

The Truth About Terror Isn't That Complicated. "Our Governments do not want us to Understand"

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Theme: [Terrorism](#)

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Like all westerners, I watched in horror at the terror that was unleashed across Paris. But my horror quickly turned to frustration when, immediately in the aftermath, western leaders took advantage of the situation to reinforce a false narrative, and to justify the very policies that have brought us to such a crisis.

Within hours of the attacks, United States President, Barack Obama proclaimed: "[This is an attack on all of humanity and the universal values that we share.](#)" Comments like this are intended to portray those in the West as innocent victims of people determined to destroy honourable values. In truth, western nations have been the perpetrators of state-sponsored terror that has been destroying country after country, and the lives of millions of people.

In 1999, I travelled to Baghdad and witnessed firsthand the anguish, death and squalor brought on by the 1991 Gulf War and years of crushing sanctions that [killed more than 500,000 Iraqi children under the age of five](#). Walking the streets of Baghdad, seeing malnourished children begging in the streets, and visiting hospitals with no medicine and water contaminated with raw sewage, I was overwhelmed by the cruelty deliberately inflicted upon innocent people. For the first time in my life I understood the rage, the helplessness and hopelessness that fuels terrorism. Iraq would endure four more years of sanctions and a second disastrous war. Yet, in my 1999 diary I prophetically wrote:

What kind of future relationship will we have with an entire generation of Iraqis who have suffered such brutality at our hand? Iraq is not a nation of terrorists but through our actions, we have planted the seeds of extremism and hatred that could make it such in the future. Terrorism is not about unfounded hatred of freedom and democracy or religious extremism, it is about repression and exploitation of the powerless by the powerful. It is about pain and anguish on a scale rarely, if ever, seen by most of us.

The Gulf War occurred in 1991, and according to the UN Finnish Envoy Martti Ahtissari, who was sent in to assess the war damage, one of the wealthiest countries in the Middle East, with a strong, well-educated middle-class, sustained [near apocalyptic damage and was bombed back into a pre-industrial state](#). The [water treatment system was deliberately targeted](#) at the outset of the war in violation of the [Convention on Genocide](#) (Article 2-C), and sanctions were used to ensure that chlorine could not be imported and the system could not be repaired.

The Iraqi people had not chosen Saddam Hussein as their leader and they had no democratic mechanisms to remove him so that sanctions could be lifted; yet even the

youngest among them were being punished with their lives. Those of us who tried to sound the alarm about the genocide that was taking place, were largely ignored. Two United Nations Humanitarian Aid Coordinators, appointed to oversee the sanctions program responsible for so much death and suffering, [Dennis Halliday and Hans von Sponek](#), resigned in protest, yet western policy pressed on.

What western media coverage existed, usually diverted attention away from the real issues and instead played games over the number of actual dead in Iraq, or deflected blame to Saddam Hussein despite the fact that the country had an [excellent health-care system](#) and a relatively low child mortality rate prior to the war and sanctions.

We must learn that we cannot brutalize people like this and then expect them to engage with us as global partners. It simply doesn't work that way. It is time for western leaders to admit that their policies are bankrupt and have been for decades.

Tragically, it is ordinary people on both sides who suffer and pay the price. The refugees fleeing war, violence and terror in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere, are victims of the same policies that are now bringing terror and insecurity to our own shores.

Our governments do not want us to understand that wittingly or unwittingly (the jury is still out on what role they have really played) they created the conditions for the rise of ISIS, and they did so through exactly the same disastrous policies that they now claim are the only way to destroy it.

It's time to call their bluff.

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