

The Nameless Peril of Muslim Terror - Michael McLaren speaks with Des Moore, Director of the Institute for Private Enterprise, about the media's reluctance to call Islamic terrorist attacks for what they are.

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MM: I'm joined now by Mr Des Moore. Des is a former Deputy Secretary of Treasury. Also he is currently the Director of the Institute for Private Enterprise, and I came across Des's work reading through Quadrant Online and, of course, what we do know of late is that the issue of Islamic extremism has been preeminent in the news cycle once again. But what's, I guess, slightly different now - only slightly different - to some of the previous examples of where extreme ideology in the form of Islam has been taken to the enth degree, that is to the degree of a terrorist attack, is that so many people in the public domain, the public intellectuals, the political class and others, seem incredibly hesitant to mention the "M" word, that is Muslim, or I guess you could say more broadly Islam, in the context of what's going on.

Des wrote all about this in Quadrant and he's on the line now. Des, good morning. It was a very interesting piece that you've put together, the title is The Nameless Peril of Muslim Terror. To go to the introduction, why is it that there is this reticence, do you think, among the political class to call it how it is?

DM: Because they're frightened that they will be called racists or discriminators and also they're frightened that they'll be criticised as getting away from the supposed support for all faiths and religions. Obama in America has been very clear in saying: look, we welcome everybody here in America, we always have. And he doesn't offer any hesitancy there when we're really dealing with what I think are two parts of the Muslim or Islamic religion. There's the peaceful part, and a lot of people talk about how Muslims are really peaceful, but there's the extremist part which is overlooked and, in my view, nobody should accept the extremist statements that are made by some of the advocates of the Islamic religion. And we know from polling that some 20 per cent of Muslims actually support terrorist activity, physical activity in support of their objectives.

MM: In the form of Jihad?

DM: Yes, that's right, the form of Jihad.

MM: It's interesting, you point this out in your interesting piece, you say: a lot of what's been said about these two brothers since the unfortunate events in Boston has been to draw a link between them and their so-called homeland near Russia there, the Chechnya area, instead of drawing on the religious aspects which really did drive their efforts.

DM: Well, that's very important, and it's also very important in assessing the counterterrorist policies operating by the US government and its agencies. It's diverting attention from that and we've got a situation where there have been something like 19 or 20 documented terrorist attempts in the United States and they've all come from - almost all come

from - homegrown terrorists, homegrown people converted to or are already Muslim extremists.

As shown by what these guys did, it only takes two or three people to adopt that attitude and pursue it and you can cause enormous damage. I mean, in a sense, you know, it was lucky that so few people were killed.

MM: Yes, I'm sure the Americans would hold that opinion as well, particularly compared to, say, September 11, 2001.

DM: Absolutely.

MM: Obviously for those who have just come in, we're talking about the Tsarnaev brothers here and what they did with Boston just a few weeks ago. But further to your point, Gerard Henderson was writing in the Herald about this very same issue, Des, and he made the point that on Good Old, Old Auntie, the ABC, straight after the event, not too long after the event, Phillip Adams on Late Night Live was speaking to a Professor Shapiro and, according to Gerard Henderson, this Professor Shapiro made it very clear that the Boston bombing was almost certainly carried out by a homegrown extreme right-wing terrorist. And he wasn't the only one, the following morning Monash University's Professor Greg Barton who, as Henderson points out - and this is true - usually talks sense, appeared on the ABC 1 News Breakfast program and he also made it pretty clear, according to Henderson, that it was most likely that "right-wing extremism was involved and not Muslim-Americans".

There is this great fear almost, isn't there, of mentioning the obvious?

DM: Absolutely. To talk about it being right or left wing is rather incidental; if you want to carry that idea forward you could say that these people are really left wing because the whole essence of the extremist Muslim movement is to have the religion take over the state and to apply religious laws, Sharia law, and involvement in terrorist activity against people who are not supporting them. That, if anything, is a left-wing movement - to institute the take-over of government.

MM: Well, true. You write in your piece as your second point, you say that this reticence, there's hesitance from President Obama down to mention Islam in cahoots with what has taken place in Boston, well initially anyway and even in the medium-term period, you say might have something to do with the fact that it's become a loaded word. Do you want to explain that?

DM: Well, I think it goes back to what I said at the start that once you start criticising Muslims, particularly the Muslim extremists, you get accused of being racist or discriminatory. And in some countries the extent of Muslim population is such now that this affects votes in particular electorates, and this is particularly true in Europe and in the United Kingdom. And it's even true here, we've got situations here in western Sydney where some electorates are very highly populated by Muslims and so the present government here is very cautious about being critical, and the same applies to the coalition, the Liberal Party; they don't want to come out criticising it because they fear political consequences.

MM: I suppose in the state political realm looking at New South Wales, and it

might be the same in Victoria, they've recently won in state politics a whole lot of seats which were traditionally heavily populated by Muslim-Australians which the ALP had always considered their homeland so with those seats in the bag they might want to hold onto them.

DM: Yes, that's right. And the report is that in America the majority of Muslim votes went to Obama so he would be cautious too.

MM: Is it fair to echo what Brendan O'Neill had to say in The Australian the other day that a lot of this discussion about these two Tsarnaev brother bombers and their so-called Chechen origins instead of their religious fundamentalism, he says here that the discussion of the bombings is underpinned by an Oprah-style psycho-fatalism where it's assumed that as abused children allegedly go on to be abusive adults, so war zone kids grow up to recreate war zones in their new homes?

DM: Well, it's interesting that you should raise that because one of the things that has happened since the bombings is that the Pew Polling in America shows that 50 per cent of United States people who were polled think that the government should do more to cope with the problem but there's another 50 per cent who seem quite relaxed about it. So there's an internal inconsistency in the United States' reactions and a lot of people have been led to believe that this is not a serious problem. But it is a serious problem because we heard on the news tonight that these guys were setting off for New York to let off - - -

MM: Times Square.

DM: Yeah. And today we see a bunch of people in the United Kingdom have been arrested planning an attack there and we've got the Canadian - - -

MM: Canada too, yes.

DM: - - - Canadian situation where they're trying to blow up a train or planning to blow up a train.

MM: On that sort of apathetic response that at least 50 per cent of the population that Pew in America polled, it seems that Australia has its own 50 per cent because in the form of the Attorney General Mark Dreyfus, as you wrote in your piece, he made a woeful attempt to dismiss the Internet link, or the Web link as you say, between one of Australia's extremist Imams and the American bombers.

DM: I could not literally believe my eyes when I saw what our national Attorney General had said about that. It's just totally way out of kilter, particularly for an Attorney General, and we've got the situation where also we've had the Foreign Minister, Foreign Minister Carr, who was on television not so long ago, saying we're okay here in Australia because we've got all this intelligence, we've built up the intelligence agencies, and counterterrorism is keeping everybody safe. But, I mean, sure we have, and it's very important that we have built up the counter intelligence. I mean, there's an enormous expansion in ASIO in Canberra.

MM: 500 per cent.

DM: Yeah, but you can't guarantee that will catch on with one or two people.

MM: Exactly. The absurdity of his argument, surely Des, is that, well, we're doing it, therefore the Americans mustn't be doing it properly because

they're not catching them all.

DM: Yes. Well, I think there's room for criticism that the FBI seems to have dropped the ball.

MM: On this one, yes.

DM: On this one. You know, the elder brother, Tamerlan, he went back to Dagestan to stay with his parents. His parents incidentally moved back out of Boston, went home to Dagestan, which is next to Chechnya, and he should have been picked up as a potential terrorist.

MM: Well, absolutely. But I guess, Des, further to what we've been discussing, to go quickly back to Brendan O'Neill's piece in The Oz the other day - I think it was on Wednesday - he says: we're left to foolishly discussing Islamic terrorism in the west as a protest against injustices in far-off Muslim lands. Many on the right hold it up as evidence of a coming - as he says here - Islam apocalypse that threatens to devour the west and its traditions.

In your piece you point out something similar, and you look at the ratios of the population that are Islamic here as opposed to in Europe. What's the scenario for Australia as you see it?

DM: Well, the scenario here is that we have 400,000 to 500,000 Muslims and it only takes five or 10 per cent of those to constitute a group from which we could see the emergence of terrorists and, as has happened in fact, we have four major imprisonments as a result of planned terrorist attacks which, fortunately, were discovered. But one of those occurred in Sydney, that was planned in Sydney, and the judgment in that case, which I read quite closely, shows that the police did not recover the weapons. They had enough weapons to do a terrorist act in Sydney, or somewhere else for that matter, equivalent to the weapons that the Indians experienced in Mumbai when they were attacked by Pakistani terrorists. So what they've got is a situation where, okay, they've caught these guys and put them in jail but where are the weapons? Who's got the weapons?

MM: Well, that's a very good point. Further to this - and by the way for those who have just joined us, I'm speaking with Des Moore who has certainly written extensively about this issue of Islamic terror. Now, Des, it is true probably to say, is it not, that what we're witnessing now - let me start again by saying a lot of people say: well, these are disenfranchised people from far-away lands that see the west as sort of the antithesis of their way of life so they come here to do damage to prove some sort of religious point. But the reality is that the Tsarnaev brothers, many of these terrorists - look at some of the London bombers and more - have grown up in the west, they've grown up in what sometimes is middle-class, fairly well-off, fairly well-adjusted families, they really don't hark back or have strong ties in any way to these foreign conflicts that they might claim is their justification, their catalyst for action. It's difficult, isn't it, in a modern so-called multicultural society to pin down who the potential troublemakers will be?

DM: Well, it is - except that what we've got. You referred to I think earlier to this Imam, who one of the bombers was using as an influence, or was

drawing on to influence his views, and that's Felix Mohammed who runs a video in western Sydney, and he's on record as making absolutely disgusting attacks on America and on Jews. And how is it that he is able to make these attacks publicly in Australia and not be caught by the police, not be prosecuted by the government? We have a Racial Hatred Act - I don't really agree with the Racial Hatred Act but we've got one - and why is he allowed to criticise Jews and Americans and get away with it?

MM: But if we were to say something about someone from, say, the Orient or something we'd be put before the courts.

DM: Exactly.

MM: And rightfully so under the Act. I guess to a point, an element of that that Gerard Henderson picks up on in that piece I referred to earlier where he says about these laws that are in place, he says: Look, even after September 11, 2001 and the attacks on America there - Henderson says - it was the civil liberties lobby on the left which railed against the national security legislation which John Howard introduced. So maybe there are still some people on that so-called lobby that are pretty lax in implementing or putting a bit of muscle to the law.

DM: Well, I've got no sympathy with some of those people, and I've got particularly no sympathy with the present Human Rights Commissioner - I can't remember her name now, Triggs I think it is - who has made statements which would imply that she couldn't take action against the sort of circumstances that I've outlined. She should be coming out and criticising the extreme Muslim statements that are coming out of parts of western Sydney.

MM: And further to her and others, as you point out in your piece, almost toward the end you say: look, the politics has to be put aside for the national interest. You say: factual statements about terrorist activity by extremists may be controversial, in fact it might cost votes, but the dubious fear of political damage should not breed - you say - a dangerous and irresponsible silence. A lot of listeners would be nodding right now.

DM: Yeah, absolutely. But I think I also said in that article that the most important thing in a way that the government could do would be to come out and say: we're going to stand up for Western culture - I'm not trying to be precise - and we're not going to stand for attacks on Western culture. That should lead to picking up these people under the Racial Hatred Act for one thing, but it should also lead to a much stricter supervision of immigration, many more security checks on immigrants. Something like I think 30 per cent of immigrants come from Muslim countries. It's not to say they're Muslim extremists but they should be subject to particularly heavy checks before they're allowed to enter the country.

MM: Well, is it possible to get there under multiculturalism as an official policy?

DM: Well, I think it should be. If you have the government coming out, I don't care which side of politics it is, in saying: we're not going to stand for any

encouragement or sympathy towards people who are adopting terrorist activity, then immediately it follows you've got to do something about immigration and tighten your security.

MM: It's not rocket science, is it?

DM: Sorry?

MM: It's not rocket science.

DM: No. Oh, no.

MM: As Brendan O'Neill put at the end of his piece, I'm sure you concur, he said: let's not flatter Islamic terrorism by treating it as a political statement or imbue it with super powers that it does not possess, but rather recognise it for what it is, a pseudo-exotic variant of the western self-loathing that is rife in the 21st century. There's a bit of that going on, isn't there?

DM: Oh, yeah, absolutely.

MM: But you conclude yours by saying: look, it's not too late to act.

DM: No, it's never too late to act. I mean, you've got to get some statements out about what you're going to do, though. You can't suddenly come out with a new policy without explaining it. This is one of the problems with the present government. They're making announcements about policies without properly explaining it.

MM: Or not even to the cabinet. And you say: look, the crux is, before we get anywhere, the catalyst to all this has to be we've got to acknowledge on a public level that a problem actually exists.

DM: Exactly. But we've got pretty good examples. I don't know whether you've read the book written by Hirsi Ali, who started off as a Muslim in Ethiopia - -

MM: That's right.

DM: - - - and gradually worked her way over to Europe and ended up in the Dutch Parliament. She had a terrible time because they attacked her verbally and she had to have protection, police protection, but she's an example of somebody who started off as a Muslim and realised it was all wrong and she's written a very - I can't remember the name of the book now - but she's written a really excellent book explaining the problem and how she tried to deal with it.

MM: Yeah, the name escapes me but I know the one you mean, yes.

DM: Yes. And there are other examples around. There's a very good book, rather heavy going, by an Anglican clergyman in Melbourne, Mark Durie, called *The Third Choice*. And there's a book by Mark Steyn who has looked at the European situation and the growing Muslim population there and pointed out that Europe is in danger of losing itself.

MM: Well, it's a two-pronged problem and solution you've elucidated for us this morning and that is, firstly, that we have to recognise there is a problem with extremist forms of this religious and, secondly, that we have to defend our culture if we're going to have anything to defend in the long run.

DM: Absolutely.

MM: Des Moore, thank you for your time; it's been an absolute pleasure having you on the program. DM: Thanks, Michael.

