

OBAMA CLUELESS ON ISIS RECRUITMENT

Recently, State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf said that “lack of opportunity for jobs” is one of the most prominent “root causes” driving ISIS recruitment efforts. Soon after, President Obama addressed the same issue, echoing Harf’s explanation.

After acknowledging that “poverty alone does not cause a person to become a terrorist,” Obama immediately cited the central role of “economic grievances.” He was explicit: “When people, especially young people, feel entirely trapped in impoverished communities—where there is no order and no path for advancement, where there are no educational opportunities, where there are no ways to support families...[this is what] makes those communities ripe for extremist recruitment.”

A recent edition of the *New York Times* quoted some Muslim experts on this subject. One said that in his experience the young men drawn to join ISIS “came from a variety of family backgrounds.” Another said, “They can come from every ethnic, socioeconomic group, any geographic area.” In short, both reject the class analysis favored by the Obama administration.

Trying to get to the “root causes” of ISIS recruitment efforts makes good sense. Unfortunately, the left-wing lens used by the Obama team renders them blind to reality. It is not structural conditions that draw young men to join ISIS—it is psychocultural factors.

Laurie Goodstein, who wrote the *Times* article, correctly stated that many are enticed to join ISIS because “they feel alienated by life in the West and admit that they have been vulnerable to the Islamic State’s invitation to help build a puritanical utopia.” Similarly, one of the experts she

mentioned described the typical recruit as “an alienated young Muslim with a black-and-white worldview, looking for purpose and adventure.”