

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross

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Canada's Response to the Violence, Religious Persecution and Dislocation Caused by the Islamic State

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=7832696&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=41&Ses=2>

I think that's an excellent question. And Ms. Abdo in her opening statement talked about how the American Muslim community hasn't been able to articulate that stake in the heart response to extremism. And I thought Ms. Abdo's statement was excellent and her argument to take religion seriously, I think is very important.

We largely live in a post-Christian West in that Christianity was at one point front and center to the way we thought about governments. It no longer is and we have this way of thinking about religion which is very different from how anyone would think about religion at the time of their founding.

We tend to think; there's a very good book by Scott Appleby called *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* and in it he argues that basically we have two views of religion among political scientists. One of which is that everything religion brings is bad. The other is that everything religion brings is good. I'd say that the latter one more the way we think about it in the West. We tend to think that, of course jihadists are wrong because what they stand for is bad. But that's not necessarily true; that's why in my presentation

I emphasize there are mistakes ISIL is making, there are transgressions even in the Salafist jihadi's perspective. But you're not going to have kind of a moderate scholar who necessarily will be able to just defang the extremist argument because this is essentially an originalist argument, an originalist interpretation of religion. Arguing that you should discard the centuries of jurisprudence and scholarship that has changed Islam and made it more consonant with modern society. That's what jurisprudence has done.

The Salafi argument is that no, all of that is a deviation from the religion all of that is *bid'ah* or innovation, and we need to go back to how it was originally practiced. And there's a powerful argument there. And I think one of our frustrations is that we see religion through a very narrow lens, our very Western lens, which isn't at all consonant with the way it is viewed in the Muslim world, even by many Muslims in the West, and as a result there's this frustration in that we think "obviously religion should turn out to be good, it should be consonant with democratic principles." But religion is a much more complex thing and within the history of Christianity obviously you have much more complexity as well than how it's understood today.

They're aiming for a few things. They're taking people who were once in some sort of position of power; whether they're journalists, whether they're fighter pilots and they're subjecting them to maximum humiliation and defeat and ultimately, some of the most disgusting deaths possible.

In particular, in the case of Lieutenant Kasasbeh, a Jordanian fighter pilot, he represented, they were basically taking out their frustrations with the air campaign, which has been quite effective against ISIS and I can say that he has been not only burned to death but before that he was castrated, he was raped. I mean, the way he was treated was extraordinarily brutal, even for ISIL.

Now to get to kind of the broader question, I think they're making a mistake. And I mentioned that at the outset. I think they're making a mistake in several ways, and this is why I think ISIL is actually much more vulnerable than Al Qaeda in the longer term.

This kind of debate happened before and Ms. Abdo referred to it. The debate between Al Qaeda and Al Qaeda in Iraq under Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. And it was debate in part, as she alludes to, about religion, but it was also a debate about strategy. And what Al Qaeda saw was that this extraordinarily brutal approach under al-Zarqawi ended up producing localized resistance in the form of the Abna or Awakening movements which ended up pushing back against Al Qaeda and really destroying them.

Now there was a combination of factors, but that fact is their extraordinarily brutal approach caused people to not only chafe at their rule, but extract revenge that was every bit as grisly as what Al Qaeda did. Not very well publicized, but there were a lot of revenge killings and a lot of humiliation put upon Al Qaeda guys after the 07-08 period and their defeat.

Now ISIL is very dependent upon social media and the youth demographic but something we understand is that what's popular today won't be popular in two years. That's why your fellow Canadian Justin Bieber is not necessarily going to continue gaining popularity. Right, like most people feel he has a ceiling and that at some point he'll be considered uncool. We may have already reached that point. But that's kind of a humorous example, but point is that this extreme brutality is at some point going to be defused.

And I mentioned some ways it can be done, but let me tell you something which I guarantee will happen at some point, because I've watched the cycles of revenge in Iraq during the last period. At some point you will have a video released by somebody, maybe its rouge Peshmerga forces, they probably won't reveal their identities. But they'll take an ISIL guy, and rather than him being strong and beheading people, he's going to be crying and humiliated and then will be subjected to a death every bit as brutal. And something like that will have an enormous affect. I'm not condoning it; I don't condone brutal killings in general. But at some point that will happen. You'll get the tools they've used against them. And I think that at some point there'll be kind of a reckoning where the Al Qaeda strategy will eclipse the ISIL strategy because ISIL has overplayed its hand.

You're not supposed to fight a two-front war. They're fighting a war on about six different fronts right now with lots and lots of people who want to kill them and kill them in the most disgusting ways possible. And as a matter of military strategy that's not the place they want to be.

