



Revisiting America's Deadliest Shooting: What Really Was Killer Paddock's Motive?

The tagline “What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas” shouldn't apply to our nation's absolute worst mass shooting. Yet five years after millionaire and avid gambler Stephen Paddock murdered 60 people and wounded 850, raining down terror from a Las Vegas high-rise window, we still don't know his motive. This reality has, of course, given rise to conspiracy theories. But what if what drove Paddock is actually hiding in plain sight, a phenomenon so common that it would never be suspected?



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Fox News host Tucker Carlson revisited the tragedy Monday, [saying](#) on his nightly show:

It was five years ago this week, October 1, 2017, that police say a man in his 60s called Stephen Paddock smashed out the window of his hotel room on the 32nd floor of the building right behind us, the Mandalay Bay, and rained rifle rounds down on a crowd of concert-goers. They were there for a country music festival.

Jason Aldean was performing on stage 400 yards from Paddock's window.

Police say Paddock continued to fire until he shot himself to death and that's how they found him when they breached the door and entered his room....

And despite a lengthy and expensive investigation, a huge number of unanswered questions, some of them the most basic questions about that shooting, remain unanswered....

Who was Stephen Paddock? He had no criminal record. He had no obvious political motive. In fact, he had no obvious motive of any kind.

That neither local nor federal authorities could, or would, provide any explanation for the massacre raises suspicions that they may be hiding something. Maybe they are, too. But there's more to it.

Usually in these cases, internet sleuths can quickly uncover at least some information hinting at motive. Not so in Paddock's case. There are apparently no jihadist passions (ISIS [did assert](#) that Paddock converted to Islam, but it appears they were attempting to capitalize on an “unclaimed” attack), no anti-government ones, no racial ones; in fact, there appears to be no political, religious, or social motive whatsoever. Moreover, according to the *Mirror*, [writing](#) in 2017, “Paddock was not a registered Democrat or Republic[an] and was not even registered to vote....”

Considering all this, a picture emerges of this man with elusive passions: of a passionless existence. I knew someone like Paddock, too.

Before proceeding, I'll emphasize that my ex-acquaintance, who's now deceased, would never have



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killed anyone; his emotional foundation's nature precluded that. But similar to childless Paddock, who'd been married and divorced twice, he was an elderly bachelor with no kids. Like Paddock, who slept much of the day and hit the casinos at night, he was a multi-millionaire who filled his days with gambling. And though he voted (Democrat, out of habit, sort of like an irresistible nervous tick), he wasn't very political and certainly wasn't religious. Eat, sleep, gamble — that was his life.

It always struck me how meaningless this was. One day, at dinner with this acquaintance and someone close to me, the topic of how he wanted to stay alive somehow arose (perhaps his health was being discussed). Half joking and maybe half trying to delve into his psyche, I asked, "Why do you want to stay alive?" He replied, certainly no more than half joking himself (if that), "I like the meals."

It's not known if Paddock tired of our planet's cuisine, but did he have a good reason to get up in the morning (or, in his case, the afternoon)? What if his motivation in committing his massacre was the simplest one of all:

"Why not?"

And then there's "Why not's" justification and worldview: the moral relativism/nihilism sweeping our age.

Considering that Paddock reportedly was depressed in the months preceding his crime, note that the Bible tells us, "There is pleasure in sin for a season." What if Paddock's season was finally over? What if the winter of reality set in and his existence's meaninglessness hit him, hard? Furthermore, what if he decided to end it all and, lacking necessary moral restraints, exit in a way that would make news and etch his name in history?

As to this, when wondering what worldview explains the man's actions — e.g., Islam, a political orientation — something almost universally is overlooked: moral relativism/nihilism (a corollary of atheism) *is a worldview*.

It's our time's default one, too, as the Barna Group found via [2002](#) and [2021](#) research. Most Americans today subscribe to moral relativism/nihilism, believing "there are no moral absolutes," as Barna [put it](#).

This isn't to imply that most Americans could bring themselves to commit a heinous massacre. As with my ex-acquaintance and his emotional foundation, their hearts don't perfectly align with their heads' morally nihilistic notions (thankfully). What's more, some may have unholy urges (e.g., to drink excessively, connive in business, be lascivious), but most have no desire to kill that needs to be restrained.

But to paraphrase writer Fyodor Dostoevsky, without God and recognition of His gift of Truth, all things are permitted. What happens when moral relativism/nihilism not only is accepted *intellectually*, but has been incorporated into a person's emotional foundation? He then will have no moral restraints and may be what we describe as a sociopath or psychopath.

Note here that Paddock's father, Benjamin Hoskins Paddock, [was a criminal](#) who appeared on the FBI's 10 Most Wanted list and, [reportedly](#), was "diagnosed as psychopathic."

As for Stephen Paddock, given his profile and today's norms, he assuredly was a moral relativist/nihilist. And if he was a "devout" one, it means he had no moral restraints on his behavior.

Jeffrey Dahmer, the homosexual, cannibalistic serial killer, explained this mentality well in jailhouse interviews (in which he was very honest) conducted after he'd experienced a Christian conversion. Relating what justified his acting upon his dark urges, he said he'd embraced atheism/evolution and



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figured that if we all just arose from the “muck,” well, what’s the difference? He also reportedly told his parents as a teen, “If there’s no God, why can’t I just make up my own rules?” Why, indeed.

Of course, my theory on Paddock is unproven. But sometimes the simplest answer is the correct one and is too simple to be considered — especially when those doing the considering accept the motive as axiomatic, as natural as the air they breathe. It all reminds me of the *Criminal Minds* episode “The Boogeyman” (2006), in which a small community is plagued by child killings. The murderer (spoiler alert) turns out to be a child himself, a 12-year-old boy. And when little Jeffrey is apprehended and [asked at the show’s conclusion](#), “Why’d you hurt those kids?” his answer is simple: “Because I wanted to.”



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