the Islamists in Syria, deny that our invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan and bombing of Libya have any blowback effect or in any way cause terrorism in the West. The hypocrisy would be hilarious were it not so serious.

The French are pounding the city of Raqqa as I write and the truth is, whatever the propaganda, that they have already killed more entirely innocent civilians in their bombing than were killed in the horrible atrocity in Paris.

The killing on both sides is mindless. The majority of those the French are bombing into oblivion in Raqqa are people horrified at being occupied by ISIL, just as the people killed by ISIL in Paris were ordinary people as powerless as the rest of us to affect the way the elite run our foreign policy. Those who believe that the random killing of bombing is the solution to random killing are crazy.

I was terribly, terribly sad for the victims of Paris and their loved ones. But I could not help but note that we did not fly flags at half mast or illuminate buildings in the rather lighter tones of red white and blue that could have marked Russia losing nearly twice as many dead in a related terrorist atrocity just a few weeks before.

For the terrorists themselves, I have no sympathy. To kill entirely innocent people is indefensible in any circumstances. To believe that religious kudos can be gained from killing the innocent is incredibly sick.

I have often argued that it is actually not difficult to commit a terrorist attack. If I wanted to kill people next week, did not care who I killed, and was prepared to die myself, I could most certainly do so successfully.

The key point is of course that in reality there are very, very few people deranged enough to carry out such atrocious acts. Any rational analysis shows this is not an existential threat. Terrible as these attacks were, they killed 0.01 per cent - that's one in ten thousand - of the population of Paris. They increased the tiny chance of being murdered in France by only 20 per cent. There are over 600 murders a year in France. Many more people die every year in traffic accidents in Paris than were killed in this atrocity.

I am not trying to mitigate the evil or atrocity, I am trying to put it in context. The drama of the incident is used vastly to exaggerate its impact and to justify those moves which the Establishment had up their sleeve anyway as the vast and growing disparity between rich and poor calls for more weapons of social control.

These include massive surveillance of the population, larger and more intrusive security services, aggressive policing, an institutional system of informers in education, a new crime of “non-violent extremism”, and of course yet more wars in the Middle East.

The sad thing is of course that the terrorists are so stupid as to increase the powers of the very forces in society whose policies they purport to be fighting, while the only people they kill are also those getting the short straw of society’s gross inequality.

I suspect the leadership knows this. Of course, if you are a Saudi prince, then right wing, highly authoritarian western governments hostile to economic equality are exactly what you want too. It makes your lifestyle in London, Paris and Monte Carlo so much easier.

Meanwhile David Cameron thrashes about. The only way he can see to look credible is to go and bomb someone, even if it is the opposite side he wanted to bomb last time. It won’t stop terrorism, but it will be good for the arms manufacturers and security industry. It will help stoke the jingoism that is so useful in enabling the wealthy to maintain their firm grip on political power.

Actually stopping terrorism would of course do none of those useful things for the Establishment. I do not claim that the Establishment deliberately employs a Middle Eastern policy that promotes and exacerbates terrorism. But their policy has that effect, and they use its consequence in their own interest in retaining a firm grip on political power. It helps further ensure that political power will not be employed to reorder society upon more egalitarian lines.

### **About the author**

Craig Murray is an author, broadcaster and human rights activist. He was British Ambassador to Uzbekistan from August 2002 to October 2004 and Rector of the University of Dundee from 2007 to 2010.

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