

Attitudes Toward Political Violence:

Conclusion

One of the questions you want to be asking yourself is, well, you know, this may have helped me to understand a good deal that I didn't understand. But on the other hand it just seems to me as if I live in a world where I see these stories all the time about extremism. It seems as if I look at my newspapers, I look at media, I look at social media-- it's all over the place.

Let me make a point here, when it comes to media and the relationship, therefore, of media coverage with regard to the issue of terrorism, but also with regard to Islam, extremism, and terrorism. Any media person will tell you that a common phrase in media is "if it bleeds, it leads." There needs to be a smoking gun. Most media do not cover very wonderful family scenes all the time. Most people find that boring. You put your TV on in the morning and usually you get reports on the latest crimes, murders in your area or globally. You know things are a slow on a weekend when media in America starts looking at train wrecks in Japan, for example.

Let me give you some insight into the question of media coverage in light of that. A study was done by Media Tenor-- T-E-N-O-R, and you could look them up on the internet-- they did a major study of media coverage of Muslims and Muslim countries and societies, 2001 versus 2011. What did they discover? 2001, stories on Islam and Muslims. 2% emphasized extremism, 0.1% mainstream Muslim reality-- what's life like for most Muslims, what do they believe? 2% extremism, 0.1% mainstream.

2011, what do we see? The 2% jumps to 25%. 2% jumps to 25%. What about the coverage when you look at stories? 975,000 pieces of media were looked at from both Europe and America, major media outlets. The coverage of mainstream Muslims in 2011 was exactly the same as 2001. 0.1%. Now, if you're looking at all these media stories, and 25% covering extremism, warfare, etc. And you only have 0.1% percent to see the broader context of what most Muslims are like, what their lives are like in the world. Think about what kind of an image you are then getting, of both the religion of Islam and the relationship to terrorism.

So, finally, terrorism is here, whether we like it or not, to stay. All forms of terrorism done by different kinds of groups, and we've seen this. The Southern Poverty Law Center recently did a study which basically identified the major violent and terrorist threats as being homegrown threats, many involving groups that we call Christian Identity Movements.

We also are going to see globally, and continue to see, acts of violence and terror. Both because you have extremist and terrorist groups that can engage in that, but also because we have a continuation of authoritarian regimes. If you look at the last year or two post- Arab Spring, you see many authoritarian governments who initially were frightened by the idea that their population did not topple the rulers of Tunisia and Egypt by following a bin Laden, but did it

through nonviolent demonstrations in the streets. Did it through elections. Many of those governments have now backed and attempt to resist that kind of change, not only there, but to prevent the democratic wave from moving into their area. To the extent that authoritarianism continues to raise its head and even become more repressive, the risk is that you can create conditions that will promote violence and terrorism.

And it's especially important to distinguish what the vast majority of Muslims believe. The Qur'an and their faith say that their lives should be like in their attitudes towards extremism from a minority, but a significant and deadly minority, of extremists who in fact capture media attention, because they provide explosive headline events and attract attention naturally by governments. In particular Western governments, who are concerned about both the stability and security overseas because of national interest-- whether it's oil, the security of Israel-- and concerned about security domestically at home.