In An Age of Terror, What Is The Responsibility of Glenn K. Beaton?

by Hugh Fitzgerald

Glenn K. Beaton delivers himself of some thoughts on terror and Islam in his article "In An Age of Terror, What Is The Responsibility of Islam," to be found [here](#).

> *I remember September 11, 2001. Terrorists hijacked civilian airlines and flew them into the two World Trade towers and the Pentagon. A fourth plane crashed into a Pennsylvania field after the hijacked passengers heroically overcame their captors.*
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> *Late in the day, our phone rang. It was a friend informing us that four of the passengers on the plane flown into the Pentagon were a couple with whom we were friends and their two young daughters.*
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> *At that point, I sat on the stairs, buried my head in my hands, and wept — for my friends and for the other 2,992 dead.*
>
> *So much has happened since. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Boston Marathon massacre. Videos showing men beheaded and women burned alive in cages. Terror in Paris, again and again. It's horrific savagery committed in the name of Islam.*
>
> *So are all Muslims terrorists? No.*
>
> *There are approximately 1.8 billion Muslims in the world — about a quarter of the world population. Even if a million are terrorists (and I'm certain the real number is far*

fewer), that's less than one-tenth of 1%.

No one knows how many Muslims there are in the world. Figures offered range from 1 billion to 1.8 billion. Census taking in many Muslim countries is still primitive; in some parts of the Muslim world it is nonexistent. Who knows how many people are being counted as Muslims who have apostatized, but prudently kept it to themselves? Twenty-five percent of Muslims in America are reported to no longer be Believers; are they still being counted, or do they count themselves, for safety's sake, as Muslims? In reporting the highest current figure for the world's Muslim population — 1.8 billion — as fact, Beaton is following the example of the triumphalists, who next year will self-confidently tell us there are 2 billion Muslims, or 2.2, or 2.4 billion. They pull these figures from the air. Also not known is how many of the world's Muslims, if not actual terrorists, are supporters of terrorism, who simply haven't yet had the chance to take part. How many such people exist? Do you think Beaton is correct when he claims that "less than one-tenth of 1% of the world's Muslims are terrorists"? Perhaps we need to know another, more significant figure: how many of the world's Muslims support the use of terror as a weapon? One in four British Muslims support the terror attacks of 7//7/2005 in London. In a Pew Research study on attitudes toward bin Laden, at least 1 in 4 respondents in six Muslim-majority countries had some confidence in him: 24% in Jordan, in Pakistan 38%, in Nigeria 61%.

As to suicide bombings and other violence against civilians, about 28% of Muslims surveyed in 2013 said these attacks are sometimes justified. 46% of Muslims in Bangladesh believe attacks are somewhat or often justified, with 28% in Malaysia, 15% in Iraq, 44% in Jordan, 57% in Egypt, 57% in Afghanistan, and 55% in the Palestinian territories justifying suicide bombings.

Polls taken by Saudi-owned Al Arabiya and Gallup suggested moderate support for the September 11 terrorist attacks within the Arab world, with **36% of Arabs polled by Al Arabiya saying the 9/11 attacks were morally justified.** Those are the figures that we should be looking at, rather than the "one-tenth of 1% of Muslims" whom Beaton claims may, at the outside, take part in terrorism.

So is it fair to blame 9/11 on all Muslims? No.

The vast majority of Muslims had nothing whatever to do with 9/11, and were as appalled by it as I was. In fact, a large percentage of today's Muslims had not even been born on 9/11. Blaming today's Muslims for 9/11 is like blaming today's Germans for the Holocaust.

Yes, we understand that the "vast majority" of Muslims did not take part in 9/11 attacks. Not only is it "not fair" to "blame 9/11 on all Muslims," but no one has done so. Beaton is making up a wild charge, in order to demolish it. However, a disturbing number of Muslims approved of 9/11. As noted just above, 36% of Arabs declared to Arab opinion-poll researchers that 9/11 was morally justified. We don't blame "today's Germans" for the Holocaust, but we have a perfect right to be outraged at those among them who minimize or deny or even justify the Holocaust. We are not blaming "today's Muslims for 9/11," but we can "blame" those who, whenever they were born, believe that attack to have been morally justified.

One wonders how, incidentally, Mr. Beaton knows that the "vast majority of Muslims…were as appalled" as he was. Even among those Muslims who when polled said they did not think the 9/11 attacks were "morally justified," there were many who said they "understood" the motivations of the attackers; they were clearly not appalled.

I posted my sentiments about this on Facebook a few weeks ago, and received over 800 comments. Many people disagreed

with me. A few expressed raw bigotry, and I was forced to unfriend them. But many others were worth considering.

One would like to have been provided examples of the "raw bigotry" to which Beaton refers. Does he think those who call into question — who criticize — Qur'anic verses and stories in the hadith are guilty of "raw bigotry"? What of those who claim that the command to wage jihad is central to Islam, and they adduce 1,400 years of Jihad as evidence — is that "raw bigotry"?

One point they made is that a disproportionate number of modern terror attacks are by Muslims acting in the name of Islam. That's true. But it doesn't take a logician to recognize that this point alone doesn't go far toward indicting Islam. It's like saying that because nearly all acts of terror are committed by men, nearly all men are terrorists.

Glenn Beaton's logic fails here. Islamocritics do maintain, and offer a great deal of evidence, that most terror attacks today are by Muslims acting in the the name of Islam. Beaton does not disagree ("That's true"). But then he claims this does not "go far toward indicting Islam." Really? If we look into Islamic texts, we find 109 Qur'anic verses that command Believers to engage in violent warfare against Unbelievers. Do these commands, and among them those that particularly stress the need to "strike terror" in the hearts of Infidels, not constitute a valid indictment of Islam? Has Beaton never read them, or has he read but dismissed them, because they do not fit what he wants to believe about Islam?

Beaton then engages in a mendacious sleight of word: just "because nearly all acts of terror are committed by men," he says, it would be wrong to claim that "nearly all men are terrorists." Of course. But who, aside from Beaton, makes that illogical leap? Only Beaton's straw man would claim, by the

same illogic, that "nearly all acts of terror are committed by Muslims" so "nearly all Muslims are terrorists." The correct version would be this: "nearly all acts of terror are now being committed by Muslims," so "let us unflinchingly investigate the Islamic texts to see if they help explain that fact."

> *Another point made by some is that Islam as a religion advocates violence against non-believers whom it calls "infidels." That's also true. The Quran does urge violence against infidels. But so does the Old Testament, which urges violence by Hebrews against non-Hebrews.*

The Old Testament is descriptive. The violence of the ancient Hebrews against non-Hebrews is not a guide for Jews today. It's understood as history. Jews are not meeting secretly in synagogues and plotting against others, or listening to sermons about killing non-Jews; Jews are not engaging in thousands of terrorist attacks because of some passages in the Old Testament. The Qur'an is valid for all time, and is prescriptive, not descriptive. An uncreated and immutable document, the Qur'an tells Muslims today how to behave — this is what you must do — just as it did 1,400 years ago.

> *Implicitly acknowledging that there's been violence in Judaism and Christianity, some of those commenters observed that they have largely put their violence behind them while Islam seems not to have.*

> *Well, yes and no. The fact that well over 99.9% of Muslims are peaceful people suggests that Islam, too, has largely put its violence behind it.*

Where does Seaton arrive at the "fact" that "well over 99.9% of Muslims are peaceful people"? It's not a "fact," but a figure he plucked from the air. He simply calls this figure of 99.9% a "fact" and expects you to take it as a "fact," too. He

offers not a shred of supporting evidence. How is his "fact" more justified than my "fact" — which I merely suspect to be true — that "well over two-thirds of Muslims support the idea of violent Jihad"? Is it a "fact" or an "opinion" that "it is reasonable to assume all those Muslims who take the Qur'an seriously support the idea of making war against the Unbelievers?" Isn't the burden of proof on those who want us to believe that Muslims reject those many violent verses in the Qur'an, given that they've been carrying out what those verses command for 1,400 years? Beaton seems not to consider the possibility that some Muslims are "peaceful" only because they believe the time is not yet right to engage in open warfare with the Infidels, or think they can accomplish their Jihadist aims through other means than qitaal (combat), or are intent on increasing their numbers, and solidifying their positions, in the Western world, before taking on the Unbelievers? Aren't these all plausible?

> *Furthermore, violence and even terrorism are not exactly extinct in Christianity — witness the violent terrorism against civilians in Northern Ireland within my lifetime between two sects of Christianity.*

Here Beaton engages, as an advocate for Islam, in tu quoque: Christians too engage in violent terrorism. But he offers the only example, unique in every respect, of Christians engaged amongst themselves in "violence and even terrorism." He ignores the huge differences between this Christian violence and that of Muslims. First, the Troubles in Northern Ireland were limited in time, to the 30 years between 1968 and 1998, when a settlement was reached, and in space, to Northern Ireland and Great Britain. The Jihad against Unbelievers is unlimited in both time — it's been going on for 1,400 years and will continue as long as Islam itself perdures — and in space, for the Jihad is not limited to any one place, but must go on until the whole world is dominated by Islam, and Muslims rule, everywhere. Furthermore, those Protestants and Catholics

engaged in violence in Northern Ireland did not find any justification for their violence in the Bible. By contrast, those engaged in Jihad find their violence not merely justified, but commanded, by the Qur'an.

And in India, it's Muslims who are typically the victims of religious violence, perpetrated mainly by the majority Hindus.

If Beaton knew something about the history of India, he might first have conceded that there is a grim background to what religious violence there now is against Muslims by Hindus (which, in any case, is not more frequent or deadly than are Muslim attacks on Hindus). First, there is historical memory: the Hindus are well aware that tens of millions of Hindus were murdered by Muslims during several hundred years of Mughal rule. They also know that tens of thousands of Hindu temples and temple complexes were destroyed by Muslims all over India. Second, ever since Partition in 1947, Hindus have been mistreated in both Pakistan (formerly West Pakistan) and Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan); their percentages of the population decreased in both states, while the Muslim share of the population in India has steadily increased. Third, in recent years, Muslims, both Indian citizens and from Pakistan, have engaged in a series of terrorist attacks against Hindus, in Mumbai, in Hyderabad, in Delhi, in New Delhi, in Varanasi (several times), in Kolkata (Calcutta). Fourth, there were the massacres in 1971 of three million people in the newly-declared Bangladesh, by the army of Pakistan; the majority of those killed were Hindus, that is, at least 1.5 million. Fifth, there have been mass killings of the Kashmiri pandits by local Muslims, which caused 300,000 Hindu pandits (Brahmins) to flee Kashmir for India.

Large-scale Hindu attacks on Muslims in India occur every few years; there have been six major incidents of Hindu violence against Muslims since 1964; the last significant one was in

2002, in Gujarat; after Muslims set fire to a train carrying Hindu pilgrims, Hindus went on a rampage of murderous retaliation. But the total loss of life in these episodes of communal violence in India do not exceed 20,000, from 1954 until today. Keep in mind the more than 1.5 million Hindus killed in Bangladesh — and the millions of Hindus who, to stay alive, fled to West Bengal. Those numbers offer some perspective on Beaton's claim that "Muslims…are typically the victims of religious violence." The violence is on both sides, and many more Hindus than Muslims have been victims. Muslim terrorists from Pakistan have repeatedly struck inside India; no Hindu terrorists from India have ever struck in either Pakistan or Bangladesh.

All that said, the data does suggest that today's backward Muslim countries tend to be more violent. But I submit that the reason is that they are backward, not that they are Muslim. When Christian Europe was a backward society in the Middle Ages conducting pogroms against the Jews, the Muslims in the Middle East were leaders in mathematics.

But why are "today's backward Muslim countries" both "more violent" and more "backward"? Surely the violence of Muslim societies must be attributed to the Qur'an, with its exaltation of violence ''in the path of Allah," and to the hadith, too, where Muhammad, the Perfect Man and Model of Conduct, is seen as a military leader and warlord, engaged in one military campaign after another, participating in the killing of 600-900 bound prisoners of the Banu Qurayza, and dividing the loot (property, women) seized from the tribes he vanquished. Violence is central to Islam. And why does Beaton not address the question as to why Muslim countries today are more "backward"? Could one reason for that backwardness be the hatred of bid'a, or innovation, because societies based on Islam are deemed to already be perfect? If Muslims start introducing innovations in ways of doing things, clerics fear, this might lead to a questioning of beliefs, of Islam itself,

and that cannot be allowed.

When Beaton writes that "Christian Europe was a backward society in the Middle Ages conducting pogroms against the Jews," he both exaggerates the anti-Jewish violence in Western Christendom (it was not all pogroms and blood libels) and ignores the attacks — pogroms — on Jews by Muslims. In Granada in 1066, the entire Jewish population of 4,000 was killed in two days, and there were repeated eruptions of violence against Jews in other Arab lands including Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and in Morocco under the Almohades.

Here's the strongest point offered in response to my Facebook post. Peaceful Muslims are often reticent in condemning violence and extremists who engage in it. Many Muslim organizations did condemn 9/11 and other terrorism, and for that they deserve credit. But too often, they fall silent or issue an equivocal criticism.

If, as Beaton has claimed, far less than one-tenth of 1% of the world's Muslims have been involved in terrorism, how is it that the "peaceful Muslims" who make up more than 99.9% of the Muslims are "reticent" — that is, afraid — to condemn "violence and extremists"? How can the many be so afraid of the very few? Beaton doesn't explain.

How many Muslim organizations condemned 9/11? There were many in the West and elsewhere. There were also many examples of Muslims, especially in Gaza and the West Bank, handing out candy to passersby to celebrate the great achievement of Al-Qaeda. In other Arab countries, there was celebration in the air. Only in one Muslim country, Iran, were there noticeable expressions of sympathy from the public. And in the years since, with the dozens of major terror attacks in Europe and in America carried out by Muslims, many Muslim organizations have remained silent. This Beaton gets right: "too often, they fall silent or issue an equivocal criticism."

For example, a newly elected Muslim congresswoman whom America rescued from violence and starvation in Somalia, and who seems to think that the problem in Washington is that too many legislators owe "allegiance" to the Jews, recently referenced 9/11. The words she chose were "some people did something."

That offends me. What happened on 9/11 was not just that "some people did something."

Okay, good, there are limits to what Beaton will stomach, and Ilhan Omar's "some people did something" — a remark which will undoubtedly enter a future edition of Bartlett's Quotations — is intolerable.

What happened was that psychopathic Muslims in a perversion of their religion murdered thousands of innocent men, women and children in the bloodiest attack on American soil since the Civil War.

How does Glenn K. Beaton know that the Muslims who since 9/11 have engaged in more than 35,000 terror attack are "psychopathic"? Or that what they did was a "perversion" of their religion? Would he be willing to look at the evidence, in the Qur'an and hadith, that such people are merely following the dictates of Islamic texts and are not "psychopathic"? Is he aware of how many of those terrorists have quoted Qur'anic verses to justify their attacks? He could not possibly have read the 109 verses in the Qur'an that command Muslims to wage violent Jihad, to "fight" and to "kill" the Unbelievers, to "smite at their necks," to "strike terror in their hearts"? But had he read them, he would also have had to admit that the terrorists were not engaged in a "perversion of their religion," but were dutifully fulfilling its texts and teachings.

What does Beaton make of this verse:

"I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them.." (8:12)

Or this one:

"We shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve, because they joined others in worship with Allah, for which He had sent no authority; their abode will be the Fire and how evil is the abode of the Zalimun [the Disbelievers]." (3:151)

And can Beaton possibly be unaware that Muhammad himself, in a famous hadith that needs to be endlessly quoted,, claimed that "I have been made victorious through terror"?

> *Still, I won't blame all Muslims for that attack or for one congresswoman's stupid remark about it. I firmly believe that to do so would dishonor my decent friends who died that day.*

"I won't blame all Muslims for that attack [9/11]," he tells us. But who has blamed "all Muslims" for the 9/11 attack? No one. That is a charge made by apologists for Islam, wishing to present sober islamocritics as incapable of distinguishing among Muslims. There are many Jihadis, and there are far more supporters of violent Jihad who have not themselves participated, but fortunately, they are not "all [the] Muslims." The question is: are those Muslims who do not participate in violent Jihad refraining because they have a moral objection, they don't believe in violence, or because they have other more effective ways of conducting Jihad (as Jihad of the pen, speech, or Jihad of wealth, or demographic Jihad), or because they believe that Muslim terrorism is in current circumstances in the West unwise, and counterproductive?

> *That leaves me with the question posed at the outset. What is the responsibility of that congresswoman and other Muslims in today's world of terror?*

"The few psychopaths"? The "few psychopaths" who have conducted 35,000 terror attacks around the world since 9/11? For 1,400 years Muslims have been conducting violent Jihad against non-Muslims. It was not a "few psychopaths," but perfectly mainstream Muslims, following the dictates of the Qur'an, who managed to conquer many lands and subjugate many peoples, throughout the Middle East, all across North Africa, and then Spain, and even plunged deep into France, where their invasion was finally halted by Charles Martel at Tours in 732 A.D. Muslim armies conquered Sassanian Persia, islamizing a country that had been entirely Zoroastrian, and after many attempts over the centuries, Muslim armies finally conquered both the Byzantine Empire and India. They sowed terror wherever they went. During the centuries of Mughal rule in India, according to the historian K. S. Lal, between 70 and 80 million Hindus were killed. Were all of these Muslims who spread Islam by violence and terror "psychopaths," or were they orthodox Muslims following the murderous dictates of the Qur'an? You know the answer to that. And Beaton would, too, if he would only take the time to study the Qur'an.

In short, the responsibility of Muslims is the same as the responsibility of Jews, Christians and all other people of faith and civilized secularists. In the battle against violent bigotry, there's no middle ground. You're either with us or against us.

Be with us. Be our brothers and sisters in our battle for humanity. We want you.

The "responsibility" of Muslims is greater than that of "Jews, Christians, and all other people of faith" because the

worldwide terrorism we see today is almost entirely that carried out by Muslims against non-Muslims. Think of Europe, where Muslims have carried out major attacks in Madrid, Barcelona, Paris (many times), Toulouse, Nice, Magnanville, St. Etienne de Rouvray, Brussels, Antwerp, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, London (many times), Manchester, Berlin, Hamburg, Wurzburg, Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm, Malmö, Helsinki, Turku, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Beslan. In Africa, there have been repeated Muslim attacks on non-Muslims in Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Kenya, Tanzania. In Asia, Muslim terrorists have struck at Christians in Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, at Hindus in Mumbai, in Delhi, in New Delhi, in Hyderabad, in Calcutta and, most recently, at several Christian targets in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Or think of the terror attacks just in the United States, in New York (many times), Boston, Washington, Chicago, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Seattle, Fort Hood, Little Rock, Orlando, San Bernardino, Chattanooga?

Muslim terrorism is not the product of psychopaths, but of devout Muslims all over the world who are following dutifully what the Qur'an commands.

> *If that's not reason enough to be with us, then be with us just to be on the winning side. Because we will indeed win, I promise you.*

Does Beaton know what he is asking of Muslims? Apparently unfamiliar with the Islamic texts, he does not realize that he is telling them to ignore the commands to wage Jihad that are found throughout the Qur'an. He is asking them to ignore the example, too, of Muhammad himself, who claimed he was "made victorious through terror." He is asking Muslims not to be Muslims, but who is going to tell him that? He will have to come to that understanding on his own. Mainstream Muslims

will never stop heeding those immutable texts. And when he tells the world's Muslims that they should "be with us just to be on the winning side" because "we will indeed win, I promise you," he is issuing a kind of triumphalist threat that will not be well received by Muslims. They will be offended by Beaton's prediction of a victory by the world's Infidels, for they know that Allah is on their side; Allah is the "best schemer," and he will not let them down.

Perhaps Beaton will surprise everyone; perhaps he will read and study the Qur'an, and some of the Hadith, and write another, very different, article about Muslim terrorists, this one based not on fantasy, but on the unpleasant reality of those immutable texts. He could do it in the form of an address to his "Muslim friends," asking them how they think non-Muslims such as himself react when they read such Qur'anic verses as 2:191-193, 3:151, 4:89, 8:12, 8:60, 9:5, 9:29, 47:4, and 98:6. And then he might ask them, in a more-in-sorrow tone, something like this:

"How do you, the moderate Muslims of whom there must be many [not repeating that factitious "fact" about 99.9% of the world's Muslims being good guys], propose to deal with these texts, that preach hatred and contempt for, exalt violence towards, command the killing of, and the sowing of terror among, all non-Muslims? What is the responsibility of Islam, of Muslims? Is it really enough for some Muslims to denounce this or that terrorist attack by fellow Muslims? Don't we have to address the source of so much bloodshed? The Islamic texts have to be dealt with, if there is ever to be a way out of this morass — or is there no way out, as long as you continue to believe that the Qur'an is the uncreated, immutable word of God? We Need To Talk."

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