

Terror and backlash in America: The San Bernardino attack and its effect on US politics

Jeff: Hello, everybody and welcome to the Daily Evolver Live. It's Tuesday, December 8th 2015. I'm Jeff Salzman, and I am very happy to be with you tonight. I'm joined by Corey deVos who is handling the tech over at Integral Radio, and here next to me is Brett Walker who just played some music before the show. My goodness, that Carmen McRae song [Body and Soul, Mt.Fuji Jazz Festival, Japan, 1986].

Brett: I know.

Jeff: Isn't that something.

Brett: Doesn't that create a mood?

Jeff: Yeah. Brett was playing some songs from a show that we're putting together with Greg Thomas who is a jazz theorist and an integral theorist as well. The last one was Carmen McRae, around age 70. God bless her, she was 30 pounds overweight, she was in a sweatshirt, her hair was pulled back. This is not the jazz babe of the '40s and '50's. She's singing in broad daylight in an outdoor festival in Japan. But oh, the transmission. Anyway, thank you, Brett for that.

Welcome. I really appreciate you being with us. Tonight we're going to do what we normally do here at the Daily Evolver and try to look at the events of our time through an integral lens.

Tonight, we're going to focus on the shootings in California, the terrorist attack in San Bernardino last week, and how it has very predictably sparked the backlash in the American culture that is really happening right now. We're in day three or four of it. The highlights are that Donald Trump has called for a halt to Muslims entering the country. ... there's also a big controversy as to what the U.S. role should be in response, how we should fight back militarily, culturally, even in cyberspace. That was, of course, laid out in Obama's speech on Sunday night and the response to that.

I want to give a special thank you for those of you who are listening here in real time tonight on Tuesday night. It's really wonderful to feel you with me in our non-local moment. If you are interested in participating in a discussion during the podcast, you can post your comments on Integral Radio's chat screen, and Brett will be keeping an eye on it if there are questions or observations that you would like me to address.

I would encourage you to do that. Again, this is all happening in real time. One of the opportunities of the Daily Evolver is that we can have a conversation. I don't have all the answers but we can sort it out together. Again, if you have some comments or questions, please post them.

All right. Brett just ... Yes, exactly. He's reminding me that Integral Radio is a feature of Integral Life with is the world's leading integral web portal and community. I do encourage you to check it out, integrallife.com. You can be a member for 99 bucks a year. It is well worth it. You can also find more of my stuff at dailyevolver.com. We have a new website that we're slowly publicizing because we're getting the things out. Please check it out and see what you think. If there's any problems you run into, let us know.

I would also encourage you to ... and particularly if you're new to Integral Theory or if you want a little help or little remedial assistance as we talk about these things, I try not to be too technical or use too much jargon, but there are a couple of charts that really help illuminate what I'll be talking about.

You can find them near the top of the website, dailyevolver.com, in a section called About Integral Theory. There are two charts at the very top of that called Levels of Development and Quadrants of Reality. I will refer to those from time to time. For those of you who are listening live, Brett will put a link to that in the comments section right now.

All right. Let's take a look. Brett, you know what we need is a sound effect about how we implement the integral lens.

Brett: Really?

Jeff: Yeah.

Brett: What do you have in mind?

Jeff: Like a creaky machine or something where I'm turning the dial or something. Anyway, I don't know.

Brett: Right.

Jeff: We'll work on that.

Brett: Or maybe like Google cardboard. Suddenly you're going to look through this little device and see the world very differently.

Jeff: Yeah, exactly. Since you mention that, I have to say, I bought five Google cardboards for Christmas presents. They're amazing. They're less than 10 bucks. I got one free by being a subscriber to the New York Times. It's out in my counter for several weeks before I finally was bored one day and put it together. Oh, my goodness gracious! It was a taste of what is to come in terms of communication and entertainment. So yeah, check it out.

Brett: Cool.

Jeff: All right. Let's do then turn our attention to this San Bernardino attack. This is the first bonafide terror attack with the fingerprints of ISIS on American soil. Now, whether it's ISIS-inspired or ISIS-embedded, we don't know, but have to say that day-by-day it's looking more and more diabolical. This young couple, he was born here in the United States; she is Saudi Arabian. They're married and have a baby. One day last week, he decided to leave a company holiday party, and they both came back armed to the teeth with automatic weapons after they dropped off the six-month-old baby at grandma's. They killed 14 people and injured many more. They got away for a couple of hours, and then they were caught, and of course, obliterated.

It turns out that it could have been much worse. They had quite an arsenal that they had developed. They had booby traps for first responders, which didn't work. They had material to make 12 pipe bombs. The next day, ISIS tweeted out their congratulations, and took credit for the whole thing.

Every day, the FBI comes out with something new. I was talking to my friend, Maria, about it. We both just ended up in that space that a lot of us end up with with these things. It's like, "Oy!"

What a mess!" Which of course, it is. What a fucking mess! It's discouraging, and it feels hopeless that this can happen here in the United States.

It's at this point that I have to say I am so happy to have an evolutionary view, one that says that, "Yes, this is a mess. This is the current mess in a world where there's one mess after the other, and a world in which there's no mess-free options. There's always a mess." A little hobby I have is to go back and look randomly at the front page of the New York Times throughout history. There's always some war or consternation or some killing or tragedy that's going on, and this is one of them.

What we can see from an integral perspective is that historically, this mess is less lethal than most -- which is not to say that it wasn't 100% lethal to the 14 people who died in this attack. But which is to say that's what's worse than 14 people is 15 people or 1500 people or 15 thousand people, the latter of which would have been a good day in World War II. Again, which is not to say that this is not a mess and that has to be addressed, but to simply put it in some perspective.

Now, addressing this is the chief job of our national leaders, chief of whom is the president of the United States, and we'll talk about Obama's response. What's also interesting is that this is an election year. We're less than a year way now, folks, from the U.S. Presidential Election. Of course, all the people who want to be president have to be weigh in on this. Most of them are Republicans. Let's just take a look at the range of responses that we see to this attack.

On the far right, we have of course, Donald Trump. He is bound and determined that there's nobody going to get to the right of him on anything that has to do with immigration and national security. Yesterday, he put out a statement. Many of you I'm sure are aware of it. I want to get it exact, so I'm going to read the first sentence. New York, New York, December 7th 2015. "Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete shut of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on."

I don't even kind to know what that means, especially the part, "Our country's representatives figure out what's going on." It's hilarious in a sense, but it has set the bar for what everybody has to respond to. Of course, one of the interesting things is that to a person, all of the Republican representatives, all of his fellow candidates for the nomination have rejected that statement.

The mildest was Ted Cruz who said simply, "I do not agree," but Trump was roundly rejected by Jeb Bush who said he's deranged. Lindsey Graham who said he's a race baiting, xenophobic religious bigot. Paul Ryan, who's the new Speaker of the House said, "This is not what the Republican party stands for, and it's not what this country stands for." Even -- liberals, listen up -- even Dick Cheney criticized Trump in the statement for being Un-American as he said, "It goes against everything we stand for and believe in." That's a really interesting statement, and one that integral theory helps us to understand.

Un-American or Un-Modern?

In terms of the American ideal for sure, it's true, Trump's policy is counter to our founding values of equality and freedom as stated in the Declaration of Independence, as stated in the Constitution. Until we remember that, of course, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were written by men, many of whom owned slaves. From there, it just continues. American history is replete with discrimination based on all kinds of things.

There was the Alien and Sedition Act of 1798, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which outlawed all Chinese immigration, the Immigration Act of 1917 which barred homosexuals, epileptics, and a whole bunch of other "undesirables." Not to mention the internment of

American citizens of Japanese descent in 1942 by the liberal icon Franklin Delano Roosevelt. After that, Operation Wetback in the 1950s, which I hadn't heard about until Donald Trump brought it up a couple of weeks ago, which involved rounding up thousands of Mexican immigrants who came in to work during World War II, and dropping them unceremoniously on the other side of the border where many of them died of starvation, heat and thirst.

American history has a lot of examples of discrimination based on all sorts of things. But what we can see is that all of these events happened in an America that was existing with a center of gravity that was *traditional*, or the amber altitude if you're looking at our altitudes of development chart.

Since then, the United States has evolved into a center of gravity *modern* country, in the orange altitude. There are many modern countries around the globe, including most of the countries in Western Europe: Canada, Australia, Japan, South Korea, most South American countries. As countries become more and more fully modern in both the exteriors in terms of their modern technology, but also in terms of their interiors -- this is where the quadrants come in handy -- in their interior consciousness (upper left quadrant) and in their cultural sensibility (lower left quadrant), however imperfectly implemented, there is a commitment that comes on line naturally, that all faiths and races are to be accorded basic human rights. It's part of the evolution of consciousness,

So, considering this, what we realized is that Trump's statement is not so much un-American as it is un-Modern. In other words, it's un-American as America is in modern times. It's un-modern for all other countries who are at that stage of development. What's interesting is that we can harumph at Trump for saying this ... but at the same time, we need to stop and notice, if not celebrate, that every other candidate, even in the Republican party, has rejected his point of view.

Now, that's not to say that Trump isn't evolutionarily potent. He actually is. He's the voice of a significant sliver of the American voting population, 20% or so I'd say. These are people who are traditionalists. They are amber altitude and even early amber altitude in a lot of cases, which means that they're fundamentally nation-centric, and even ethnocentric. That is a predictable and to be expected characteristic of that stage of development.

At this amber traditionalist stage there's a reflexive antipathy towards people who are "not of our tribe." We think that our god is better than the other guys' god. We think that our country is a better country than the other guys' country.

Traditionalists feel unseen and unheard in mainstream American culture. They're majority not college educated. They're basically culturally backward -- I don't know how else to say it. They feel caricatured by the green postmodern culture that makes fun of them.

I love Trump, he's a genius at really playing that fiddle. His big theme is Crippled America. Make America Great Again. America is currently governed by people who are in ... and these are his words, weak and stupid. That is the view of the traditionalists.

Now, these traditionalists have to tow a modernist line when they're at work. They have to be politically correct, because in the modern public sphere, everybody's equal. If they don't tow that line, they're ostracized or worse, sued. Their kids go to school where liberal values rule the day. They have to compete with people who get affirmative action. They see a world that is slipping away. And in their own families, at their own kitchen tables, among their own friends, church goes, among the people they trust, they're damn sick and tired of it. They want to take their country back.

This is a statement that they really respond to. They want to take their country back. They want to make her great again. Can you feel that a little bit? Don't you want to take America back to where she was great again? Of course, for most us we realized that while there is an emotional response to that statement, that when we think about it, we realize that there was never such a time. For those people who do think that, Donald Trump is their unambiguous champion. This is the good news for us evolutionaries, because he will lead them to abject defeat, and defeat is evolutionarily potent.

There's no way (I've said this before, and there's a part of me that's praying I'm right) that Donald Trump will be elected president. I don't think there's even much of a chance that he'll get the Republican nomination. I don't think there's any chance, let me say that unequivocally.

Currently, he has 25% to 30% of support from the Republican party. That means, of course, that somewhere between 70% and 75% of Republicans *don't* want Donald Trump to be president. They want somebody other than Donald Trump. There are currently 12 other candidates. He is speaking for the aforementioned sliver of the American culture, and also the ethnocentric cultures of all modern countries. But it's far from a majority.

Obama's Strategy

Let's look at the other side of the spectrum. We have Obama, and his speech Sunday night, and his strategy. He laid out his strategy, which is basically to use American intelligence and power, short of actual American soldiers on the ground, to support the parties in Syria and Iraq that are fighting ISIS. Including, if possible, Iran and Russia, who also are enemies of ISIS. This is all a moving target.

When I talk about Obama's strategy, I can feel the eyes roll of my conservative friends. One of the main talking points in conservative circles is to say that Obama doesn't have a strategy at all. But he does; it's just not a strategy that traditionalists are used to because it is indeed in the mold of some version of "leading from behind."

Leading from behind is a fundamentally integral statement. It is the expression of the realization that in this life as it is, this world of Samsara, this world of suffering, that there are things that are wrong. And some of them can be fixed, and some of them can't be fixed.

In the universe of things that can't be fixed, there's a category of things that can be managed and things that can't be managed. In that universe of things that can't be managed, there are some things that can be influenced and some things that can't be influenced. At some point, we realize that there are some things that can't be influenced, there are some things that we realize that it's better to do nothing than to do something.

I think of the wonderful teachings of the Tao on non-doing. I always love this expression, "Let non-doing do it's thing." That's something that Obama is bringing to the party, and it feels very, very frightening to people on the right. After his speech ... and actually for the last couple of weeks after the Paris attacks ... I've been very chagrined by the response of even middle-of-the-road people that Obama's not doing enough.

I think of Joe Scarborough of MSNBS's *Morning Joe*, who has just been relentless in his criticism of Obama as being feckless and weak, indecisive, and ineffective. A couple of days ago Scarborough stopped in the middle of Morning Joe, and he said something that really helped me understand what the problem is. He said, in essence, "Obama scares me. It's like these malevolent forces are mobilizing against us, and we have a leader who's not doing anything. I'm afraid." That really helps me to understand this resistance to this strategy -- for Traditionalists, if you're not fighting, you're endangering us all.

Leading from behind

Leading from behind is a little like parenting. I would ask, how many of you who are parents have created the child of your dreams? You had an idea of who your child would be, you wanted them to be that, you may feel guilty for them falling short or you falling short. You may realize that you yourself have wounded your children, and part of their problems are your fault. Regardless, you're responsible for them.

There is an imperative that you guide them. When appropriate you set limits for them. You give incentives and disincentives. And yes, if they are a harm to themselves or others you have to intervene, sometimes forcibly.

This is the same dynamic that is appropriate between modern countries in relationship to pre-modern countries, to countries who are at the amber stage of development or even the red stage of development. I wish I could think of a better comparison than between foreign relations and parenting. It feels like it's condescending. It makes my green alarms go off. How could one country presume to be a parent to another? But from an integral perspective, it's literally true. Every stage of development has a new level of maturity that comes on line. This is just the creative force of the cosmos.

And by the time humanity reaches modernity, or the orange altitude, that is a very important fulcrum in human development. It's when people become pacified. In that way, modern people are more grown up than traditional and warrior people. That's not an insult anymore than it is to say that a 30-year-old is more grownup than a 12-year-old, and that in any intelligent and loving ecosystem, the more grownup person is responsible for the less grownup person.

We have to have a foreign policy that is about helping pre-modern people -- who are doing what pre-modern people do, which is having holy wars -- we have to use our influence as best we can to bring these people into the modern world.

Of course, the criticism of Obama is that he is way too cool in this process. I think there's an argument for that, I really do. In some ways, it's the downside of integral consciousness, and as I've said before, Obama is functionally integral. From an integral perspective, when you see the larger forces at work and the forces of evolution, and you see that actually the trajectory of human history is bending towards justice, and that we are becoming ever more peaceful, ever more prosperous, ever more intelligent, ever more inclusive ... it's just a little harder to get all riled up about something like what happened in San Bernardino.

Not because what happened there is not atrocious and worthy of all condemnation and resistance and response, but because we realized that getting riled up about it actually doesn't help. It hurts.

But a leader can't be too cool, or people won't trust that he or she cares. On the other hand, Obama can only stray so far from his authentic emotional complexion..I remember there was a time in 2008 somewhere on the campaign trail, and there was some crisis. Clearly, Obama had been getting advice that he needs to be more angry and more emotional. He gave this speech where he talked about how "it makes me damn mad" that something happened. It was just hideous. It was fake. It didn't work.

Yes. Could somebody who's even more wonderful than Obama manage to pull off a restrained yet ramped up response to ISIS as he described in his speech on Sunday night? Could he do that and also connect emotionally with the country? Yeah, there's probably somebody who

could do that. All I can say is in the short term, and by that I mean the next 20, 30, 40, 50 years, we're going to miss this guy when he's gone, this incredibly gifted and yes, wise man that ...

Again, I'm not arguing that he hasn't made mistakes. But no aspect of life on earth is about not making mistakes. That's a fantasy. We make our mistakes, we learn, and we move on. That's what humanity is doing here, particularly modern humanity is doing as we see this wild outbreak of red, amber holy warrior culture arising out of the war zone of Syria and Iraq.

And there is actually a pretty strong consensus, once you get through the politics. For the most part, everybody's in general agreement with Obama's proposals or Obama's strategy which ranges from coalition air strikes against ISIS, beefing up intelligence about potential terrorists, and what's up in the air is should we have a no-fly zone, should we arm the Kurds. These aren't details, but these are still within the 40-yard lines of both Republicans and democrats aside from the few outliers (like Lindsey Graham who is saying we got to invade with up to 40,000-50,000 troops. Or Ted Cruz, who is talking about carpet bombing).

In fact, there was an article in today's Washington Post I got a kick out of. It was titled, "The GOP's New Strategy to Fight the Islamic State: Kill Them with Cliches". They reported that House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy stated that "we want our homeland to be secure," while Majority Whip Steve Scalise spoke of the need to "Go and rout out and take on ISIS." Cathy McMorris Rodgers, the number four Republican leader proclaimed that we must "Rise to the challenge" and find "courage and the resolve". Representative Lynn Jenkins of Kansas announced that we must "Stand shoulder-to-shoulder with friends and our allies and show a path forward as we fight for a safer world for our kids to grow up in." Now who could disagree with that? None of them aside from the few outliers that I've mentioned are arguing for boots on the ground. We muddle forward.

War in virtual space

Now, the other piece of the puzzle and this is something that I've wondered about this whole time, and finally, people are talking about it. That is, how is it that we allow ISIS to use the internet and social media? Come on. It's our internet. By that, it's modernity's internet. Science and technology built the internet. The science and technology of ISIS, if they weren't able to borrow modern technology, they'd be right up there with rubbing sticks together. They haven't created much of anything in terms of technology.

Yet pre-modern people are able to use technology they could never have invented. They are able to use Twitter and Facebook and the internet, and I just don't quite understand how that is. It's not like the internet is not controllable. China controls it. Turkey controls it. Child pornography is well-controlled.

Now, finally, I hear Obama talked about this problem, and Hillary Clinton talked about it too. There are really in a sense two territories on which we're fighting this war. One is the territory on the ground which is where we have people and bombs and no-fly zones and soldier and all of that. There's also a virtual territory, and this is created in the internet.

That territory is real. It's interior territory that from an integral perspective represents the left-hand quadrants. That territory cannot be given to the enemy. I saw a long article today in the New York Times about how government can work with the private enterprise, Facebook and Google and Twitter and so forth, to control this, and that we're just really in the first throes of making that happen.

Now, there's always that polarity between security and freedom, between security and privacy. When those come into conflict, and people feel afraid, they're going to naturally go to security.

People are ultimately very ... We have our ideologies, we have our constitutions, we have our declarations, we have all of our laws, and we also have common sense. It's an oft-cited legal principle that "the constitution is not a suicide pact." When necessary, we will adjust things. We've seen that in past history.

I actually don't think that there's a problem in terms of the constitution because the social media is owned and managed by private companies. Of course, there'll be pressure on them, and Obama promised tighter coordination between the internet companies and the government.

People, get used to the surveillance state and get comfortable with it because one of the other things we realize is that when cultures become modern, the government is no longer invested in controlling its own people (like pre-modern countries are). Oppressing the population is no longer part of the agenda. We can actually trust that. We can trust that government can be in our business in a way that is really looking to protect us and not oppress us. We'll see how that goes.

God, I've been blabbing for 53 minutes, huh?

Brett: We're having a good chat on the Mixlr page too.

Jeff: Cool. Let me see.

Brett: We're talking about generally just the logistics of gun control.

Jeff: Let me just take a look at these questions here. Corey writes, "The problem is we have a number of systemic issues with violence. All of which overlap with our overall gun problem. None of which can be really conflated with the others. One is mental illness. Two, police abuse. Three, Islamic terrorism. Four, domestic terrorism. Five, school shootings. Six, Black-on-Black violence. Liberals think they could fix all of these with gun control which I think is naïve. Conservatives think we need not bother fixing any one of them until we fix them all which is suicidal."

There's a lot of intelligence to that. Of course, there's a lot to talk about in there. The horses are out of the barn here. We now have as many guns in America as we have people, somewhere over 300 million of each. There's not going to be a confiscation. It's actually astonishing how little gun violence we have considering the number of guns, and a lot of gun violence that we have in America is actually suicides.

Even with the mass shootings that we've seen in the kindergarten in New England, and in Columbine, and the theater shootings, and what we just saw in San Bernardino, gun violence is actually something around half of what it was in 1990.

We have two things happening. One we actually have less gun violence, and, two, we have an acceleration of these high-profile politically motivated attacks or not even politically motivated in the case of the kindergarten shooting.

Can we work around the edges with assault weapons and these armor-piercing bullets, and gun shows? Yes, but are we going to take guns away? It's not going to happen. I'm not sure it's even necessary.

Happy Holidays!

This is going to be the last of the live shows for this season. We're going to go into the holiday now. Actually, next Tuesday night is the republican debate. We should all listen to that. That's on the 15th. We'll be back with another live Daily Evolver show on January 5th, Tuesday night, January 5th, where we'll continue to look at the ever-unfolding state of affairs in this world through an integral lens.

In the meantime, I would just leave you with a quick holiday message. It's such a beautiful time of year. Excuse me for a little Northern hemisphere imperialism here, but we're close to the shortest day of the year now. All the lights are twinkling, and it's cold, and there's a certain feeling of the season. And all we ask from a contemplative point of view is to just notice ... to notice that this time of year, whether it's Christmas or the solstice or whatever it is you're celebrating, it's about renewal, and it's about enchantment, and it's about the birth of the baby, and about renewal.

As a practice, it is a time for me, and this is why I'm looking for to really quieting down a bit for the next few weeks, a time to recognize that life is enchanted, that we are living in a world where every moment is an opportunity for new creativity, for a new expression of who we are. Creativity is the prime feature of the universe since the first millisecond of the Big Bang, the first creative act. The materialistic view that we are living in a world where there's no such thing as free will or love or connection, and our behavior is a result of some set of involuntary calculations of cost and benefit by our genes and biological forces.

But let's set that aside. Just as a thought experiment and a heart experiment, assume that we are living in a world where there is a loving intelligence that kicked it off and continues to take us to ever-new unfoldings of goodness, truth, and beauty ... And that while we are living our lives, that we are also being lived by life. Just a thought for a practice as we move into this beautiful season devoted to love and renewal.

All right, folks. Well, that's it for the Daily Evolver Live tonight. Again, we'll see you on Tuesday, January 5th. We will be posting regularly on my site, dailyevolver.com, and Integral Life will still be publishing through the holiday as well. Have a great, great holiday season, and we will see you in the new year!