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The Islamic State of Mind

A coalition might destroy the Islamic State, but can it destroy the state of being radically Islamic?

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The world has never seen anything quite like the Islamic State.

This terrorist pseudo-state appears to have somehow surpassed the savagery of al Qaeda, the organization that spawned it and that executed the worst terrorist attack in history on Sept. 11, 2001.

The Islamic State's savagery and its rapid spread have made even the radical Islamic Republic of Iran appear moderate and pragmatic by comparison. In spite of Iran being well known as the world's foremost state sponsor of terrorism, an enabler of 9/11, an enabler of the Islamic State itself, and a genocidal regime ambitious for nuclear weapons, the United States government has partially allied with it to defeat the Islamic State.

Such is the power of social media and hd videos of beheadings, crucifixions and other gory executions committed by terrorists waving black flags. Such is the effect of overrunning whole cities, seizing American-made tanks and guns and ammunition from national armies, and then declaring a caliphate.

When the Islamic State became a "caliphate," its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, became "the imam and [caliph] for the Muslims everywhere," the group's spokesman said in a statement in June 2014. That meant all Muslims, jihadists or otherwise, according to the statement, had to pledge their allegiance to the Islamic State and Caliph Baghdadi. "The legality of all emirates, groups, states and organizations," said the spokesman, "becomes null by the expansion of the [caliph's] authority and arrival of its troops to their areas."

Charles Lister, visiting fellow at the Brookings Doha Center, called this brazen declaration "likely the most significant development in international jihadism since 9/11." The Islamic State essentially picked a fight with everyone on the planet who did not already support it.

Now, everyone is fighting back. The United States, Britain, France, Germany, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar, Turkey, Russia and Iran are launching ever increasing air strikes from an ever expanding anti-Islamic State coalition. By nearly all accounts, the defeat of the Islamic State is inevitable and imminent.

The big question is, *what happens after the Islamic State is defeated?*

The Islamic State is apparently about to share a fate similar to Libya in the 1980s, the Taliban in 2001, Saddam Hussein's Iraq in 2003, Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda in 2011, and others who were identified as enemies in the war on terror.

But what is that fate? Annihilation?

Far from it.

After the Islamic State is defeated and perhaps Baghdadi is imprisoned and awaiting trial, what will happen? Will its black flag disappear?

Will its tens of thousands of gunmen and executioners go back home and get a job? Will its ideology fail and dissipate into oblivion?

Or will its unstable, disruptive nature continue to roil under the surface, as in Libya? Will it morph into something else, as Saddam Hussein's forces morphed into insurgency groups like the Army of the Men of the Naqshbandi Order and the 1920 Revolution Brigades? Will it retreat and resurge in bloody insurgent warfare until even its enemies allow it to regain much of its power, as in Afghanistan with the Taliban? Will it splinter into other groups, as al Qaeda divided into splinters—one of them being the Islamic State itself?

When the bombing ends and politicians declare that the Islamic State is finished, will it truly be defeated?

The Islamic State—Post-Caliphate

The Islamic State has indicated that its beloved caliphate may not endure long. In an audio message released in May, Islamic State spokesman Abu Mohammad al-Adnani implied that its losses today are similar to its losses during the Iraq War troop surge of 2007 and the Anbar Awakening. He taunted Western nations by asking, "Were we defeated when we lost the cities in Iraq and were in the desert without any city or land? And would we be defeated, and you be victorious, if you were to take Mosul, Sirte or Raqqa, or even take all the cities …? Certainly not! True defeat is the loss of willpower and desire to fight."

*True defeat is the loss of willpower and desire to fight.*Despite the fact that this statement came from a propagandist, it is true.

Defeating the Islamic State requires more than simply bombing out the caliphate.

In June, the Islamic State published an editorial in its*al-Naba* newsletter titled "The Crusaders' Illusions in the Age of the Caliphate." It said: "If they [the West] want to achieve true victory—and they will not, God willing—then they will have to wait a long while: till an entire generation of Muslims that was witness to the establishment of the Islamic State and the return of the caliphate, and that followed the story of its standing firm against all the nations of unbelief, is wiped out …. For the generation that has lived in the shadow of the caliphate, or has lived during its great battles, will be able—God willing—to keep its banner aloft, as was the generation that grew up in the shadow of the Islamic State in Iraq able to bring it back in a stronger form than before, after the crusaders and their clients thought that it had been eliminated and that its trace had vanished from the Earth."

This statement underlines the *only way* that will prove effective enough to annihilate radical Islam.

At the same time, it also acknowledges the vulnerability of the caliphate. For the Islamic State, losing the caliphate means losing a major source of income, a sanctuary, a source of inspiration for its followers, and a microcosm of the kind of Islamic society it hopes will one day engulf the world. It's an excruciating prospect for the Islamic State to face, considering its success over the past two years.

Rapidly increasing air strikes and ground attacks from the U.S.-led Combined Joint Task Force, Operation Inherent Resolve, and the Russia-Syria-Iran-Iraq coalition have been forcing the Islamic State out of its strongholds in Iraq and Syria and into the lawless coastal regions of Libya. Yet air strikes have followed them there as well. "The whole world really is rallying in a way that is unprecedented against this organization," noted Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Joby Warrick.

According to the ihs Conflict Monitor, the Islamic State lost about 12 percent of its territory in the first half of this year.

Desperate Times, Desperate Measures

"There's a growing understanding that the idea of the caliphate is dying," said Max Abrahms, assistant professor of political science at Northeastern University in Boston, "and more and more, the leadership is calling on foreign fighters not even to come to Iraq and Syria but to go elsewhere or to commit violence locally."

The morphing and splintering of the Islamic State has already begun. You can bomb the organization, but can you bomb its ideology?

We are now seeing the Islamic State rely on the resilience of its ideology in an effort to immortalize its terror campaign.

A senior Islamic State operative said in an Internet interview, "While we see our core structure in Iraq and Syria under attack, we have been able to expand and have shifted some of our command, media and wealth structure to different countries. … We do have, every day, people reaching out and telling us they want to come to the caliphate. But we tell them to stay in their countries and rather wait to do something there." This man also said that the loss of Raqqa, the Islamic State's capital in Syria, would definitely be avenged.

Exporting terror via citizens of other countries who stay where they are is a way for the Islamic State to deter foreign nations from getting involved in the region. Not only do domestic terror concerns occupy these nations' attention, but a nation will at least think twice about striking the Islamic State if it knows Islamist terrorist sympathizers are somewhere within its borders.

One apt example of this was when the Islamic State incited Muslims in Germany, which is a member of Operation Inherent Resolve, to commit Brussels-style violence against the "enemy of Allah." The group threatened attacks on the German Chancellery and the Cologne-Bonn Airport.

Already, the Islamic State has left its terrorist imprints across many parts of the globe: Brussels, Würzburg, Ansbach, Paris, Nice, Normandy, Baghdad, Sirte, Sharm el-Sheikh, Istanbul, Dhaka, Jakarta, Philadelphia, Orlando. While some of the more recent attacks came in response to the Islamic State's calls for more bloodshed during the Islamic observance of Ramadan, counterterrorism experts say that the attacks were primarily a reaction to the group's recent losses in Iraq and Syria. Will McCants, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution's Center for Middle East Policy, noted, "The successful attacks abroad are an indication of deep worry at home."

The Islamic State "will now expand to other tactics and start executing much more insidious and covert ops in big cities," a senior security official in France stated.

To complicate matters, Islamic State leaders have called for its lone-wolf recruits to "keep it simple and effective." Previously, in 2014, they exhorted their followers: "If you are not able to find an ied [improvised explosive device] or a bullet, then single out the disbelieving American, Frenchman or any of their allies. Smash his head with a rock, or slaughter him with a knife, or run him over with your car, or throw him down from a high place, or choke him, or poison him."

Mohammed Lahouaiej Bouhlel did not use an ied or a bullet on Bastille Day in Nice. He used a truck, and he slaughtered 84 people in about five minutes. Air strikes are useless against lone wolves like Riaz Khan Ahmadzai, who attacked Germans on a train with an ax.

“If the tyrants close the door of migration in your faces, then open the door of jihad in theirs and turn their actions against them,” an Islamic State spokesman said in a July audio message.

This is a *direct message* from the Islamic State to Muslims who are migrating to Europe. And it is not suggesting that those who *do* walk through the door of migration should reject terrorism in an act of gratitude.

Among those migrants already in Europe and those bound for its shores are Islamic State jihadists who expatriated to Iraq and Syria from over 120 countries, particularly the United States, Australia and Middle Eastern and European nations. “We all know there will be a terrorist diaspora out of the caliphate,” Federal Bureau of Investigation director James Comey told the House Homeland Security Committee on July 14. “Those thousands of fighters are going to go someplace, [and] our job is to spot them and stop them before they come … to harm innocent people.”

What’s Ahead

From its foundation in June 2014, the Islamic State has singled out Christianity and Rome as its chief targets. Baghdadi declared, “Syria is not for Syrians and Iraq is not for Iraqis. The land is for the Muslims, all Muslims. This is my advice to you. If you hold to it, you will conquer Rome and own the world, if Allah wills.”

In September 2014, the group’s spokesman stated: “Oh America, oh allies of America, and oh crusaders, know that the matter is more dangerous than you have imagined and greater than you have envisioned. … We will conquer your Rome, break your crosses, and enslave your women, by the permission of Allah …. This is his promise to us …. If we do not reach that time, then our children and grandchildren will reach it, and they will sell your sons as slaves at the slave market.”

A recent issue of the Islamic State’s *Dabiq* magazine was its most anti-Rome. Titled “Break the Cross,” it featured “Why We Hate You and Why We Fight You” and other articles of unveiled hatred toward Catholics in particular.

Yet, in January 2015, the Islamic State announced, “Oh crusaders, … know that we want Paris—by Allah’s permission—before Rome and before Spain, after we blacken your lives and destroy the White House, the Big Ben and the Eiffel Tower, by Allah’s permission …. We want Kabul, Karachi, the Caucasus, Qom, Riyadh and Tehran. We want Baghdad, Damascus, Jerusalem, Cairo, Sanaa, Doha, Abu Dhabi and Amman. The Muslims will return to mastership and leadership in every place. Here is Dābiq, Ghouta and Jerusalem. There is Rome. We will enter it and this is not a lie” (emphasis added).

These are the ambitions not of a pragmatic nation-state, but of an ideology embodied in it. If Baghdadi is captured or killed, if the caliphate’s governing apparatus is broken, if the Islamic State is destroyed, will this ideology die with it?

The Islamic State desires to conquer Rome as its chief target, but it is willing to temporarily suspend that aspiration to attend to more pressing matters. It desires a caliphate, but it can be content without it. The only thing it fears is “true defeat”: “the loss of willpower and desire to fight.”

Islamic State-style radical Islam still has access to rocks, knives, poison, guns, trucks and millions of unarmed, non-Muslim men, women and children. And it still has the willpower and desire to fight.

In the Islamic State’s June editorial, in which it conceded the likelihood of defeat, the group’s spokesman stated: “The state of the caliphate has shown all mankind what the true Islamic state is like, how the sharia is applied in full and not in part …. It has thus done away with all the myths of popular support, all the lies of gradualism, and all the fears of the revenge of the crusaders.”

Geopolitical Futures founder George Friedman wrote on July 26: “The war [on terror] is not being won, and a stalemate is equivalent to a loss for the United States.

“The essential problem has been a persistent misunderstanding of radical Islamism. It is a movement, not an organization. Or to be more precise, radical Islamism is a strand of Islam. How large or small it is has become the subject of a fairly pointless debate. Its size is sufficient to send American forces halfway around the world and it is capable of carrying out attacks in Europe and the U.S. Whether it is a small strand or a giant strand doesn’t matter. What matters is that it cannot be suppressed, or at least has not yet been suppressed.”

Former German Defense Minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg and Daniel J. Arbess, a lifetime member of the Council on Foreign Relations, wrote on February 12 that the Islamic State “is by no means a unique adversary; it’s only today’s manifestation of a multiheaded hydra: Decapitate [the Islamic State], like al Qaeda, degrade or even destroy it, and expect to see another known, or as-yet unknown, iteration step up to proclaim itself the leader of the supposed sharia caliphate increasingly impervious to physical and digital boundaries.”

As much as Westerners want to, they cannot relegate the fight against radical Islamism to some remote stretch of miserable desert. The very word *caliphate* points to the multiheaded, multi-*century* nature of violent, radical Islamism.

If the Islamic State falls and its believers morph into splinters, lone wolves and perhaps a new head of the hydra, what more could the world do to annihilate radical Islam? If Iran, the world’s foremost state sponsor of terrorism, suddenly proclaims itself the king of yet another caliphate (a nuclear-armed caliphate, perhaps), what will stop that seemingly never-ending cycle of terrorism?

Is it even possible to defeat the multiheaded, multi-century, multi-continental force of violent, radical Islam? Can anything strike Islamist nations, pseudo-nations, terrorist organizations and individuals into “true defeat”—“the loss of willpower and desire to fight”?

For today’s open-society, politically correct Western democracies, the answer so far has been no. But for tomorrow’s unified, galvanized, crusading empire, the answer is yes. Believe it or not, this is the truth revealed in biblical prophecy.

True Defeat

Iran is the king of terror that has rallied radical Islam since its very foundation as an Islamic Republic in 1979. Nearly every act of terror by

any radical Islamist group has been directly or indirectly inspired, funded, manned and/or carried out by Iran. As America has weakened, Iran has grown in power. Rather than moderating its sponsorship of terrorism as it joins the community of nations, Iran has been greatly emboldened, pushing against other nations and aggressively seeking the ability to sustain a program for creating nuclear warheads and missiles able to deliver them to Israel and Europe.

Years before the Islamic State beheaded its first victim, Iran knew the key to its power: become the leader of radical Islam, an ideology that no single air strike, battle, war or series of limited wars can destroy.

Islam is a huge religion with numerous divisions. The fact that Iran is fighting the Islamic State is a case in point; another is Iran's enmity with Saudi Arabia and other moderate Arab states, which are more likely to ally with Europe than with Iran. Other deep divisions exist between Islamic countries. But more and more, there is only one king leading and wielding radical Islam, and that king is Iran.

Iran will continue to push and advance its ambitions by using its national power and its terrorist arsenal to control more groups, to dominate more countries and to attract more radical Islamic believers inside the Middle East and beyond. It will push and push until its radical ideology takes over—or until a superior force attacks radical Islam itself, and its king.

For over two decades, *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry has proclaimed a prophecy that can apply only to radical Islam. Daniel 11:40 describes a clash between radical Islam, led by Iran, and a European power, led by Germany: "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over."

This clear prophecy, put together with other Bible prophecies, reveals that radical Islam's ceaseless pushing and Europe's attack will trigger World War iii!

Perhaps Europe's "whirlwind" attack will be partly informed by wisdom from the Islamic State itself: "If they want to achieve true victory … then they will have to wait … till an entire generation of Muslims that was witness to the establishment of the Islamic State and the return of the caliphate, and that followed the story of its standing firm against all the nations of unbelief, is wiped out."

We are seeing the aggressive development of this "push." Soon, the world will be shocked to witness Europe's "whirlwind," blitzkrieg response. Read the rest of Daniel's prophecy, and you see how these events indicate just how close we are to the time when "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." ▪