

Author Warns: 'The power of Islam may at any moment re-arise'

Today there are 1.6 billion Muslims in the world, and Islam will [supposedly](#) supplant Christianity as the world's largest religion before this century is complete.

These facts have many in the Western world frightened.

At the same time, the Muslim world does not currently represent a united military threat to the Western world. The foreign policy of the U.S. and its NATO allies over the past two or so decades has served to destabilize the Middle East, creating a situation there for the foreseeable future that Russian Prime Minister Dimitri Medvedev [has called](#) "permanent war." And though terrorist activity is able to have an increased impact in the age of mass communication, it is still considered by many to be an act of desperation from a people in existential crisis.

But as those who have studied history know, the Muslim world was not always the military inferior of the West. In the 7th and 8th centuries Muslim leaders swiftly conquered half of the then-Christian world in what historian Will Durant has called "the most amazing feat in military history." Over time, lands that had been the cradle of Christianity for centuries—Syria, Egypt, and Carthage (present-day Tunisia)—became predominantly Muslim. Within two centuries the territories won back by the Crusaders in the 11th through 13th centuries had been reclaimed by Muslims, and in 1453 Constantinople, the seat of the Byzantine Empire, finally fell to the Muslim Ottoman Turks. And if it hadn't been for victories at Tours in 732, Lepanto in 1571, and Vienna in 1683 (on September 11!), it's argued that much of Europe could be Muslim today.

In an interesting chapter entitled ["The Great and Enduring Heresy of Mohammed"](#) (1938), the famous Catholic author Hilaire Belloc reminds us that the Islamic world was once superior to the West in military prowess (at least from a technological standpoint), and warns that "the power of Islam may at any moment re-arise":

"Today we are accustomed to think of the Mohammedan world as something backward and stagnant, in all material affairs at least. We cannot imagine a great Mohammedan fleet made up of modern ironclads and submarines, or a great modern Mohammedan army fully equipped with modern artillery, flying power and the rest. But not so very long ago, (less than a hundred years before the Declaration of Independence), the Mohammedan Government centred at Constantinople had better artillery and better army equipment of every kind than had we Christians in the West."

But as Belloc points out, during the 18th and 19th centuries, the Western military capabilities began to surpass those of the Muslim world: