

Is Militant Islam Facing an Endgame?  
Posted On:December 31, 1969

Many intellectuals believe that the political right-wing is \342\200\234demonizing\342\200\235 Islam. This is a conundrum, because it appears that Islam is demonizing itself. How peaceful is a religion when it is obviously going through a fever fueled by resentment, fear of modernity, and a phase of religiosity that is as much at war with its own people as it is against the rest of the world?

Religions are like rivers: there is upstream, downstream, rapids, still waters, and a delta where the religion reaches the global ocean. Christianity and Judaism have both flowed through such a river and are now, by and large, part of the global ocean of civilizational values. Buddhism has traveled the same route, and its key values are now global. Hinduism is in the delta stage, with varying streams approaching the ocean. This is not to say that all religions are in a perfectly peaceful place; there are pockets of extremism and rigidity, but by and large, most of the world\342\200\231s religions share civilizational values today.

Islam, the youngest of the great religions, is in a fever that is roiling not only Muslims, but every neighbor they have in the world. Small but determined groups can terrorize huge populations that had grown accustomed to order. Suicide bombers, truck bombers, and carefully staged assassinations do not need to kill masses of people to sow terror.

There is a worldwide trend that is alarming, but understandable: a trend to put an end to the problem, sweeping up both criminal zealots and ordinary practitioners. We are seeing this now with Russia and China: threats of total extermination of their Muslim populations.

Russia. Russia\342\200\231s problem is several centuries old. In the 19th century, they conquered all the old Muslim city-states (the Silk Road) across Asia, incorporating them into the Russian Empire. During the early days of the Russian Revolution in 1917, these Muslim states were freed, then absorbed again as the Soviet Union became the new Russian Empire. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Muslim states once more asserted their freedom, but Russia has pulled most of them into a neo-imperial union. Although Russia conquered these Muslims, they never fully pacified them. We are seeing this now. The region is suffering both internal warfare (nationalism vs. Islamism) and ethnic warfare, the results of Stalin\342\200\231s campaign to displace who le populations and draw borders that are deliberately designed to divide and conquer.

Militant Islamists are directing their fury at Russia, with the threat that they will deal with the other issues later. Russia, hosting the Winter Olympic games, is under attack by Islamists. President Putin has announced (and I believe him) that he will deal with these terrorists with extermination. We will soon see that anyone in Muslim clothing (veils or robes) will be marked for punishment.

Asia. Thailand (Buddhist and secular majority) is in a war of extermination against their Muslim minority, as is Burma (Myanmar), and for some time, China against their once moderate Muslim population, the Uighurs.

Egypt. Islamists got as far as getting elected, where they expected to reverse Egypt\342\200\231s trend toward secularization and modernization. The army has put an end to that, and is now in the process of exterminating the Islamist membership.

The United States. This country responded to a series of deadly attacks, culminating in that of 9/11, by going to war in Afghanistan and Iraq, neither of them wars of extermination and neither of them transformative either. We ourselves are in a slow-moving internal war that throws into conflict civil libertarians and the government responsible for our safety. If there is another large-scale attack on our homeland, the civil libertarians will lose.

Europe. The horrors of World War II had convinced the European elites that they must be tolerant toward immigrants. This tolerance has met the stone wall of organized Islamism, converting thugs in prisons, radicalizing hapless and unemployed youth to seek martyrdom in \342\200\234holy wars,\342\200\235 and pushing liberal laws to permit i lliberal behavior. Europe is now reversing its liberality, not with extermination, but probably expulsion in the future.

The Islamists are in a death cycle.

680 words

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