Are we missing the real threat in the war against ISIS? It's tough to tell. As with any foreign conflict being fought in a faraway land, we don't have a clear picture of what exactly is going on in Iraq and Syria. But before Parliament votes on whether Canada should extend and possibly expand its military mission in Iraq, it's important we try to assess the threat ISIS poses to Canada and the rest of the world. The momentum ISIS had gathered through its fierce and relentless propaganda campaign seems to have plateaued. U.S.-led coalition air raids have stopped any territorial progress made by ISIS fighters. ISIS has lost 25% of its peak territory, thanks in part to Canada's efforts. ISIS is not only struggling on the battlefield; it's also struggling with basic management and leadership. It is easy to forget that the Islamic State, as the name suggests, is not just a terrorist group. It's also a state (or at least, it's trying to be) and must therefore deal with the responsibilities of statehood. This includes the more mundane tasks of collecting taxes, building infrastructure, and ensuring law and order. According to some interpretations of the ISIS mission, its goals include not only imposing Sharia law, but also imposing socialism. The group apparently aspires to provide universal health care and education. They want to create Sweden, for radical Islamists. And that's why ISIS is collapsing. It's one thing to detonate bombs and use radical fear tactics to attract fundamentalist followers. It's quite another to build an expansive governing apparatus to deliver social services. ISIS is building a bureaucracy, supervised by administrators who oversee councils to handle various aspects of the fledgling government, including finance, religious affairs and media communications. ISIS propaganda videos depict renegades and mavericks engaging in guerilla warfare, but the life of the average ISIS member is perhaps more like a bureaucrat from the show Yes, Minister filing paperwork than it is like Rambo fighting against infidels. When the cameras are rolling, the group purports an affinity for indiscriminate killing and inhumane disregard for human life and decency. When the cameras stop rolling, however, they start worrying about how to collect taxes, how to pay for food, and how to deal with internal rifts within the organization. Reports of infighting and internal conflicts have increased, and we're hearing more about Western fighters who left to fight with ISIS and are now desperately trying to return home. Apparently, the brutish realities and daily atrocities of the death cult were more unpleasant than what they'd signed up for. ISIS is responding by turning on its own fighters and punishing anyone trying to leave. Despite what the ISIS social media hacks will have you believe, ISIS is beginning to self-destruct. They've bitten off more than they can chew. But that doesn't mean the threat is over and the West has won. In fact, the collapse of ISIS may be scarier than its reign of terror. That's because ISIS fighters are driven by a devout belief in a Sunni Muslim Caliphate. Islamist ideologues flocked to ISIS because they bought into this idea and strive for the creation of a powerful Islamic State with strict Sharia law. They are true believers. Once the momentum stops and it becomes clear that ISIS will not obtain its Caliphate, ISIS fighters are unlikely to quietly surrender and lay

down their arms. These fighters have been radicalized and militarized. They've committed countless atrocities and witnessed even more unspeakable crimes. The odds are the remaining ISIS fighters will double down on their massacres. The United Nations human rights division just released a report accusing ISIS of committing genocide against the Yazidi people. An investigative panel cites evidence that ISIS is trying to wipe out the Yazidi minority through a pattern of targeted attacks and killings. If ever there was cause for Canadian action, it is in the case of genocide. Sure, Canadian and coalition forces can bomb ISIS into abandoning their hope for statehood. But bombs alone will not stop ISIS from attempting to rid Iraq and Syria of its Kurds, Yazidis and Coptic Christians. And at some point soon, we have to ask ourselves some hard questions. Are we willing to put boots on the ground and put Canadian lives at risk in a prolonged battle to save the lives of millions of ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq and Syria? That is the real ISIS crisis.