

We'll Always Have Paris

What fools these mortals be! In view of events in November 2015 Shakespeare may have been talking about the unwise statements and inadequate, even ludicrous, policies of political leaders in the United States and in Western Europe. Now that Paris on November 13, 2015 was attacked by Islamist terrorists of ISIS, which must be considered an act of war, France will respond and lead the charge of western democracies against the physical facilities of ISIS and against the poisonous ideology of Islamism.

The brutal massacres in the city must make even the most ignorant leaders or those unwilling to perceive reality, or those taking a neutral position, now understand the menace of Islamist terrorism. The time is long overdue for western politicians to recognize that the greatest threat facing them and western civilized existence in general is the Islamic State (ISIS or Daesh in Arabic), the self-declared Caliphate.

The title of Caliph was taken, after the Prophet Mahomet's death by two of his father-in-laws, Abu Bakr (632-634) and Omar (634-644). A Caliphate was started again in 1517 by the Ottomans and abolished in 1924. ISIS reestablished it in 2014, and based it on a return to what it considers the original Islam, the Salafist interpretation of the Koran. In this perspective all "impure" elements will be eliminated.

ISIS was born out of a schism in 2006 with the terrorist organization al-Qaeda. First calling itself the Islamic State in Iraq, it changed its name, its nature, and dimension as it conquered territory, ruled over 10 million people, and attracted more than 25,000 foreigners, including 5,000 Europeans to its cause. In 2013 it was renamed the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant, and then the Caliphate, a sign of its ambition to confront and overcome western democratic systems.

The self-appointed leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is a ruthless and fanatical individual who like Josef Stalin in the Soviet Union eliminated all rivals on his way to power. ISIS has established a central government with officials, a cabinet of seven, and ministries including war, finance, and information, though it is not clear where power is located. It has two branches, one for Iraq, and the other for Syria, and surrogates and espionage throughout western Europe. Since the U.S. raid on November 8, 2014 that failed to kill Baghdadi, communication within ISIS is not through couriers but by Internet or telephone.

It is fruitless to allocate blame for the success of ISIS, whether it be the result of the Obama withdrawal of forces from Iraq, the corrupt and inefficient government of Nouri al-Maliki, or the chaos caused in the Middle East by the continuation of the brutal civil war in Syria. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta had warned that withdrawing all US forces would endanger the fragile stability of Iraq.

Nevertheless, what is important are two factors: the refusal of western leaders, especially President Barack Obama, to give the threat of ISIS the priority it deserved; and the inclination to misunderstand if not to deliberate understate its real menace.

On the first issue of priority, President Obama defined his position. In his speech to the UN General Assembly on January 20, 2015 he declared that no challenge posed a greater threat to future generations than climate change. Considering the threats of bacteria and viruses in the world, let alone nuclear proliferation, by Iran and others, and Islamist terrorism, it is difficult to agree, even after accepting there is a real problem of climate change, with Obama that it is the "global threat of our time."

Ironically, Obama's stance comes at an unusual moment. An international gathering to agree on a climate pact to be

attended by 80 leaders including Obama, is due to be on November 30, 2015 in Paris of all places. Obama, on October 11, 2015, informed us of his priority: his definition of leadership would be "leading on climate change."

One should take note that a similar view, though adopted for different reasons, is that of the government of Bolivian President Evo Morales who was concerned by the climate crisis. It was, he thought, due to the failed capitalist system. That system is a system of death, and Morales continued, "we must destroy capitalism."

The second factor, of inaccurate statements and bad policies, is more important. As recently as November 12, 2015 on NBC TV, President Obama asserted that the US strategy against ISIS had "contained" it. He did not think they were gaining strength, the U.S. goal "has been first to contain and we have contained them." He added, "we don't see this systematic march of ISIS across the terrain."

The very next day, on Friday November 13, the systematic ISIS march did take place with terrorists carrying out the series of massacres in Paris in a number of locales: the Bataclan concert hall where a rock performance by an American group was taking place; the soccer stadium where France was playing Germany; the Les Halles food market; and two restaurants. Ominously, the killers were calm, very determined, very sophisticated, very coordinated, during the massacres, reloading their weapons, including Kalashnikov assault rifles, three or four times.

So far more than 130 have died and more than 300 are injured as a result of the attacks in Paris. The beautiful City of Light was dark, and even the lights of the Eiffel Tower were turned off.

Western European political leaders and President Obama had already been warned by ISIS of its belligerence in the *Charlie*

Hebdo killings of January 2015, and the effort in August 2015 to shoot up the train travelling to Paris. In November, ISIS operatives are believed to have exploded a device to blow up the Russian passenger jet on October 31, 2015 killing all 224 passengers, and to have sent suicide bombers into Beirut on November 2015 killing 43 and wounding 239.

A conference on climate change may be a useful contribution to the fate of the earth. But a more offensive policy and a prosecution of war against the Islamist threat is much more important, especially now that the U.S. and the rest of the world is aware of the menace of ISIS inspired operations in their own countries. James Corney, FBI Director, has estimated that 900 investigations of suspected ISIS operators and recruits are now under way.

Now ISIS warns it will continue attacks against "the Crusader campaign," in effect western civilization. The western response should be to destroy ISIS and end its aura of success, so useful for propaganda purposes. Now that France has been attacked, Article 5 of the NATO agreement should come into force: "an armed attack against one or more of (NATO countries) in Europe or North America shall be considered as an attack against them all."

European borders should be closed at the moment to the thousands of Muslim immigrants attempting to enter the EU. The US should not close Guantanamo base. The Obama administration must now accept it has not "contained" ISIS and must develop a coherent and integrated policy to fight terrorism. It is long overdue.