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# It's just wrong to blame the EU for terrorism

**MIRIAM GONZÁLEZ**



30 MARCH 2016 • 7:25PM

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A framegrab made from an undated video released by the jihadist group calling itself Islamic State (IS) video allegedly showing Abdelhamid Abaaoud at an undisclosed location CREDIT: EPA

**H**aving felt for five full years the frustration of seeing my husband, Nick Clegg, regularly reversing ill-judged Conservative decisions with little public credit, it is tempting to remain silent on the Brexit referendum – yet another ill-judged Conservative government decision that puts at risk the future of all our children just to sort out internal difficulties in the Conservative Party.

Yet the wildly spurious claims of the Brexit campaign should make us on the non-Conservative side of the pro-European camp speak up. The latest of these came in a speech by justice minister Dominic Raab that terror suspects can “waltz” into Britain because of EU rules on freedom of movement. His statement follows accusations earlier this week that the freedom of movement principle is to blame for the entry of 50 extremely dangerous European criminals into Britain.



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These assertions are made despite the fact that the UK is not part of the Schengen area and that, even for those within Schengen, there are exclusions to the freedom of movement on public security grounds. So if the Home Office has allowed criminals and terrorists into this country, it is nothing to do with EU rules and everything to do with the Home Office itself. But even that plainly false claim is mild in comparison with the Brexit camp blaming the EU for lack of safety regarding Islamic State terrorism following the suicide bomb attacks in Brussels's airport and metro last week.

Some of the people leading the Brexit campaign (including generally sensible ones such as the ex-Tory Leader Michael Howard and Sir Richard Dearlove, a former chief of MI6) said after the Brussels attacks that the EU is failing to keep its people safe – as though the fact that we are confronted with the terrible threat of Isil had everything to do with decisions taken in Brussels, and nothing to do with decisions taken in European capitals, including London.



There is never any excuse for terrorism, political or otherwise. Terrorism never has a political cause. The only cause of terrorism is the brutality of some hideous criminals driven by a hateful and evil ideology. But some political decisions – or, at times, lack of decisions – though often taken with good intentions, have made it easier for those terrorists to establish new bases from which to organise their attacks.

One of those was the decision to invade Iraq (voted for by many MPs – including many who now defend Brexit, such as Michael Howard, who implied he would have invaded Iraq whether or not it had weapons of mass destruction as he saw the invasion as “regime change plus”). Another was the decision to isolate Syria, initially promoted in the EU by the UK (while Richard Dearlove was in charge of MI6), then supported by France and finally endorsed by the whole Union.

More recently one thinks of the victory pictures of the British Prime Minister and then French President Nicolas Sarkozy in Libya, parading like rock stars while not committing to a concerted follow-up. Look at the results now. Iraq, Syria and, increasingly, Libya are now the three main bases for Isil. This is a fact.

When I saw how some of those decisions were taken I was a Middle East and North Africa adviser in the office of the EU Foreign Affairs Commissioner. While my role was minor, I too feel responsible for not having done more to avoid them. It beggars belief that people that were much closer than me to those decisions feel they can now simply – and cheaply – pass the blame on to others.



That does not mean that the EU and all its member countries do not have a lot to answer for, of course. Some 130 people were brutally murdered four months ago in Paris. It is good that many EU governments are now saying that we should reinforce the EU cooperation policy against terrorism.

But why haven't all the prime ministers and governments used those four months to implement strict and meaningful measures to control the financing of Isil? What are the intelligence services waiting for in order to share information with each other? Why haven't all implemented urgently the EU measures to control firearms? How many more need to die before all heads of government spend their time on what really matters to us all – in Britain or on the Continent – instead of on their immediate political preoccupation at hand, be that the forgettable renegotiations of UK membership that have dominated the agenda until February or anything else?

The innocent victims of the attacks in Paris and Brussels lost their lives because some hideous criminals hate the values we have. The fact is that those terrorists appear to be spreading and getting stronger – our response to their attacks cannot be to become smaller and weaker. Whether you instinctively like or dislike the EU, that is just common sense.

*Miriam González is an international trade lawyer and former EU Foreign Affairs Adviser*

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#### Pledge

"We will insist that EU migrants who want to claim tax credits and child benefit must live here and contribute to our country for a minimum of four years." - *Conservative Party Manifesto 2015*

#### What he got

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