

Islamist Barbarism At The Gate

The barbarism of Islamist terrorists grows every day. They are committing war crimes by systematically destroying the cradle of Western civilization and erasing the history of the region.

The world has become familiar with Islamist actions: not just the cruel brutal behavior of the Islamist State of Iraq and Syria (IS) with its belligerent militarism, its beheadings of hostages, and crucifixion of Christians, but also the actions of other Islamist groups such as al-Qaeda, Taliban, and Boko Haram. These groups have been responsible for terrifying modes of punishment for any divergence from the right way of life they impose, for the suppression of education, honor killings, enslaving and sexually assaulting teenage girls, genital mutilations, and forced marriages.

Now, the world is witnessing with horror the destruction by Islamist terrorists of the cultural heritage of entire civilizations, including UNESCO World Heritage Sites, in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.

It is baffling that some well-meaning Westerners still regard Islamist extremists – jihadists – as carrying the banner of the oppressed or the underprivileged. They disregard the reality that the extreme Islamists are not the modern incarnation of the members of the movements that pressed for liberation from Western colonial powers or the elimination of imperialism. Those individuals had a specific objective in mind, the creation of a freer and more egalitarian society, and, for the most part, they observed basic moral rules in their general behavior and political tactics.

From about 1950 until 1970 the “Third World” group of

countries and their Western supporters expressed the aspirations of those who wanted to liberate themselves from what they perceived as the iniquities of Western controls. They were influenced to a considerable degree by the heralded though imaginary Communist utopias of the Soviet Union and China.

Almost all of those would be reformers were disillusioned by the gods that failed with the revelations of the horrors and mass murders in the two Communist countries. Nor can they seek any comfort in the present autocratic and corrupt Russian regime, or in the semi-transformation, economically if not politically, of China. Perhaps because there is nowhere else to turn, some, especially younger people, have sought out the Muslim world and the Islamists as a surrogate of progressive resistance against Western systems.

But the difference is enormous between contemporary Islamists and those reformers who once regarded Stalin, in spite of the evidence of his brutality and killing of millions, as the incarnation of wisdom. Leftists of the past operated in the context of a Western culture that they, rightly or wrongly, sought to improve. The jihadists and their supporters are not anti-imperialists. They are opposed not simply to the U.S. and other Western-style democracies, but to essential Western values of civilization. Indeed, they reject the traditional leftist concepts, socialism, communism, liberalism, and nationalism.

Jihadism is different from other forms of anti-Western expression. It incarnates justification of slavery, now illustrated by the kidnapping of female Christian students in April 2014 by Boko Haram in Chibok in Nigeria, and by the attacks by IS on 50,000 Yazidis in the mountains of northwest Iraq.

The Islamists seek the restoration of former Islamic

glories and the establishment of a Caliphate or an emirate, based on Sharia law and with the objective of conducting jihad. From the 9th century jihad has been the obligation of true believers against all "infidels."

Contemporary jihadists have no positive objective as did the traditional leftist ideologists, nor do they adhere to moral restraints. Much ink has been spilled over the true nature of Islam today, and who or what can be seen as embodying the essence of the religion. There are five acknowledged pillars of Islam, the basic obligations to live a good life: belief, prayers, fasting, almsgiving, and pilgrimage to Mecca.

Individual religions are interpreted differently depending on time and place. Today, there appears to be a sixth pillar that the jihadists claim and insist upon as the truth of Islam. That pillar is the obligation to wage war against the infidels, and it is being imposed on an increasing number of Muslims, including those in Western democracies.

The Islamist war against Western civilization, and civilized values is world-wide. What else can explain why the French flag was burned on January 23, 2015 in Surabaya in Java, several thousand miles from Paris, by Islamists who were offended by the publication in the journal *Charlie Hebdo* of cartoons that they held had insulted the Prophet Muhammad?

Manifestations of jihadism are evident in a line from Senegal and Nigeria to the borders of China. They are particularly strong in those states that have failed: Nigeria, Somalia, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.

The West has to recognize that Islamists – jihadists is perhaps the better term – have recreated a retrograde and brutal form of Islam directed against non-Muslims that goes back to a dark period in its past.

.

The brutality against non-Muslims is not new. Saladin

(1169-1193) was known for his chivalric nature and courtesy but he also conducted a "holy war" against the alien world, especially the Franks. The Egyptian imam, Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949, called for the return to "true" Islam and for jihad to repel the invaders. He founded the Muslim Brotherhood to do this. Jihad, he held, was an obligation for every Muslim who should resist existing regimes.

What is happening now is not resistance to any form of colonialism, Western or otherwise, but destruction in the areas controlled by jihadists of the very cultural heritage, the historical artifacts of the "unbelievers," and denial of their beliefs, history, and dignity. Destruction of "idols" is not new in history. But the scale of the Islamist behavior is startling.

The terrorists are removing the very essence of the cultural history of civilization, especially pre-Islamic history. In March 2001 the Taliban began the destruction of the monumental 6th-century Buddhas (180 and 125 feet tall) in Bamiyan, Afghanistan. In Mali in June 2012 Boko Haram destroyed monuments and set fire to the library in the Ahmed Baba Institute in Timbuktu, that had been put on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1988. Not only were 700 monuments destroyed, the clay from the monuments was taken to prevent any rebuilding in some possible future.

Videos have been posted of IS terrorists destroying artifacts, including Jonah's tomb, in the museum and all Christian institutions in Mosul with sledgehammers and power tools. Bulldozers destroyed the ancient archeological site of Nimrud, founded in 13th century B.C., in northern Iraq, and said to be the best preserved Assyrian site in Iraq. Temples and sculptures in Hatra, on the UNESCO Heritage List in 1985, were destroyed, as were the carved stone reliefs in Dur Sharrulin, the Assyrian site founded in 717 B.C. near the village of Khorsabad in northern Iraq. The Krak des Chevaliers crusader

castle in Syria has been heavily damaged.

The West world tends to have a capacity for illusions. Finally, outrage is now being expressed about the brutalities of the Islamist terrorists. Commendable as this is, the West must also act to prevent the Islamist barbarity from continuing. Islamists must not be allowed to obliterate the entire history of civilization.

First published in the