



Sunday April 10, 2016
BIG SUNDAY : Finding Our True North

True North

No matter where you stand on Earth, you can hold a compass in your hand and it will point toward the North Pole. What an unbelievably neat and amazing thing! Imagine that you are in the middle of the ocean, and you are looking all around you in every direction and all you can see is water, and it is overcast so you cannot see the sun... How in the world would you know which way to go unless you had a compass to tell you which way is "up"? Long before GPS satellites and other high-tech navigational aids, the compass gave humans an easy and inexpensive way to orient themselves.

To be completely accurate, the bar magnet does not run exactly along the Earth's rotational axis. It is skewed slightly off center. This skew is called the declination, and most good maps indicate what the declination is in different areas (since it changes a little depending on where you are on the planet).

True north is the direction along the earth's surface (along a meridian) towards the geographic North Pole. True north is a geographical direction represented on maps and globes by lines of longitude. Each line of longitude begins and ends at the Earth's poles and represents direct north and south travel.

True north usually differs from magnetic north (the direction a compass points toward the magnetic north pole), and from grid north (the direction northwards along the grid lines of a map projection).

Magnetic declination is the angle between compass north (the direction the north end of a compass needle points) and true north (the direction along the earth's surface towards the geographic North Pole). This angle varies depending on position on the Earth's surface, and changes over time.

True north is so important in navigation - whether it is a ship at sea, an aircraft or just you and me using our GPS to find our way around. True north acts as a reference line to guide us to our destination. It tells us where we are, and the path we need to take to get us to our destination.

Now, lets pause and reflect briefly on things that are happening in our world.

The Islamic State - How? and Why?



The jihadist group Islamic State (IS) burst on to the **international scene** in 2014 when it seized large areas of territory in Syria and Iraq. It has become notorious for its brutality, including mass killings, abductions and beheadings. In June 2014, the group formally declared the establishment of a "caliphate" - a state governed in accordance with Islamic law, or Sharia, by God's deputy on Earth, or caliph. It has demanded that Muslims across the world swear allegiance to its leader and migrate to territory under its control. IS has also told other jihadist groups worldwide that they must accept its supreme authority.

Militants from so-called Islamic State (IS) have seized large parts of **Syria and Iraq**, where as many as **10 million** people live under their control.



In Iraq, the UN says more than **18,800 civilians were killed in acts of terrorism and violence between January 2014 and October 2015**. The picture is less clear in Syria.

The conflict with IS has left some cities and towns across Syria and Iraq in ruins. Other areas have been cut off by IS militants, leaving their populations dependent on foreign aid and black-market food supplies.

In Iraq the US-led coalition has launched more than **7,300 air strikes** against IS targets in Iraq since August 2014. The UK launched its first air strikes on the group in Iraq the following month. Other nations taking part include Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Jordan, and the Netherlands. The US also estimates that its air strikes have killed a total of **25,000 IS fighters**.



In Syria, the US-led air campaign began in September 2014.

Since then, more than **3,500 strikes** have been carried out by coalition forces, which include Australia, Bahrain, Canada, France, Jordan, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and the UK.

Terrorist Attacks

From the declaration of the caliphate until early 2016, **some 70 terrorist attacks** were either carried out or inspired by IS in **20 countries around the globe**, from California to Sydney, with an **estimated 1,200 victims killed**. The attacks carried the same message of punishment, deterrence and provocation as the hostage beheadings, while also demonstrating IS's global reach.

Paris and Belgium attacks

And then on 13 November, at least 128 people were killed in a wave of attacks around Paris.

In the attacks around Brussels (airport and metro station) on March 24 left over 30 people dead and about 60 in critical condition.

Foreign Fighters

The declaration of the formation of a "caliphate" by IS in **June 2014** triggered a surge in the number of foreign fighters travelling to Syria and Iraq to join the group. A report published in December 2015 by the New York-based security consultancy Soufan Group estimated that **27,000 foreign jihadists made the trip from 86 countries**, more than half of them from the Middle East and North Africa.

What Draws People to fight for the IS?

- 1, The influence of ideology
- 2, The drive of socio-economic factors
- 3, Some just slip into it

The influence of ideology - The Sayyid Qutb Influence

Born in a small village in Upper **Egypt in 1906, Sayyid Qutb** found himself at odds with the way Islam was being taught and managed around him. Far from converting him to the ways of the West, a two-year study period in the US in the late 1940s left him disgusted at what he judged unbridled godless materialism and debauchery, and his fundamentalist Islamic outlook was honed harder.

Back in Egypt, he developed the view that the West was imposing its control directly or indirectly over the region in the wake of the Ottoman Empire's collapse after World War One, with the collaboration of local rulers who might claim to be Muslims, but who had



in fact deviated so far from the right path that they should no longer be considered such.

For Qutb, **offensive jihad** against both the West and its local agents was the only way for the Muslim world to redeem itself. In essence, this was a kind of takfir - branding another Muslim an apostate or kafir (infidel), making it justified and even obligatory and meritorious to kill him.

Although he was a theorist and intellectual rather than an active jihadist, Qutb was judged dangerously subversive by the Egyptian authorities. He was hanged in 1966 on charges of involvement in a Muslim Brotherhood plot to assassinate the nationalist President, Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Qutb was before his time, but his ideas lived on in the 24 books he wrote, which have been read by tens of millions, and in the personal contact he had with the circles of people like Ayman al-Zawahiri, another Egyptian who is the current al-Qaeda leader. Another intimate of the al-Qaeda founder *Osama Bin Laden said: "Qutb was the one who most affected our generation." He has also been described as "the source of all jihadist thought", and "the philosopher of the Islamic revolution".*

Clearly, the caliphate had appeal, despite - perhaps in some cases because of - its graphically publicised brutality. A tribute to its extraordinary skill in using the internet and social media as a propaganda and grooming tool.

Ten months after vowing to "degrade and ultimately destroy" the organisation, President Obama ruefully acknowledged that IS "has been particularly effective at reaching out to and recruiting vulnerable people around the world including here in the United States, and they are targeting Muslim communities around the world". And he put his finger on the real challenge, monumentally greater than the comparatively simple task of defeating IS militarily: **"Ideologies are not defeated with guns, they are defeated by better ideas, a more attractive and more compelling vision,"** he said.

The prospect of taking part in that final glorious climax (apocalypse), **achieving martyrdom on the path of Allah and an assured place in paradise**, is one of the thoughts inspiring those heeding the IS call to jihad.

That could help explain why the organisation seems to enjoy an endless supply of recruits willing to blow themselves to pieces in suicide attacks, which it calls **"martyrdom-seeking operations"** (suicide is forbidden in Islam). Hundreds have died in this way, and they happen virtually daily.



It's one of the elements that makes IS a formidable fighting force that will be hard to destroy even in strictly military terms.

Socio-Economic Factors

Tunisians make up the majority of foreign recruits, driven by unemployment at home and disillusionment.

The problem is that when disenchanted people in the region look around them - especially the young, the idealistic, or the hopeless unemployed who have no future - they see scant evidence of "better ideas" or attractive and compelling visions. They see the ruins of an "Arab Spring" which raised hopes only to dash them cruelly. The brutal, corrupt dictatorships which it shook have either fragmented into chaos and sectarian and tribal upheaval, like Syria itself, Libya, Yemen and (with Western intervention) Iraq, or the "deep states" of their former regimes came back, even more harshly in the case of Egypt, more gently in the case of Tunisia.

While many of the European jihadists may have heeded the call for other reasons, **socio-economic factors play an important part in radicalising some of the Arab jihadists, and will continue to do so unless addressed.**

One of the biggest contingents is **from Tunisia**, where a detailed survey in the poorest suburbs of the capital showed clearly that the radicalisation of young people there had far less to do with extreme Islamic ideology as such than it did with unemployment, marginalisation and disillusion after a revolution into which they threw themselves, but which gave them nothing, and left them hopeless.

The Bottom Line : A sense of hopelessness and purposelessness

The Migrant Crisis - What would they be going through?

Syrians

More than **4.8 million Syrians** have fled abroad to escape the fighting in Syria, according to UN reports. Most have gone to neighbouring Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan - but a growing number have tried to reach Europe. Many continue to do so despite facing perilous journeys across the Mediterranean from Turkey and Libya, contributing to a growing migrant and refugee crisis across Europe.

Iraqis



In addition, the UN estimates there are more than **3 million Iraqis** who have been forced to leave their homes to escape the conflict with IS and are displaced within the country.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that more than **1,011,700 migrants arrived by sea in 2015, and almost 34,900 by land**. This compares with **280,000 arrivals by land and sea for the whole of 2014**. The figures do not include those who got in undetected.

According to the IOM, more than **3,770 migrants were reported to have died trying to cross the Mediterranean in 2015**. Most died on the crossing from north Africa to Italy, and more than 800 died in the Aegean crossing from Turkey to Greece. The summer months are usually when most fatalities occur as it is the busiest time for migrants attempting to reach Europe. But in 2015, the deadliest month for migrants was April, which saw **a boat carrying about 800 people capsize** in the sea off Libya. Overcrowding is thought to have been one of the reasons for the disaster.

Winter has not stemmed the flow of people - with **135,711 people reaching Europe by sea since the start of 2016**, according to the UNHCR.

The conflict in Syria continues to be by far the biggest driver of migration. But the ongoing violence in Afghanistan and Iraq, abuses in Eritrea, as well as poverty in Kosovo, are also leading people to look for new lives elsewhere.

What would life mean to them?
What would their view of the world be?

"I don't feel human" is what one of them was quoted to say, recently.

Trends in our Nation

Increased earning and spending - Indians earning more, spending more.
The global Indian - more Indians travelling abroad.

And yet, there seems to be that sense of restlessness, a vacuum - suicide, divorce, crime, corruption are on the rise in our cities.

A Common Denominator

There seems to be something in common between all of us - although our immediate circumstances can be starkly different:



Finding true north

More than a million migrants, left homeless, searching for hope, and thousands dying in their journey; the ISIS crisis causing fear and destruction, the social and cultural issues stirring across our land. But more importantly, there is the unrest within each person, with the recognition that greater success, more money and heightened pleasure does not yield proportionate satisfaction and meaning.

How do we make sense of all of this? **There is an innate and prevailing need to have a sense of purpose, meaning and direction** - a destination to which we are headed, a sense of our true north so that we can stay the course through all the ups and downs. ***How do we find our 'true north' to navigate through life?***

God created us and designed us for purpose.

We need to connect with God our Creator to discover life's meaning and purpose.

We need a real, meaningful, vital relationship with our Creator God to discover life's meaning and purpose.

Sin is the great barrier that hinders us from a personal relationship with our Creator God, and thereby driving us into wrong purposes and pursuits.

Christ died for us to remove this barrier of sin and to bring us to God.

God releases His purpose and grace to us in Christ.

2 Timothy 1:9

who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,

[Invitation]

Are you staying on course?

For believers - some of us may have started right...but may have deviated off-course along the journey:

What blinds people to finding true north

Bill George in his classic on leadership "Discover your true north" identifies some things that pull us away from our true north:

- Losing touch with reality - rejecting honest criticism, unwilling to see your true self in the mirror
- fearing failure - not facing up to our short comings
- Loneliness - distancing ourselves from people who can speak into our lives
- Craving success - putting net worth ahead of self worth



Leaders who are

- Loners ("I have to make it on my own")
- Imposters ("fooling others")
- Glory Seekers ("money, fame, power make me successful")
- Rationalizers ("I am not responsible for my failure")
- Shooting Stars ("I must not slow down on my way to the top")

are the ones who tend to lose their way.

Call to believers to stay focused

Source:

BBC.com

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35695648>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>