

Military Force Can Only Treat Islamism's Symptoms. Logicians Can Eradicate the Disease Itself



by Lev Tsitrin

The horror of October 7 has rightly been called Israel's 9/11. The similarity in terrorists' daring and cruelty is obvious. The loss of life is equally horrendous. The revulsion in the civilized world is the same – as is the rejoicing among Islamists and their sympathizers, as well as the claims that Israel brought this disaster upon itself by its policies. And Israel's reaction is the same – a campaign of bombing, likely to be followed by a ground offensive.

And that what will not be done will likely be similar, too. There will be no attempt to understand, let alone debunk, the Islamist ideology of the perpetrators of this horror. Their brutality will be written off to their inherent fanaticism, depravity, and lack of humanity – summarized by the former President Bush on the day of 9/11 with a word “evil,” leaving it at that.

This is a very convenient position to take when you don’t want to search for real answers – the “evil” being a metaphysical term that defies rational explanation. It is just a fact of life that is beyond analysis. Like deadly viruses, it simply exists, the question of “why” being moot. Hence, the solution: military force.

The problem with this solution is that it merely treats the symptoms – but does nothing to eradicate the disease. It keeps the Islamist violence in check, more or less – given the periodic outbursts that we witnessed all over the world since 9/11, in Bali and Madrid, in London and Paris, in Beslan and Brussels. The disease is lodged in the mind, infecting it through the words that are heard or read – and can only be dislodged by words that expose the falsehood of Islamism, debunking it for good. The virus must be fought with an antivirus. While we do reasonably well using military force, the battle of ideas, the battle to debunk Islamism itself, is not being fought – let alone won.

Yet, it is surprisingly easy to debunk Islamism. After all, its message is simplicity itself: the purpose of human life is to do what is right in God’s sight. This, in the final analysis, is the dictum that the Taliban, and Iran’s ayatollahs claim to follow. This is what drives Hezbollah, and Hamas, and Islamic Jihad. This is the *raison d’être* for al Qaeda, ISIS, and Boko Haram.

How do they arrive at the need for murderous action from this general principle? Not irrationally, but through several

perfectly logical steps (the word “logical” seems to be a particular favorite with the ayatollahs, who use it constantly to explain and defend their position).

The premises which drive Islamists into bloody action are arranged in a clear logical sequence: the ultimate record of God’s will is the Koran; hence, whoever refuses to follow the dictum of the Koran is opposed to God, and must therefore either acknowledge his error and convert – or be eradicated, cleansing the world of the sin of disobedience to God. This simple logic lead to 9/11 in the US, to 10/7 in Israel.

The problem with this seemingly logical structure is that it omits one key premise that is implied by the Islamists: that we are in a position to know that Koran is God’s word. The books on logic specifically warn of what logicians call “hidden premises” – unspoken assumption that are assumed to be self-evidently true – but may not be. Hence, logicians demand that all premises must be spelled out explicitly, to make sure that each and every one of them is factually true. A falsity of any premise will derail the conclusion.

And the “hidden premise” of Islamism – that it is possible for anyone to know whether God talked to Mohammed – happens to be patently false. Ayatollahs, Mullahs, First Followers of Mohammed – none of them have or had the ability to know that what Mohammed said was the word of God, was in fact the word of God. This is due to what I called “the problem of the third party” – any two-step transfer of information between three parties (the first party relating it to the second party, and the second party in turn relaying it to the third) – is inherently unreliable. There is simply no way for the third party to know whether the information pushed by the second party indeed came from the first one. The thing is physically impossible.

And the Koran is precisely the result of this unreliable two-step communication between three parties: God as the first,

Mohammed the second, and you, me, and a billion-and-a-quarter Moslems – the “ummah” – is the third party. Our ability, individual or collective, to know whether Koran is God’s word is nil. Simply put, all the Islamists of the world – be they Hamas, Hezbollah, Taliban, ISIS, al Qaeda, of the Islamic Republic of Iran – have no clue of what they are talking about, for a simple reason that they cannot possibly have any clue: the problem of the third party precludes it.

This has a hugely important theological consequence. In purely religious terms, what Islamists do is pure idol-worship – they illegally rely on their mind to form a picture of a god they worship, “illegally” because the mind is incapable of such a task. They engage in idol-making, worshiping the god that is, ultimately, a figment of their imagination. Needless to say, Islamists abhor idolatry – but they are exactly what they abhor, they are idol-worshippers. Their bloody exploits are not acts of following God, but of worship of their own selves as an idol.

Now why don’t we in the West point out to this key fact, pulling the rug from under the ayatollahs and their terrorist ilk, both Shia and Sunni? This is not logical on our part; this is not rational. When Islamists resort to violence, we simply respond in kind. The military action is of course a necessity under the circumstances – but it doesn’t solve the problem of terrorism. Debunking its intellectual underpinnings that are rooted in Islamists’ faulty logic has a much greater chance of success.

We are well positioned for the task. The US alone has close to four thousand colleges and universities – and most teach logic as part of their philosophy program. While I hate to do Marx-like sloganeering (“logicians of the world, unite!”?), given that Islamists’ claim to be fulfilling God’s will in their bloody actions is a glaring example of a practical result of a logical fallacy, it should be used in all textbooks on logic to illustrate the notion of a “hidden premise.” People will

notice, and debate – and put the Islamism many pegs down in the pecking order of religious practices – right down to where idol-worship is.

It sounds like a small step – but it is a vitally important one. It alone has a chance of ridding the world of the plague of Islamist terrorism, the latest gruesome manifestation of which we saw on October 7. The military action, though necessary at times, cannot by itself do it.

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