

Actually, terrorists do want to kill us

Farzana Hassan in the _

I recently participated in a panel discussion organized by Hazlitt, an online contemporary affairs magazine published by Penguin Random House Canada. The purpose was to introduce Gwynne Dyer's new book, *Don't Panic: ISIS, Terror and Today's Middle East*.

As the title of his book suggests, Dyer denies any serious radical threat to Canada and rejects any Western responsibility to root out Islamic radicalization from the world.

He insists groups like ISIS and Boko Haram pose no threat to Canada and that prime minister-designate Justin Trudeau is right to pull our military out from any areas threatened by ISIS.

Broadly, my response to his main premise was that our understanding of radicalization needs a fundamental adjustment.

Muslim orthodoxy embraces jihad as an essential element of the faith. As jihad mainly involves active conquest, it is hardly surprising that radicals equate jihad with terrorism. Therefore, it is wrong to assume that this orthodoxy begins as a benevolent and pacifist belief that somehow becomes corrupted when its followers start stoning adulterers and beheading infidels.

What we call radical is actually a prevailing sentiment among many orthodox Muslims. To both the Islamist and these orthodox Muslims, anyone who shuns the doctrine of armed jihad has rejected Islam.

The ideology of the extremists is therefore a logical extension of a conventional view.

This is not to suggest that every Muslim in Canada is orthodox but a significant number are.

Terrorist attacks are very hard to anticipate.

Because the ideology is so pervasive, an outrage may occur anywhere at any time. The most likely danger in Canada comes from lone wolves, but we must not underestimate the massive damage even one terrorist can inflict if he gets his hands on explosives.

Dyer was right to assert that reformation in Islam should come from within.

However, I dispute his call for Islam to reinterpret problematic doctrines. Jihad has been interpreted and reinterpreted for centuries, and no good has come of it.

What is needed is for Muslims to repudiate the concept totally as something inapplicable to modern times.

Another reason we cannot be dismissive about terror abroad is that it is inspired by an ideology that is more pervasive than the terrorist organizations themselves. Violent jihad is bigger than al-Qaida or ISIS or the al-Nusra Front.

The current focus of radical groups may be to weed out unbelievers in their own countries.

However, their eventual goal is to wreak havoc in Western countries and to kill infidels.

Conquest is the point of the global caliphate, which makes the struggle, both for them and for us, a universal and civilizational one.

Dyer's book urges us not to panic.

I agree that panic is never a useful response.

Yet citizens of Western countries would be naive to make light of the Islamist threat.

There is no question that they are out to get us, and inaction is not an option.