

Does an Islamic Prophecy Foretell an Apocalyptic Battle with the West?

As the Islamic State has drawn the world's attention with terrorist attacks in France, California and elsewhere, Islamic experts say the militants wants to draw the United States and its allies into a ground war in the Middle East.

But these experts say this could be the "worst trap" because the founder of the Islamic State, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, believes in an Islamic prophecy that states Islam will be victorious following an apocalyptic battle with the West once Western forces invade the Middle East again.

"Should that invasion happen, the Islamic State not only would be able to declare its prophecy fulfilled, but could also turn the occurrence into a new recruiting drive at the very moment the terrorist group appears to be losing volunteers," wrote Rukmini Callimachi in a *New York Times* article.

President Obama referred to this prophecy in his speech Sunday night, arguing the United States should pursue a "sustainable victory" involving airstrikes and supporting local forces battling the Islamic State rather than engaging in another ground war in the region.

"I have said it repeatedly: Because of these prophecies, going in on the ground would be the worst trap to fall into," said Jean-Pierre Filiu, a professor of Middle East Studies at Sciences Po in Paris, and the author of *Apocalypse in Islam*. "They want troops on the ground. Because they have already envisioned it. It's a very powerful and emotional narrative. It gives the potential recruit and the actual fighters the feeling that not only are they part of the elite, they are also part of the final battle."

Joel C. Rosenberg, a *New York Times* bestselling author, wrote on his blog that his latest political thriller, *The Third Target*, and his forthcoming novel, *The First Hostage*, envision a scenario in which ISIS leaders are driven by end times prophecies to capture chemical weapons in Syria and launch attacks against the U.S., Israel and Sunni Arabs.

“As *The First Hostage* unfolds, ISIS leaders are trying feverishly to draw the U.S. and the Western powers (‘the forces of Rome’) into a bloody ground war in Syria,” Rosenberg wrote. “Why? In order to fulfill Islamic prophecies about an apocalyptic end times battle in an obscure Syrian town called Dabiq and establish a global Islamic kingdom or caliphate.”

Although he’s had difficulty convincing western leaders of the importance of the “genocidal intentions of our enemies and the Islamic eschatology that is driving them,” Rosenberg says he’s been encouraged by the release of a recent book by Brookings Institution scholar Dr. Will McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, that explains the significance of the Islamic prophecies, along with recent remarks by GOP presidential candidates Sen. Marco Rubio and Sen. Rick Santorum, who have spoken out about the threat of “apocalyptic Islam.”

“My hope (is) that other candidates and current office-holders, military leaders and intelligence experts will start studying and publicly discussing this matter,” Rosenberg wrote.