

Charlie Hebdo: Conservative and ‘Liberal’ Islamophobia Find Common Ground in the U.S. Mainstream Media

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Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Bob Beckel and Cal Thomas literally wrap themselves in the flag.

USA Today has a feature called “Common Ground,” which is a back-and-forth involving Cal Thomas, “a conservative columnist,” and [Bob Beckel](#), billed as “a liberal Democratic strategist” but more accurately described as a [Fox News Democrat](#) with a lucrative sideline as a [corporate lobbyist](#).

“As longtime friends,” **USA Today** promises, “they can often find common ground on issues that lawmakers in Washington cannot.” What the column usually illustrates is how far a corporate Democrat is willing to go to adopt right-wing language and policies (FAIR Blog, [9/17/09](#), [3/31/10](#), [3/24/11](#)).

In their latest column ([1/14/15](#)), Beckel and Thomas agree that “We Need Aggressive Steps” to ensure the West is “fighting to win” against Islamists in a conflict **USA Today** labels “World War III.” There’s not a lot of daylight between the conservative and the so-called liberal on this issue. Here’s Thomas calling for a war on Islam:

The terrorist attacks in Paris are part of an ongoing plot by Islamic fanatics to destroy Western culture and occupy Western nations. It’s past time we stop the hand-wringing and self-delusion about a “peaceful” religion and start fighting this war as if it were World War III.

To which Beckel replies:

There is no doubt that terrorists acting under the banner of Islam have declared war on us. Paris is the latest in a string of terrorist attacks dating back decades, which provide all the evidence Western nations should accept for the reality of this war.



The pair agree that not every Muslim is a terrorist, and they seem to feel that this concession gives them license to make sweeping claims about the culpability of Islam as a whole:

Thomas: These killers say they murder in the name of Islam. Western leaders should take them at their word. “Reaching out” isn’t working. It’s time to be more aggressive.

Beckel: I agree. These are Islamic terrorists, period. The first step in uniting the West against these murderers is to stop calling people “Islamophobes” when they state the obvious and quote what too many Muslims say in their sermons and media.

It’s not clear, actually, why Beckel objects to calling people Islamophobes when he proudly proclaimed that he was one a couple of days earlier on **Fox News’The Five** (1/12/15; Media Matters, [1/12/15](#)):

I’m an Islamophobe. That’s right. You can call me that all you want.... How can you possibly not call these Islamist terrorists? And you’re making us the enemy. I mean, we’re the enemy because we’re Islamophobes, apparently.

Both Thomas and Beckel called for military reprisals against Yemen:

Thomas: Some of the Paris terrorists reportedly received training in Yemen. President Obama should attack those training camps with whatever weaponry is necessary to destroy them and kill their leaders.

Beckel: You’re right. Anyone who trains terrorists is as guilty of terrorism as the killers themselves. If we have intelligence on the location of terrorist training centers, it is insane not to act.

These calls seem a little redundant, since the US is [already](#) routinely hitting targets in Yemen with drone strikes and other weaponry.

Thomas also called for increased religion-based surveillance:

We need stepped-up surveillance of mosques and Islamic schools in the US. Those found to be encouraging sedition and antisemitism should be closed.

In a rare deviation from purely echoing Thomas, Beckel added a caveat to his agreement: “I don’t have a problem with stepped-up surveillance as long as we follow the rule of law.” The suggestion that US shouldn’t take steps against Islam that are actually illegal, which Beckel made more than once, was the main thing that seemed to distinguish the “liberal” from the conservative point of view.

Beckel did not, however, object to Thomas’ proposal that the envisioned crackdown should ignore the First Amendment. (You have a free-speech right to express antisemitic views—just as you have a right to be an Islamophobe, self-declared or otherwise.)

Nor did Beckel have anything to say about Thomas’ comparison of Islam to Ebola: “Ebola is being fought with disinfectant. We must disinfect Europe and America, or this virus of fanaticism will become incurable.”

Beckel did, though, balk at Thomas’ idea that dozens of groups, including the Council on American-Islamic Relations, should be shut down on the say-so of the United Arab Emirates, a coalition of hereditary dictatorships. “We need solid evidence,” Beckel demurred.



Finally, Beckel and Thomas agreed that the **Charlie Hebdo** killers were basically [Hitler](#):

Beckel: If anything good has come out of the Paris murders, they have united people across different political and even religious divides. Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein wrote a [column](#) for **Variety** in which he compared the murderers to the Nazis. He said we are engaged in a battle between good and evil.

Thomas: I completely agree with this longtime Democrat and Obama supporter. Weinstein sees the problem more clearly than some of our political leaders.

Beckel: Now there’s a great example of common ground.

It’s a great example of [Godwin’s Law](#), actually.

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