

PC Journalism and the Massacre in Orlando

The story was still developing, but there were already indications that the shooter at the gay dance club in Orlando was an American-born Muslim who somehow, directly or indirectly, was connected to radical Islam.

The panelist on “Meet the Press” knew at least some of this. So Chuck Todd, after acknowledging to his panel that the actual motive for the murders wasn’t known with certainty yet, asked Tom Brokaw, “Should it matter,” what the motive was.

This is a remarkable question – one drenched in liberal PC. Chuck Todd, who is a serious journalist (and in my limited contact with him, a good guy) would never have asked if motive mattered if the gunman was a white supremacist skinhead who had just gunned down innocent African Americans in a church.

In fact, when a white bigot shot up a black church in South Carolina, everyone knew that motive mattered. But when it comes to radical Islamic terrorism, liberals get queasy. Tom Brokaw did. He didn’t think the motive mattered either. “It shouldn’t matter,” he told Chuck Todd. Take a guess what should matter to Mr. Brokaw. If you said guns ...

You got a problem,” Brokaw said, “get a gun. That’s what goes on now. It’s got to come to an end. It’s a terrible commentary.”

Joy-Ann Reid, a host on MSNBC, also saw guns as the main problem. ‘We have mass casualty shootings that are affecting children, teachers, people in church, whether it’s a hate crime or whether it’s related to international terrorism, we’re not getting to the core issue.’ And what exactly is that core issue? “How easy it is to get a gun,” she said.

“How do we prevent terrorists from arming themselves,” Chuck Todd wanted to know. It’s a fair question, as far as it goes. But there’s another question that liberal journalists won’t ask: What is it about Islam that makes some of its faithful want to slaughter innocent people?

Hugh Hewett, the conservative radio talk show host, introduced reality to the discussion. The problem he said ... was ISIS.

“This looks like the Paris concert hall attack,” he said. “ISIS wants to do this here. They want to do it they want to do it here a lot. ... Every dead person is a tragic murder. But if ISIS gets their people here, or inspires [others], it will be a long series of years.”

When Joy-Ann Reid reminded Hewett that Muslim terrorists weren’t the only ones who want to kill Americans, that white nationalists like the gunman at the South Carolina church also want to kill large numbers of innocent people, Hewett calmly responded that ISIS – unlike skinheads – has the means to actually do it.

Brokaw got in the last word, again choosing to emphasize guns over terrorists. “We’re having this debate about [international] terrorism, or domestic; it doesn’t make any difference. There are a lot of dead people, dead people at the point of a gun. Guns are really easy to get their hands on.”

Except it does make a difference. Why people do what they do always makes a difference.

Still, this is not an argument about whether assault rifles are too easy to obtain – or even whether Americans should be allowed to purchase them. I’ll leave that for others at some other point in time. But in the wake of mass murder, no serious journalist should ever ask if motive matters. It does. Even when the motive makes liberal journalists uncomfortable.