Daesh's evolution and eventual professionalisation are crucial to understanding what its overall strategy represents in its thinking. It can no longer be taken as a coincidence that as it loses substantial ground in Syria and Iraq it has taken to more ravenous attacks outside of its main area of operations. The attacks within Europe and other parts of the globe, from Turkey to Pakistan, represent not an invincible strength, but the true start of Daesh's decline, writes Cory Turner

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Before the predatory attack on Charlie Hebdo, Daesh had relied principally on the less direct fear of it and the resultant xenophobia and other social tensions after its attacks. It had allowed its own brand of soft power, not to mention the perception of it being untouchable despite its atrocities, to wage the psychological battle. It is no coincidence that as the group loses ground in Syria and Iraq, it has launched a series of attacks against innocent civilians more intensely than it ever has done before.

At face value it may appear that Daesh has evolved into a new beast once again, once attempting to build its so-called 'Caliphate', to now adopting an insurgency strategy. The assumption that it is more powerful than it has ever been possesses three main fallacies, which only play into the group's fortunes.

Firstly, the continual losses it will face will severely undermine its capabilities to operate in Europe and otherwise outside of Syria and Iraq. The training and coordination of such attacks come from within Syria itself. The deaths of key – often skilled and experienced – leaders, as well as disruption to communications and the ability to meet together, will leave insurgents within Europe vulnerable to being discovered, and may even leave them impotent entirely. Often its attacks away from Syria are taken in isolation to its losses there. This is mistaken, and only reinforces the psychological impact of the attacks, implying that Daesh is inherently illusive and invulnerable. As its administration suffers and it loses its links and command structures, its cells abroad will become less dangerous.

The attacks are also delivered by the nationals of the countries in which they are inflicted, contrary to the accusations of far-right wing European parties that Schengen and the refugee crisis are to blame. Because Daesh's ideology only appears legitimate to some because of its

history of successes - promising some twisted form of utopia, purpose, and victory against what it designates as evil – as the group is pushed back, its appeal to would-be recruits will fade as well. 'Home-grown' extremism should never be considered in isolation with the group's performance in Syria and Iraq. This in itself creates a dangerous problem for Daesh, and an opportunity for the US-led coalition to claim an eventual victory by default. Daesh relies heavily on foreign fighters for recruitment; its own destructiveness does not lend itself to resource generation, human or material. As its militaristic strength dwindles, so will its appeal, and in a cycle, so will its ideology be undermined, leading to even greater pressures upon it.

Thirdly, the switch in strategy from focusing on claims to victory and progress within Syria and Iraq themselves – with the occasional supposed 'lone wolf' attack elsewhere – represents a panic within its command structure. The objectives of such attacks are not strategic, but rather psychological. In Paris, both against Charlie Hebdo and in November, it was civilians who were targeted, not key government or military targets. Neither would they have done considerable damage had they done so. Brussels is a slight exception due to the attack on transport links, but even then it is clearly intended as a psychological weapon more than a threat to the country's management. Though it may seem that Daesh is now powerful enough to attack at any moment, the change to almost purely psychological warfare abroad reflects its inability to continue winning a more recognisable armed conflict. Daesh appears to be frantically lashing out in protest at its own inevitable demise rather than genuinely attempt to survive.

In other words, Daesh's evolution into a proto-state is now collapsing around it, and it is returning to a more traditional style of terrorism, albeit more dangerously than experienced before. Yet, its ability to remain effective at this is doomed to failure; it must manage a war on countless fronts, with little-to-no generation of human or material resources under its control. There is a silver lining to Brussels. We are being signalled not the impregnability of the group, but Daesh's inevitable, and total, destruction. International leaders, particularly European and Middle-Eastern governments, should prepare to adapt accordingly. Firstly, they must prepare for the power struggle that will inevitably be at play in the region, whose fault lines are likely to emerge in any post-conflict settlement in Iraq and Syria. Secondly, they must be decide what their actions will be to the remaining tensions and distrust between different groups – some with entirely different goals for their own future. Lastly, they must be prepared to handle the divisive reactions to what is a declining threat in their own countries, especially with regard to the threat that right-wing separatist groups pose to the future of the European Union.

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