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The Soleimani Killing and Left-Liberals

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Many in the West have expressed great dismay at the killing of Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani. Such responses to the removal of perhaps the world's leading terrorist seem to suggest that the democratic West has descended into decadence. If that is the case, it is worth examining the extent to which the liberal-left dominance of much of Western public discourse is undermining the stability of democracy itself.

Major unforeseen political events tend to lead to an avalanche of questions. This is certainly true in the case of the targeted killing by the US of Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani, which occurred on January 3. How will the Iranians react? Was the elimination of Soleimani an impulsive move by President Trump or was it part of a detailed strategy to rein in Iran? Will it lead to a major war? What will Soleimani's death mean for the Middle East?

But the responses to Soleimani's death also prompt questions. Do the many horrified Western reactions to his killing indicate democratic decadence? Why else would the killing of a man who was perhaps the world's leading terrorist have led to anything other than a clear choice by democrats to stand with the American government and against the terrorist and the regime he represented?

The extreme left in the West exhibits sympathy for terrorists in varying degrees. The departing leader of the British Labour party, Jeremy Corbyn, has been accused of supporting the IRA. He has described it as his "honor and pleasure" to host "our friends" from Hamas and Hezbollah in Parliament. About the killing of Soleimani, Corbyn said: "The US assassination of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani is an extremely serious and dangerous escalation of conflict in the Middle East with global significance" and "The UK government should urge restraint on the part of both Iran and the US, and stand up to the belligerent actions and rhetoric coming from the United States."

Sentiments of identification with Muslim terrorists can be heard among some Muslims in the West. The Islamic Centre of England (ICE) hosted a vigil for Soleimani at its headquarters in north London. (The ICE is a charity, which as such is entitled to tax relief and gift aid.) Iraqi-American Sheikh Ibrahim Kazerooni of the Islamic Center of America in Dearborn, Michigan eulogized Soleimani, who he claimed had “brought hope to the marginalized [and] hatred and fear to the enemies of Islam.” Kazerooni called Soleimani’s killing a “cowardly and heinous act.” Gatherings mourning Soleimani took place at mosques in Berlin and Hamburg.

Far more important is mainstream left-liberal waffling about, and even outright condemnation of, the elimination of the Iranian arch-terrorist. In the US, several Democrat presidential candidates are on the opposite side of their government on this matter. The fact that they are reflexively anti-Trump is no excuse.

When the Obama administration killed Osama bin Laden, a far less dangerous terrorist than Soleimani, there was near-universal support for the action. Yet the comment of Joe Biden, Barack Obama's VP and supposedly a moderate, on the Soleimani killing was: “Trump just tossed a stick of dynamite into a tinderbox.” (Of course, Obama negotiated an agreement with the Iranians that facilitated their terrorist expansion into other countries, including Syria and Yemen, and Biden went along with that plan at the time.) Democrat presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren tweeted: “Trump ripped up an Iran nuclear deal that was working.” In a television interview she referred to Soleimani as “a government official, a high-ranking military official.” Extreme leftist Democrat candidate Bernie Sanders called the killing an assassination. Michael Bloomberg was the only major Democrat presidential candidate to condemn Sanders’s use of that term.

Other leading Democrats have come out against Soleimani’s killing, as have media figures, celebrities, politicians, and academics from the American left.

In Europe, left-liberalism is the dominant mood. The intolerable is tolerated to the extent that the word has lost its meaning. The German government’s attitude toward the Iranians has been particularly accommodating. German president Frank-Walter Steinmeier, a socialist, congratulated the Ayatollah Khamenei on the fortieth anniversary of the Iranian religious dictatorship. This is the same Steinmeier who refused to congratulate Trump when he was elected president of the US. Undersecretary of State Niels Annen of the SPD party also celebrated Iran’s revolution at the Iranian Embassy in Berlin.

The SPD is at the forefront of the country's appeasers. Minister of Foreign Affairs Heiko Maas—who claims he entered politics because of Auschwitz—tweeted, after the elimination of Soleimani: “The US military operation followed on a series of dangerous Iranian provocations. Yet due to this action it has not become simpler to reduce tensions.”

Even more positive toward the Iranian terrorist was the head of the parliamentary faction of the SPD, Rolf Mützenich. He said: “We will not be able to avoid the consequences of the targeted killing of a state representative by a Western democracy.” Mützenich added that Germany's relationship with the US has now become subject to fundamental changes.

French Minister of State for European Affairs Amelie de Montchalin had not a word of support for the US or against the Iranian arch-terrorist after news broke of the killing. When asked whether the American operation worried her, she answered: “First of all, it is the next step in an escalation which has been going on for months. So what we feared is happening, namely that you can see an increasing standoff between the United States and Iran. Today, this morning, our priority is the region's stability.”

All of this raises the question: To what extent does the widespread appeasement of terrorism in the West result from inherent left-liberal cowardice? For many, there is no principled choice between the white of democracy and the black of a dictatorship for which terrorism is an integral part of policy. The Western politicians cited above are not emotionally linked to terrorists or ideologically favorably inclined toward them, as is Corbyn, yet their statements indirectly facilitate terrorism. Their message changes only when they are confronted with a terrorist danger in their own country.

The ambivalent reactions in Western democracies to the killing of Soleimani point to what is fundamentally wrong with the prevailing left-liberal mood.

Many other democratic values are diminished or even discarded in societies dominated by a left-liberal ethos. Police forces are understaffed, and judges often have more understanding for perpetrators than for victims. Many European NATO countries choose not to spend the 2% of GDP on the military to which they are committed. Germany is a typical example. After much American criticism, Berlin announced it would raise its military expenditures to 1.5% of GDP by 2024—though the German military commissioner, Hans-Peter Bartels, has said he doubts that even that target will be reached.

A rapid indicator of a country's illness is the experience of its Jews, who tend, no matter how assimilated they may be, to eventually be painfully reminded of their disfavor in left-liberal societies. After the brutal murder in Paris of

Jewish citizen Sarah Halimi, French judges acquitted her killer because he was under the influence of drugs. At the end of December 2019, Shalom Levi died of injuries suffered when he was stabbed on a street in Strasburg in August 2016. The judges at the time declared his assailant not responsible for his actions and let him go.

Left-liberal papers in European countries have published extremely antisemitic anti-Israel cartoons. Many EU countries vote for the ever-flowing stream of anti-Israel motions at the UN knowing full well that in doing so they are committing an act of antisemitism. Germany allows the terror group Hezbollah to operate on its territory, justifying this by citing a nonexistent separation between the organization's military and political branches. EU countries remain silent about Palestinian terrorism, just as they looked away from Soleimani's terrorism. There are many other examples.

All this raises an extremely important question. Is the left-liberal ideological dominance of much of Western public discourse undermining the stability of democracy itself?

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