

ISIS: Not Monsters, Losers

President Trump is changing terms used in political and military discourse in ways that are helping to reassert American leadership in the world. Radical Islamic terrorists are called for who they are now by the military, the state department, and the White House. The terrorists are not referred to as monsters; they are losers. No longer is it the Persian Gulf; it is now the Arabian Gulf. Consider the impact of these changes.

Speaking at a Bethlehem press conference President Trump condemned the suicide attack in Manchester, England, that killed 22, including children. He did so not by proclaiming shock and horror at the act of a monster but by conveying condolences to those who have suffered at the hands of a "loser." Monsters are not human and possess powers beyond human capacity; we are defenseless against monsters. Losers are human and possess little power beyond acts of cowardice. We can defeat losers. We cannot defeat monsters; they are products of our imaginations. The change in word choice is brilliant. It reinforces the President's commitment, unequivocally communicated to our nation's military and intelligence leaders that radical Islamic terrorists are to be exterminated, obliterated from the face of the earth. That commitment promises victory because defeat to "losers" is not an option.

Despite media reports to the contrary, the President did not depart from his decision to refer to radical Islamic terrorists by reference to those three words. In doing so, he is not attacking Islamic people in general, rather he is attacking that subset of radicals who engage in terror in the name of Allah. It is those, a minority, who aim to kill all who refuse to submit to their theocratic dictatorship, including Islamic people who refuse to follow that minority. It is this President who truthfully identifies radical Islamic

terrorists as our enemy, and not Barack Obama, that the Saudis embraced with a royal reception and commitment to aid in the war against radical Islamists. It is this President, not Barack Obama, who the Israelis also have embraced, renewing America's historic alliance. Suddenly Iran is the target and its neighbors are coalescing in an alliance with the United States against that radical Islamic state, the chief state sponsor of terrorism in the world.

In a recent conversation with a friend who serves in the Gulf, I was advised of another simple yet profound change that is increasing esprit de corps in the military. During the Obama Administration, when the White House adopted appeasement of Iran as official U.S. policy, the Gulf was known as the "Persian" Gulf. Persia is synonymous with Iran and, thus, adopting that phraseology reinforces the notion that the Gulf is properly under Iranian control rather than an international waterway for commerce from all nations. The Iranians assert that the Gulf is rightfully theirs, deeming the Straits of Hormuz as appropriately dominated by the small gun boats of the Iranian navy. Thus it is that they engage in antics that pose little military threat to American military vessels but do, on occasion, invite a military response. During the Obama years, such a response was out of the question and the rules of engagement were so tight that they effectively served as a barrier to self-defense. President Trump and Secretary of Defense Mattis no longer refer to the Gulf as the "Persian" Gulf. It is now the "Arabian" Gulf. In word and deed, the United States is reasserting its power in the region. President Trump is effectively isolating and surrounding Iran. While occasionally cantankerous, the Iranian leadership does not know what to make of this President. They view him as unpredictable, and that is decidedly to America's advantage. if they harass American ships, take more Americans captive, or expand their nuclear weapons program, will this President and Secretary of Defense defend America's interests by sinking Iranian vessels, re-imposing sanctions, or perhaps

even destroying a large part of the Iranian navy or air force? They do not know for sure but they suspect that he will act unpredictably and decisively. They know he is not moved by threatening rhetoric or jingoistic actions.

Since Thomas Jefferson's creation of the merchant marines to attack radical Islamic terrorists who harassed American ships off the coast of Tripoli and who took Americans hostage, the most effective means to achieve peace has been to vanquish the barbarians rather than pay tribute to them. President Trump is that proven course and, in so doing, is changing even the language used in military and political discourse, changing that language in ways that support and magnify American power in the world.

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