Imagine a team of doctors removing the largest malignant tumor from a lung cancer patient, leaving in countless smaller ones, and then allowing the patient to smoke 2-3 packs of cigarettes a day. Does anyone think this would cure the problem?

Yet that is basically Barack Obama's approach to "destroy" ISIS. And why is that? While eliminating today's largest terror network will help protect Americans and allies for the moment, it does nothing about smaller ones, nor changes the underlying conditions that led to their rise in the first place. Let's face it, a hit parade of anti-Western, radical Islam-inspired terror groups have stung Americans under every single president since Jimmy Carter. It's not so simple as to just "blame Bush" or even the current administration. For instance, Iranian revolutionaries humiliated Carter by capturing the U.S. Embassy and holding hostages in Tehran for 444 days. Islamic Jihad blew up the Marine Barracks in Beirut, killing 241 service members during Ronald Reagan's first term. George H.W. Bush was president-elect when Libyan agents exploded Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. Bill Clinton was the Commander-in-Chief during the first World Trade Center terror attack, the Khobar Towers explosion in Saudi Arabia, East Africa Embassy attacks, and USS Cole bombing in Yemen. George W. Bush presided during 9/11 and the aftermath. Though Barack Obama ordered the hit on Osama Bin Laden, Islamic terror groups are even stronger now, despite his olive branch attempts to close Guantanamo and rid the world of nuclear weapons. Yet militarily attacking Sunni terror groups like Al Qaeda, Taliban, ISIS, Ansar al Sharia, Al Nusra Front, Hamas, Al Shabab and Boko Haram, some of whom want to re-establish an Islamic Caliphate stretching from Afghanistan to Spain; and rival Shia groups who follow Iran's state orders like Hezbollah, Mahdi Army and Badr Corps, is akin to pruning poison ivy. It works for a while, though stronger ones eventually rise to take their place. In order to stop the problem entirely, we must tear up the roots. Though political correctness has muddied the waters of public discourse, Americans should not be fooled — the roots of terror are in radical Islam. Exported by Shia-led Iran, and the competing Sunni branch from Saudi Arabia plus other Gulf States, adherents of both versions seek to destroy Israel and drive the U.S. out of the Middle East. Complicating matters further, since the Saudis and other hardline Sunnis consider Iranians upstarts and apostates, they have fought proxy wars against Tehran to thwart their exportation of Shia Islam. In preserving the Arabian Peninsula as center of gravity for the Muslim world, the Saudis and their allies in Qatar, Kuwait and U.A.E. have spent an estimated $100 billion to promote their extreme Sunni form of Wahhabism. They built madrassas throughout Pakistan and Afghanistan, teaching boys only the Koran, which helps explain why the Taliban emerged as a powerful force. And their material support to defeat the Soviet's decade-long occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, aided by the U.S., similarly gave jihadists worldwide an appetite for further glory. The world has slowly, yet steadily felt the repercussions of intolerant,

political Islam. As a cultural indicator, for instance, take a look at pictures from 1970’s Egypt, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan – women commonly wore dresses, skirts and enjoyed far more equality. Now they’re in hijabs in Cairo, Istanbul and Tehran. And while under the Taliban rule, burqas in Kabul, much like the female second class citizens wearing obligatory niqabs are in Gulf States, with just the eyes visible. In some places, they’re even whipped, stoned or hanged for alleged infractions of ultra-rigid sharia law. Freedom has been extinguished in large swaths of the planet.

Meanwhile, though it sounds good in the faculty lounge, Mr. Obama’s proclamation that ISIL is not “Islamic,” rings hollow coming from an American. Instead, he and other Western leaders ought to be pressuring the national leaders of top Islamic countries, including ruling clerics to say that — often, publicly and loudly. That would truly help undermine the legitimacy of groups like ISIS, sapping their strength and undermining recruiting. Without the perception of Mecca’s support, ISIS would be exposed as just another morally bankrupt criminal gang, no more appealing than MS-13, Bloods, Crips, or neo-Nazis.

It’s time for Americans to demand that Washington take stronger action to prevent terror groups in the first place — not simply reacting after we’ve been attacked. And that pressure must be decisively applied to Saudi, Gulf State and Iranian leaders to stop exporting extremism, and officially or unofficially supporting those waging war to kill us. Otherwise destroying ISIS will be just another costly, yet partial and temporary fix to a long term security nightmare.