



On Nice and the ‘true believers’ of the 21st century

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The attacks in Nice are a further reminder of what’s at stake in the fight against terrorism, but there is still more policymakers can and must do to prevent attacks in the United States by reforming our homeland security apparatus.

With the cold winds of November came the [Paris terrorist attack](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34818994) (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34818994>), followed shortly by the [San Bernardino attack](http://www.cnn.com/specials/san-bernardino-shooting) (<http://www.cnn.com/specials/san-bernardino-shooting>). Several months later, the [Brussels terrorist attack](http://www.cnn.com/2016/03/23/europe/brussels-belgium-attacks-what-we-know/) (<http://www.cnn.com/2016/03/23/europe/brussels-belgium-attacks-what-we-know/>) launched our spring, with the [Orlando](http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/12/us/orlando-nightclub-shooting/) (<http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/12/us/orlando-nightclub-shooting/>) and [Istanbul](http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/28/europe/turkey-istanbul-airport-attacks/) (<http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/28/europe/turkey-istanbul-airport-attacks/>) terrorist attacks starting our summer. Now, on Bastille Day, terrorists in [Nice, France, likely connected to ISIS, drove a truck with explosives into a crowd killing at least 84](https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2016/jul/14/nice-bastille-day-france-attack-promenade-des-anglais-vehicle) (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2016/jul/14/nice-bastille-day-france-attack-promenade-des-anglais-vehicle>) and injuring over 50 other celebrants. In six attacks in Europe and America in eight months, ISIS adherents have slaughtered 364 innocent men, women, and children.



(http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/RTSI2T2_nice-e1468594469702.jpg)

Flowers in tribute to the victims of the Bastille Day truck attack in Nice are seen in front of a military armoured vehicle at the French embassy in Rome, Italy, July 15, 2016. REUTERS/Max Rossi.

For what? A radical ideology filled with hate that stands no real chance of doing much other than causing more death and destruction, most of which will occur in Muslim countries with fellow Muslims taking the brunt of the attacks. After all, in comparison to the five attacks in France, Belgium, and America, [Muslim countries have experienced over 100 terrorist attacks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Islamist_terrorist_attacks#2016) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Islamist_terrorist_attacks#2016) this year. Radical Islam will not topple Western countries, nor will it bring about a true Muslim nation based upon its warped views.

In the long forgotten 1951 book by Eric Hoffer, [The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements](#), he provides a little light on our current fight. Hoffer wrote the book after World War II and the devastation wrought in that terrible fight between freedom and fascism. Hoffer noted: "In all ages men have fought most desperately for beautiful cities yet to be built and gardens yet to be planted."

ISIS promises its adherents a future on Earth that is implausible and an afterlife no loving God would honor. Nonetheless, as Hoffer warned, these contemporary true believers will fight desperately for what they see as their reward for killing non-believers.

As Joshua Cooper Ramo noted in his latest book, [The Seventh Sense: Power, Fortune, and Survival in the Age of Networks](#), in discussing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld pointedly asked: "Are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas and the radical clerics are recruiting, training and deploying against us?" Without a doubt, over the last eight years, the number of terrorist soldiers has risen dramatically.

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They can't win, but we must do more to stop their murderous attacks and, over time, reduce their numbers. My foreign policy colleagues have ideas on how we can [increase](https://www.aei.org/publication/one-of-us-is-a-conservative-one-of-us-is-a-liberal-heres-a-counterterror-approach-we-can-both-agree-on/) (<https://www.aei.org/publication/one-of-us-is-a-conservative-one-of-us-is-a-liberal-heres-a-counterterror-approach-we-can-both-agree-on/>) [our effectiveness](http://www.aei.org/feature/us-grand-strategy-series/) (<http://www.aei.org/feature/us-grand-strategy-series/>) abroad. Domestically, we can begin the arduous task of reforming our security apparatus for this new, higher frequency environment. Here are a few key ideas:

- Launch a [national commission on the terrorists' use of technology to make recommendation to Congress on how we can adapt our intelligence operations](https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/National-commission-on-terrorists-use-of-technology-is-needed.pdf) (<https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/National-commission-on-terrorists-use-of-technology-is-needed.pdf>) to overcome the challenges of technology while protecting civil liberties;
- Streamline our domestic intelligence apparatus by [consolidating state and local information and intelligence activities in Joint Terrorism Task Forces](https://www.aei.org/publication/consolidate-domestic-intelligence-entities-under-the-fbi/) (<https://www.aei.org/publication/consolidate-domestic-intelligence-entities-under-the-fbi/>);
- Give [states and localities a permanent voice on the National Security Council](https://www.aei.org/publication/giving-states-and-localities-a-voice-) (<https://www.aei.org/publication/giving-states-and-localities-a-voice->

[in-washington/](#)) to leverage the resources and experiences from those entities to ensure our national domestic security policies are right;

- Increase the [use of human intelligence by local law enforcement to improve the odds that we detect terrorist activities](#) (<https://www.aei.org/publication/enhanced-human-intelligence-is-key-to-defeating-terrorists/>); and,
- Create [Regional Outreach Groups](#) (<https://www.aei.org/publication/create-regional-outreach-groups-to-establish-connections-and-build-trust/>) in the highest risk jurisdictions that strengthen connections and build trust between local law enforcement and the Muslim community.

Our fight with terrorists won't end soon, so we must do all we can to minimize the likelihood and, God forbid, consequences of their attacks. More than anything, we must vigorously defend our liberties and lock arms with the vast majority of Muslims who deplore terrorism as much as we do. A better tomorrow in America inherently requires a better tomorrow across the Middle East.

Learn more: [More terrorist attacks likely in Turkey](#) (<http://www.aei.org/publication/more-terrorist-attacks-likely-in-turkey/>) | [Enhanced Human Intelligence Is Key to Defeating Terrorists](#) (<http://www.aei.org/publication/enhanced-human-intelligence-is-key-to-defeating-terrorists/>) | [Giving states and localities a voice in Washington](#) (<http://www.aei.org/publication/giving-states-and-localities-a-voice-in-washington/>)

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