

# The Islamic State Caliphate is Pure Islam

by Jerry Gordon with Bill Bennett of Morning America and Dr. Michael Welner (April 2015)



## ISIS Foreign Fighters

In the March *New English Review* (NER) we [wrote](#) about the failure of the Countering Violent Extremism Summit of President Obama.

On Wednesday, February 18, 2014 at a White House Summit, President Obama presented his views on countering “violent extremism.” He suggested that Islamic terrorists misappropriate Islamic doctrine, exploit disaffected youths in communities across the US and globally throughout the Ummah – the community of Muslim believers. He suggested that youths prone to radicalization outside the US may be victimized by poverty, without job opportunities and oppressed by corrupt regimes. Countering violent extremism he suggests is a multi-pronged approach involving economic programs, political reform and community involvement to halt radicalization. His focus in the US was on creating community partnerships and pilot projects in several American cities, endeavoring to integrate Muslims in America, preserving and protecting their civil rights under our constitution against untoward surveillance. The President gathered Muslim and other religious clerics from the US and abroad, community leaders, law enforcement, homeland security officials, and high tech entrepreneurs seeking means of stopping radicalization of youths. These youths are attracted by the “successes” of the Islamic State blasted around the world via the internet, tens of thousands of tweets, high production videos and on-line webzines in a number of languages including English.

Nowhere in his remarks did the President explain what the Islamic doctrine is that has attracted tens of thousands of foreign fighters, Americans among them, to be recruited to the cause of this self-styled Caliphate, the Islamic State (IS). What he has called ISIL, the Islam State in the Levant (ISIL) is a reference to the broad geographic area that stretches from the eastern Mediterranean coast to the Persian Gulf. Those “successes” include videos of the savagery perpetrated against the hated Kuffars, meaning infidels, including Christians, Jews, ancient religious minorities and apostate

Muslims. Those videos show barbaric beheadings, burnings, crucifixions, mass shootings and enslavement. The President mentioned recent incidents in Paris, Copenhagen, Ottawa and Sydney of attacks on victims without naming the victims; leftists, free thinkers, Christians and Jews. Neither did he identify the perpetrators.

Just prior to the mid-February White House Summit, *The Atlantic Magazine* published an article by Graeme Wood, [What ISIS Really Wants](#) which stated:

The Islamic State is no mere collection of psychopaths. It is a religious group with carefully considered beliefs, among them that it is a key agent of the coming apocalypse.

Russian historian at Connecticut Central State University, Professor Jay Bergman, wrote, "I read it. Superb. The [President] should read it. But of course...he won't."

According to Wood, IS bases all of its power and authority on a strict adherence to a Salafi literal interpretation of Islam and Sharia law, with almost a total focus on the doctrine of Tawhid. Tawhid calls for strict adherence to the laws of Allah as revealed by the Prophet Mohammed. Further, that all man-made laws and systems must be rejected. IS considers any Muslim who doesn't adhere to the doctrine of Tawhid an infidel, including "core Al Qaeda" and other Salafists who object to IS public displays of savagery.

We concluded:

Countering violent extremism as propounded by President Obama evaded his responsibility to identify the radical Islamic doctrine of IS. He engaged in the delusion that by campaigning for community organization, jobs and faith based programs we might prevent radicalization of Muslim youths. Instead he should listen to the wise counsel of former DIA chief, Army Gen. Michael Flynn, who in media interviews and [testimony](#) before the House Armed Services Committee called for a global war against IS. Flynn suggested the first cornerstone of a strategy to "degrade" and "defeat" IS is to define the ideology behind radical Islamic extremism. The fact that liberal publications like *The Atlantic* have exposed the barbarity of strict adherence to Tawhid in Islam clearly communicates that destroying IS through the exercise of American and allied military power should be the first order of business.

The President's "violent extremism" Conference in Washington demonstrated that soft power is trumped by raw Islamic Jihad every time. That is embodied in failure to recognize the Qur'anic doctrine behind the rise of IS. To paraphrase a State Department

anti-ISIS message, "Think Again, Turn Away" from Taqiyya – lying for Allah.

On March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Forensic Psychiatrist Dr. Michael Welner, Chairman of The Forensic Panel, was [interviewed](#) on Bill Bennett's *Morning America* program about what attracts Western and other foreign Muslims, to join the barbaric cause of the Islamic State. Welner provided insights as to what attracts Islamic State recruits that raise serious questions about the social media messaging initiatives of the Obama Administration. Dr. Welner explains the root of ISIS's appeal and why people continue to join its cause.

In the face of the rise of the Islamic State and its ability to attract Muslims to Syria and Iraq from all over the world, syndicated radio host Bill Bennett welcomed Michael Welner, M.D. back to his program to discuss the apparent popularity of ISIS. Dr. Welner, known to NER readers, as one of America's most highly-regarded forensic psychiatrists. He is routinely consulted on the most complex forensic cases across the United States, such as the ongoing New York trial of the accused kidnapper of young [Etan Patz](#). He is known to our readers for his work on the [Omar Khadr Guantanamo](#) case and in pioneering research an evidence-based standard of the worst of crimes, the [Depravity Standard](#).

In response to Bennett's invitation, Dr. Welner confronted the apparent paradox of ISIS recruitment successes in the face of its disturbing beheadings. As he explained to Bennett, Dr. Welner noted that non-Muslims do not appreciate the significance of the Caliphate declared by ISIS leader al-Baghdadi. ISIS is attracting followers of a utopian and unadulterated Islam abandoned over 1000 years ago, of a faith of strict dogmatic adherence to the Qu'ran. These Caliphate ideals prompt an obligation among the devout to serve the Caliphate in whatever capacity needed, and involve a plan of nation building based on the idealized Muslim society on land the Caliphate controls. Beheadings (and enslavement and immolation) are prescribed by the Qu'ran for cleansing those Muslims deemed to be apostate. Followers allow for these methods as necessary measures in the building of a messianic ideal, reminiscent of the "cleansing" of Pol Pot's Cambodia. ISIS exploits these punitive options to inspire fear of the consequences of resistance among its local opponents. At the same time, ISIS inspires quiet among Muslims generally because to contest its methods would be to contest the Qu'ran. This psychological control, explains Dr. Welner, is an adaptation of political correctness, Muslim style.

The Western media and ruling classes muddle through by looking away from how ISIS is laying waste to all religions in the Arab world. That is consistent with the intelligentsia's uselessness in genocide historically, Dr. Welner lays out an approach for how America should confront the ISIS threat militarily and in its public information in a segment Bennett termed

“masterful.” Readers of the NER will be familiar with how American exceptionalism is key to the solution from our interview with Dr. Welner in the aftermath of the ([Oklahoma Beheading NER interview](#)).

The *National Review On-line* rated the Bennett-Welner discussion the best of the Week of March 16 to 20, 2015 on this topic. Clare Lopez, former CIA Operations officer and Senior Fellow at the Washington, DC-based Center for Security Policy commented:

Great interview with Dr. Michael Welner...he understands appeal of IS better than the entire USG put together right now. I must say it was fascinating to listen to someone from completely outside the political realm nail it like that. Meanwhile all the so-called counterterrorism ‘experts,’ and Islam ‘experts’ are so far off base we know the bad guys are laughing at us all.

Against this background, here is an edited version of the Bennett-Welner interview.



**William J. Bennett:** It is morning in America. Good morning, welcome back everybody. Sorry I’m tripping on my words. I’m going to get out of the way and let our guest speak. In any case Dr. Michael Welner, Forensic Psychiatrist, Chairman of The Forensic Panel and this morning I want to emphasize his work as the Architect of The Depravity Scale, Dr. Welner’s practice is in New York and surrounding areas. Good morning Dr. Welner.



**Dr. Michael Welner:** Good morning Bill. Very nice to be back with you and hope you have been doing well these days. We have all been busy but I miss you.

**Bennett:** I missed you too and that’s why we called you because it was time to talk to you so thank you very much. I want to talk about ISIS and related phenomena, two, really two questions. One is, we have been witnessing on TV, video and the internet a level of depravity, a word you know best better than most. We don’t usually see the beheading of people, children

burying people alive, and crucifixions. I have two questions. One, the second one really frightens me, but the first one is does this kind of thing go on a lot all the time? We just don't see it and ISIS likes to publicize it for whatever odd reasons it has. The second question is does this have appeal to people? Aristotle says man seeks the good. Is this a recruiting tool in some bizarre, depraved way?

**Welner:** There are a number of very important things for us all to get oriented in to understand this that may be beyond our view where we sit here in America. It illustrates the complexity of the problem not only from behavioral standpoint how we react to it but how others in the Muslim world react to it and also those who are recruited. First of all, we have to get away from the notion that the idea of Islamist, Islamofascism and political Islam means the same thing to every movement. ISIS is very different from the fascism of Iran and their key difference explains ISIS's success. What ISIS has tapped into is the notion of the Islamic Caliphate. For those who are devout Muslims, they are very vulnerable, very sensitive to the idea that a Caliphate is required in order for a Muslim to adequately observe one's faith. It is the equivalent of what we have seen in other faiths of false messiahs. The notion of a messiah – if you can carry it off – is so powerful that it gives the movement, for those who subscribe to it, the entitlement to say come and join and be part of what gives the Caliphate the opportunity to declare itself: that it has *land*, and that's what has always distinguished ISIS from Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda may have some of the same ideological orientation. However, it isn't just about the idea of "Come and behead people," it's "We have land, we want to establish a Caliphate." It's the equivalent of saying, "We're building Mecca or we're building something holy. Come and fight for it." Thus, people are fighting for a cause and that's why they are joining. They are not joining because of You Tube; they are not joining because of social media. Social media only enable them to be reached, to be energized, to go beyond themselves and to get caught up in something messianic.

**Bennett:** Let's go back to my first question, is this sort of thing we have seen and I have described, beheading, burying children alive, etc., etc., does this kind of thing go on all of the time in the world, we just don't see it or is this pretty unusual?

**Welner:** Well the reality is that it does. There are far more people who are beheaded by governments, for example, like Saudi Arabia and other countries that nominally adhere to Muslim teachings. The idea of beheadings and stonings and even setting people on fire is totally consistent with Muslim teaching, which is one of the problems within the Muslim world. We think we are the only ones who are politically correct? The political correctness that exists within the Muslim world is such that while these kinds of actions when they are broadcast to the world in an obnoxious way, in an outrageous way, in a provocative way, may be

embarrassing to Muslims who are secularized. At the same time they recognize that because it is in line with the Qur'an and not at all inconsistent with ISIS's claim that it is a purified strain of Islam, they can't criticize it. That is *their* political correctness. The pushback against ISIS from within the Muslim world isn't just because there is death and destruction of Muslims killing Muslims it's because the leaders themselves are threatened. It's because Jordan recognizes that the Kingdom is in peril. When the Saudis recognize that their reign is threatened, it isn't beheadings, because *they* do beheadings. ISIS can claim the high road because they say: "We are following the Qur'an to the letter. Come and join us." That freezes devout Muslims who say "Well, you know they really are devout Muslims."

**Bennett:** I think it's important to bring up in this context talking about ISIS. It's important to remind people about King Abdullah and even Egyptian President Al-Sisi are going to fight back against this. However, as you have said Dr. Welner, the task here is to be a good Muslim and thus to establish the Caliphate. Then these beheadings and burying people alive just an unpleasant means to the end that we just sort of look past them or is there an appeal per se in these things to the young unhinged or even not unhinged young male?

**Welner:** The beheadings, the stonings and the killings that are going on regularly are essentially reflecting an ethnic cleansing that is going on right now in the Arab world. Salafist Muslims who feel that they are a pure example of Islam are essentially doing what Pol Pot was doing in Cambodia to get rid of a segment of the population in order to create the kind of population, the kind of Muslims that they want. The shocking nature of it, the broadcast of it, intimidates people into not fighting. It intimidates the West into not fighting. It is designed to do that. It is propaganda by design. It is done in accordance with law. However, the way it is done is in order to send a message and to get people to freeze and be afraid to fight.

**Bennett:** Let me come at this another way. We saw the news story Dr. Welner of the three young Muslim women, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, leaving from London going off to Istanbul and then from there into Syria, Iraq and to join up with ISIS. The only thing that would make sense to a lot of Americans and a lot of commentators was they don't know what they are getting into. They are so young and naive. My fear was that they knew exactly what they were getting into.

**Welner:** You're right because we are not seeing the whole picture. All we are seeing of ISIS is the beheadings. What these young Muslim women are seeing of ISIS is essentially nation building saying, come, help us build a nation. We need doctors, we need engineers. We need people who want to live in this pure messianic society where you will achieve your spiritual

purification by serving the Caliphate. *That* is why they are going. They are going as any nationalist and identified people would go to start something ideal and that is what's being tapped into. They are not watching beheading videos and running there saying I want to go behead someone. We are only getting a part of the picture and that's why it's working for them.

**Bennett:** I take it, that it doesn't make them pause. That is, to go to establish the Caliphate and you watch these things, you see what they do. A lot of people you know I think would say and would think, I think I'm going to pause on this. You know I was going to join because I really would like to see a Caliphate. But wait a minute. I don't want to be part of a group that does this.

**Welner:** Those people were not inspired to join; the alternative view is I am devout. I want to be part of a pure Islam; one that we haven't had for a thousand years. Therefore purification by getting rid of infidels and unbelievers is a necessary evil prescribed by the Qur'an. So by going to the Islamic State – the declared Caliphate, I will be living the Qur'an. I don't expect myself to behead someone but I'm going to live by the law and I shouldn't have any problems under the circumstances. Don't forget they are offering free health care, jobs, from a social welfare standpoint. That also gets caught up with the idea of nation building being ignored in the West. This is far more than the idea of Al Qaeda even though it is outside of its influence and viewed as so outlandish in the use some of its methods.

**Bennett:** I was going to make fun of the Administration proposed jobs program. That is the notion that they are joining because they want job security. I fear it's something worse than that but I may be missing something very important here. I want to come back to ISIS, the Caliphate and the slaughters etc. So the dream of the Caliphate which is part of the faith here, the true believer means that you look the other way? You say well the end justifies the means? I'm not really for beheadings, but you know this is the way we get there. I think of that stupid old joke I learned when I was a kid about the kamikaze pilots, you know the guys announces to all the future kamikaze pilots, you go up in your plane, you are loaded with explosives, you aim your plane toward the American ship and it blows up and you die for the glory of Japan. Any questions? The guy says, what you are out of your mind? I mean if someone promises me the Caliphate and says when we get there the gates of paradise all you have to do is cut people's heads off, crucify them, rape the women, have total disregard for human life I'm going to pause aren't I? Aren't I going to pause and say wait a minute! That isn't any way to build a Caliphate that is worthy.

**Welner:** I think those of us who are not as familiar with Islam as others may have to realize that the idea of a Caliphate runs to the core of the idealized version of Islam and its revival. There has not been a Caliphate for a thousand years. Al-Baghdadi, who declared himself to be the Caliph is actually from the appropriate family line of Muhammed and so there is a certain credibility that he has had among some in declaring himself to be a Caliph and the head of the Caliphate. The significance of that is within Islam if you fulfill your obligations as a Muslim to the Caliphate. That means going to the Caliphate and serving it. Then you will have fulfilled your obligations to the most pure degree. Otherwise you will die ignorant. For someone who is extremely devout – if that is they believe in – what al-Baghdadi is pitching is something messianic, hoping they are going to buy into it. Now, of course there are those who do not believe in him and yet at the same time they respect the Caliphate and what it means. They just say he's not the one and these are not the circumstances under which it will happen. That is very similar to those who may have read Erich Fromm's *The True Believer* and in appreciating fascism and how Hitler and other fascist leaders are able to mobilize people to just great intensity for the cause. When you throw into the mix an idealized form of religion that so many people share, all bets are off.

**Bennett:** How do we combat this? What is the first and most obvious way?

**Welner:** There are ways that we can combat it among our own citizens. However, I don't see that we can't combat this unless we are militarily involved, because it's not going away. People do things in the name of the Muslim faith and in a way that gathers momentum, for example, Boko Haram and others, declaring allegiance to ISIS and gathering more land, they are not going away. What we don't recognize is that they are going after Muslims first. That is their first target so we have a lead time and we have been through this before as a country. You have to deal with the problem when it's small or you have to deal with the problem when it is much bigger.

**Bennett:** Shouldn't we be in a warmer embrace of Egyptian President Al- Sisi and King Abdullah and those who want to take on ISIS in military and in terms of their own religion?

**Welner:** I think that President al-Sisi is a very important man of his generation, who is very clear-eyed about the ISIS threat. We have the wherewithal to support the coalition of the willing. However, there is an Iraqi military that cannot fight. There have not been alliances in Syria that can coalesce. The Jordanian military is really just ineffectual. The Egyptian military is extremely powerful. They are American armed. There is a traditional alliance that goes a long way. As far as I'm concerned and I say this as a very proud supporter of Israel I see President al-Sisi as a man of peace. He is not a troublemaker. He's not looking like late



President Nasser before him to establish his own hegemony and he is naturally aligned with the United States. Egypt didn't kill 243 U.S. Marine servicemen as Iran's proxy in Beirut did in 1983. Egypt didn't take American hostages, Iran did. Egypt isn't taking over Yemen, Syria, and Lebanon and Iraq, as has Iran with its own Shia version of a Caliphate, the Imamate. Astonishing to me that with Egypt so willing and so experienced in having to eradicate its own destabilizing force of Islamism, the Muslim Brotherhood and now Salafists and that the United States is sort of slow on the ball. Unfortunately because al-Sisi is a man of action he's just going have to do it without us. President Obama is going to be left once again following from behind. As far as I'm concerned, he's a man who can make a difference in a vacuum.

[Listen](#) to the *Bill Bennett Morning in America* interview with Dr. Michael Welner, Chairman of the Forensic Panel:

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Also see Jerry Gordon's collection of interviews,