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We cannot, of course, expect any history from the corporate US media on this Islamic "insanity." In order to take the moral high ground, to claim innocence, the rich and powerful -- the oppressor classes -- prefer not to talk about history, or invent the history that serves their interest.

What *is* surprising, however, is that few writers, even on the left, bring much history to their analysis of unfolding events. Not being a historian -- of Islam, China or Britain -- I can only thank serendipity for the little bit of history that I will invoke to provide some background to the "malaise" unfolding in the Islamic world. A little history to connect Islam today to China in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Implausibly -- perhaps for some -- the history I invoke comes from Friedrich Engels -- yes, *he* of the Communist Manifesto, friend of Karl Marx, revolutionary -- writing in May 1857, when the British were waging war against China, known to history as the Second Opium War.

More implausibly, this history comes from an article published in a leading *US* newspaper, *The New York Daily Tribune* (available in *Marx and Engels Internet Archive*). Yes, in some remote past, a leading US newspaper routinely published commentaries by the likes of Marx and Engels. Today, the publishers of *NYT*, the *Washington Post* or *LA Times* would become apoplectic just thinking about it.

During the First Opium War of 1840-42, when the British waged war to defend their "right" to smuggle opium into China -- Friedrich Engels writes: "The people were quiet; they left the Emperor's soldiers to fight the invaders, and submitted after defeat with Eastern fatalism to the power of the enemy." Yes, in those times, even enlightened Westerners spoke habitually of Oriental fatalism, fanaticism, sloth, backwardness, and -- not to forget their favourite -- despotism.

However, something strange had overtaken the Chinese some fifteen years later. For, during the Second Opium War, writes Friedrich Engels: "The mass of people take an active, nay fanatical, part in the struggle against the foreigners. They poison the bread of the European community at Hongkong by wholesale, and with the coolest premeditation ... They go with hidden arms on board trading steamers, and, when on the journey, massacre the crew and European passengers and seize the boat. They kill and kidnap every foreigner within their reach."

Had the Chinese decided to trade one Oriental disease for another: Fatalism for fanaticism? Ah, these Orientals! Why can't they just stick to their fatalism? If only the Orientals would stick to their fatalism, all our conquests would have been such cakewalks!