

What is so dangerous about Donald Trump is that he sometimes, quite by accident, takes a position that has some merit. He recently talked about "profiling the Muslim community," but, as always, with very little supporting data. If he were not so shallow and glib, he might have said: "There is a cult living in the Muslim community that advocates a most violent form of Islam." This is certainly true, but the notion of a blanket profile of all Muslims is a waste of resources because there are many kinds of Muslims living in the United States, and profiling two million people is silly.

There are secular Muslims (such as most Iranian immigrants) who have no interest in promoting Islam at all. There are former Muslims, those who have either given up on Islam altogether or have converted to mainstream Christianity. And there are refugees from countries as diverse religiously as Somalia and Syria; they are not all equally dangerous. More subtle are the distinctions between well-educated elite Pakistanis and Afghans and their more ignorant (and pious) fellow countrymen from villages.

Another distinction is that not many first-generation immigrants to this country, fleeing war, persecution, and misery, are dangerous. Their children, however, face the danger of belonging neither to their old culture nor their new, and are ripe for radicalization.

Trump advocates keeping an eye on the mosques, which makes sense. But what makes him think that these are not already infiltrated with FBI agents? Our past two presidents have authorized this sort of infiltration, to good effect in catching violent plots before they can be executed.

If we could really profile those being radicalized from Jihadi web sites, we could prevent many lone-wolf attempts at violence. But this is not easy to do. If we shut down all such jihadi sites, they would go underground and be even more dangerous. It is also difficult to know if a young Muslim on the Internet is self-radicalizing or is just letting off steam. Our protection of free speech makes this sort of profiling difficult.

Before 9-11, we were in no position to watch and apprehend Muslims taking flying classes. Now, of course, we can and do. And certainly keeping certain Muslims on the no-fly list or those under investigation from acquiring any firearms makes sense, so much sense that Trump risks the ire of the National Rifle Association by supporting this issue.

One source of radicalization that gets little attention is in our universities, within the Muslim Brotherhood-organized "Muslim Student Association." There are both students and professors who should probably be profiled as agents of a foreign power. It would be illuminating to know how many university students try to make the trek to Syria to join the jihad.

One other issue that drives scholars of Islam crazy is the insistence that Islam is a peaceful religion and that Islamists are perverting it. Islam used to be a diverse global religion that was practiced in very different ways, ranging from states with secular governments (pre-Islamic Revolution Iran, early Pakistan, and Turkey) to the totalitarian Wahhabi Saudi Arabia. Bangladesh practiced a mystical Sufi form of Islam with reverence for many saints\222 tombs. Lebanon and Syria managed diverse groups, several kinds of Muslims, several of Christians, and educated elites disinterested in religious orthodoxy. Religion was primarily a means of political and community organization.

This changed with the advent of Saudi Arabian big oil with big money available to the Wahhabi clerics to spew their poisonous form of medieval Islam throughout the Muslim world and now (through mosques and student organizations) even in the west. Wahhabi money has poisoned Islam\222s diversity, making its violent form the main show. What makes it so terrible is that it is not a perversion of mainstream Islam at all; it is a literal reading of Islam\222s main religious texts and has enthusiastic global Muslim support. "True believers" in this form of Islam can, and should, be profiled. Families with children suddenly going pious (headscarves and beards) should be alarmed. Muslim families need to watch them and the authorities to profile them.

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