

Evaluation of US Strategy in Defeating Islamic State in Syria and Iraq

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.803066>

Received: 15 February 2024; Revised: 28 February 2024; Accepted: 04 March 2024;

Published: 05 April 2024

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the inability of the US-led coalition to eradicate the existence of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS). Even after ISIS's territorial defeat in 2019, the group still poses a significant threat to this region. The success of the US strategy to defeat ISIS is called into doubt in light of the group's apparent resurgence. The first section of this paper is focused on a review of the related literature. Whether or not the United States' allegations regarding ISIS are accurate, and what the regional and global ramifications of a resurgence of the organization would be, are questioned in the existing literature. From a constructivist vantage point, the second chapter discusses how the Islamic State came to be as well as the difficulties it faces now. In addition, it clarifies the motivations and behaviors of terrorists. It also demonstrates the limitations of current strategies for eliminating ISIS. The United States-led coalition's participation in the fight against terrorism in Iraq and Syria is laid out at the outset of the third chapter. Following its territorial defeat in 2019, the Islamic State has shown signs of resurgence. Furthermore, it details the current US strategy for countering the resurgence of the Islamic State. The final one evaluates potential counter-ISIS strategies. The difficulties of destroying ISIS are discussed. Moreover, it provides a potential strategy for eradicating the Islamic State and explores other aspects of the issues inherent with doing so. Final thoughts and suggestions are provided as the paper winds down.

Keywords: ISIS, US-led Coalition, Strategy, Constructivism, Iraq, Syria, The Islamic State, Resurgence, Eradicate, etc.

INTRODUCTION

In September 2014, the United States began bombing Syria from the air. This was done in an effort to prevent the Islamic State (IS) from utilizing Syria as a springboard for attacks into neighboring Iraq. To "formalize current military measures against the rising danger presented by ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria)," the Defense Department established the Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) in October 2014. More than 70 countries have joined CJTF-OIR to aid local forces in Syria in their fight against the Islamic State.

The Islamic State (IS) is a transnational Salafi jihadist group that was once an unrecognized quasi-state. It is also known by the names Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and Daesh in Arabic. The group that gave rise to it was Jaish al-Taifa al-Mansurah, which Abu Omar al-Baghdadi formed in 2004 and fought alongside al-Qaeda in the Iraqi insurgency. After its militants exploited the ongoing Syrian civil war to successfully seize sizable areas in eastern Syria and northwest Iraq

in 2014, the group became well-known throughout the world.

The United States' strategy toward Syria and Iraq has shifted significantly since 2014, with a focus on counterterrorism activities against the Islamic State. From the territory it already held in northeastern Syria and freshly seized areas in Iraq, the Islamic State intended to launch attacks against the rest of the world. Since 2015, when Congress gave the United States permission to train, equip, and advise local partners in Syria and Iraq to help retake territory from the Islamic State, the United States has been working "by, with, and through" local partners to achieve this goal. The United States had about 600 troops in Syria in July 2020 (Humud, 2020; Blanchard, 2020).

In early 2018, President Trump pushed for an immediate pullout of American forces from Syria. Senior administration officials, however, later stated that U.S. soldiers would remain in Syria to ensure the Islamic State was beaten for good. Even John Bolton, who was National Security Advisor at the time, said that the US would stay in Syria until the forces led by Iran left. At President Trump's command, all U.S. forces left Syria in December 2018. Secretary of Defense James Mattis resigned as a result of the criticism he received from lawmakers (Humud, 2020; Blanchard, 2020).

After Trump declared ISIS "defeated" in December 2018, many began to question the legitimacy of a continued American military engagement in Syria. Reports from the Office of Government Oversight say that administration officials are worried that the Islamic State could get back together if military pressure is taken off of its remaining members, even though the group is still attacking eastern Syria (Rosen, 2015).

As of March 2019, all areas controlled by the Islamic State had been retaken by U.S.-backed forces in Syria and Iraqi security forces. U.S. military officials believe that the group still has an entire command and control structure and is conducting a low-level insurgency in Syria and Iraq as late as 2020 (Rosen, 2015). Although the United States and its allies were successful in retaking territory held by the Islamic State, that has not been enough to end the group's existence. The question of how the Islamic State might maintain its presence in the area remains unanswered. ISIS's presence in the region and the ongoing struggle against them both have global repercussions.

Research Questions: This paper intends to find out: Why has the Islamic State not been entirely defeated despite the United States and its allies' tremendous efforts? And how might it influence US and ally counterterrorism policy?

Research Objectives: This research paper aims to investigate the causes of the regional and worldwide effects of the war on terror, including the inability of the United States and its Coalition partners to remove Islamic State entirely. In addition, this article will examine secondary sources in an effort to shed light on the elements and explanations that have allowed the Islamic State to persist in the region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Failure of the U.S.- Led Coalition to Eradicate ISIS

Sarhang Hamasaeed says in his paper "ISIS is a Problem of Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow" that more than three years after its military defeat in Iraq and Syria, ISIS is a lessened threat because to the combined efforts of the US-led global coalition and its Iraqi and Syrian partners. Despite the fact that the extremist group's capacity has been significantly reduced and millions of civilians have returned home, ISIS has continued to launch attacks on a yearly basis despite no longer controlling territory (Hamasaeed, 2022).

Recent research by Jessica D. Lewis, titled "The Islamic State: A Counter – Strategy for a Counter-State," concludes that ISIS is more than just a terrorist organization. ISIS is able to exert its influence because of

the myriad circumstances that are hastening the destruction of Iraq and Syria. Among these are internal civil and sectarian cleavages, authoritarian leadership, and polarizing regional pressures. ISIS is growing as a menace, and there is a chance it may leave permanent damage in Iraq and Syria. The danger to American interests abroad is increased by a factor of many as a result. ISIS is a threat not only because of the havoc it causes in the region, but also because it is overturning modern state boundaries in ways that will lead to massive murder and the purging of members of different religious and ethnic groups. ISIS is another worldwide jihadist movement that adheres to the same ideology as al-Qaeda. Because of this ideological similarity, ISIS is moving in the direction of an apocalyptic and post-state vision, which calls for the annihilation of the current state system (Lewis, 2022).

The article “The Real-World Capabilities of ISIS: The Threat Continues” by Anthony Cordesman warns readers about the dangers of claiming the ability to defeat terrorist organizations like ISIS. He claimed that while the US may have contributed to the demise of the ISIS proto-state or “caliphate” in Syria and Iraq, this does not imply that the US has defeated ISIS. Even if the US had been successful in eliminating ISIS’s caliphate in Syria and Iraq, it would not have been able to stop the group’s global attacks. The fight to demolish ISIS’s “caliphate” has also exposed both countries to the prospect of state-sponsored terrorism from Assad’s despotism in Syria and Iran’s theocracy (Cordesman, 2020).

ISIS and Its Resurgence

According to the article titled “The Risks of an ISIS Comeback,” written by Lea Berriault, although the Islamic State has suffered significant setbacks, they are not enough to prevent its eventual resurgence. Despite suffering terrible defeats and losing its territorial base, the group appears to have gained a fresh lease of life. On 10th March 2022, it was reported that Abu al-Hassan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi had been chosen as the new caliph. This should serve as a wake-up call not only for states where ISIS is present but also for coalition members that failed to take sufficient precautions to prevent this resurgence.

Moreover, the United States and its allies failed to comprehend the phenomenon’s religious, political, and social dimensions. They were oblivious to the notion that radical Islam could and did leave the limits of the Middle East and pose a threat to the intelligence agencies of Western nations and the global community. (Berriault, 2022).

Byman argues that when President Trump announced the withdrawal of U.S. troops from northern Syria last week, he effectively authorized the Turkish invasion of territory controlled by the Syrian Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces—the most effective U.S. ally in fighting ISIS, having sacrificed thousands of its own members to subdue the group and holding thousands of ISIS prisoners. The departure of the troops has prompted worries that ISIS will reclaim its former splendor and rebuild the caliphate. ISIS has lost almost all of the land it used to control, but the group has gone back to its roots as an insurgency, with thousands of fighters still at work in Iraq and Syria (Byman, 2020).

Becerra stated that despite being militarily defeated, ISIS still has large numbers of fighters it can call upon in the Syrian Arab Republic and has been waging a low-level insurgency against a variety of actors in an effort to demonstrate capability, undermine public confidence in local authorities, and reverse reconciliation and stabilization efforts in cross-sectarian areas. Following the collapse of its caliphate, the Islamic State seeks to reclaim lost territory and influence by leveraging the weaknesses of Syrian state structures. Moreover, ISIS has insured that, despite the loss of its territory and physical financial holdings, the group will continue to generate sufficient revenue to pursue its objectives. Since its foundation, the Islamic State has adhered to a consistent finance policy designed to promote the group’s state-building and Sharia law implementation objectives (Becerra, 2022).

The reemergence of ISIS as a threat to the American homeland is increasing by the day, wrote Mike Brest in

his article “Perfect Storm Developing” for the “reemergence of ISIS” in Syria. According to him, “there is a perfect storm building in northern Syria, where we have a refugee camp full of ISIS women and children mixed in with other populations.” That’s going to be an ISIS factory. The extremist parts of the camp are taking over. Late in the month of January, members of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) attempted an escape from the Hasakah jail. The subsequent combat lasted for several days before the Syrian Democratic Forces and the Coalition Forces were able to put an end to it (Brest, 2022).

Regional and Global Consequences of the ISIS Threat After Its Resurgence:

Amin Tarzi, who authored the section of the book titled “The Future of ISIS” titled “Islamic State—Khorasan Province,” states the following: Despite the fact that the land controlled by ISIS in Iraq and Syria has fallen dramatically, the group’s ideology and affinities are spreading to other groups in the region, which increases ISIS’s potential reach and power to destabilize the region. Affiliates and supporters of ISIS in other parts of the world, such as Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen, where an Islamic State province (wilayah) has been declared, have received varying degrees of international attention based on the scale and nature of the threat they pose to broader international security. Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen are some of the countries where an Islamic State province (wilayah) has been declared. (Tarzi, 2018).

It is argued in the paper titled “Turkish Military Offensive in Syria: Consequences for Counter-Terrorism Operations” that the ability of Islamic State and its affiliates to subsequently exploit possible consequences, such as geopolitical instability, is demonstrated by the growing strength of its eastern branch, Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISIS-K), which occurred after the withdrawal of the United States and its allies from Afghanistan. This shows that Islamic State and its affiliates are able to capitalize on potential fallout, such as instability in geopolitical relationships. Despite the fact that it is difficult to compare the situation in Syria to the situation in Afghanistan, the situation in Afghanistan can serve as a warning of what might occur if ongoing counter-terrorism programs are interrupted in an unstable region. If the Syrian Democratic Units (SDF) are forced to redeploy their fighting forces, this might put the United States in a position where they are unable to fully take over counterterrorism operations, creating a situation that is exploitable by ISIS (Vugteveen 2022; Molloy 2022).

Complexity of Defeating ISIS

Michael Gunter and Nahro Zagros dive into the reasons why ISIS is proving to be such a difficult enemy to defeat. It is very evident that ISIS has gained a great deal of knowledge about how to survive and fight successfully from its history. The organization is expanding rapidly as a result of the public’s impression that it has achieved success, that it is dynamic, and that it has a feeling of destiny. ISIS has been able to acquire local superiority despite their smaller numbers, thanks to their mobility and their ability to deceive their opponents.

ISIS is able to evaluate its competition, get through formidable defenses, and distract opponent forces from major targets through the use of probes. ISIS will typically start its attacks with one or more attacks that result in a large number of casualties in order to incite panic and force people to flee. Hostage taking, car explosives that cause panic and overwhelm barriers, suicide attackers, fighters dressed in their enemies’ clothes, and fighters dressed in their own uniforms are all common tactics that are used to terrify their opponents and bring their morale crashing down (Gunter, 2014; Zagros, 2014).

In his article, “Striking at the Heart of ISIS Recruitment,” Jacob Olidort believes that a strategy to combat ISIS should not focus on challenging the philosophy of the group but rather on rewriting the narrative of events. When this is done, the goal should be to prevent would-be jihadists from having two “psychic moments”: first, the idea that ISIS is the solution to regional crisis; and second, the framing of regional

conflicts in terms of sectarian tensions. To achieve both goals, the West will need to devise a strategy that gives power to local actors who advocate for the reconstruction of stable, inter-sectarian states (and there are still voices advocating for this), while at the same time maintaining the destruction of ISIS infrastructures and state-level capabilities. If both of these things were done, it would demonstrate not only that the narrative being put forth by ISIS is untrue but also that it is impossible to put into practice.

An inclusive strategy, one that engages local groups committed to defeating ISIS, may be the most vivid, if not realistic, way to eliminate ISIS' focal points of radicalization. This is despite the fact that no partnerships should be made on an unconditional basis and that no effective strategy on the ground will definitively eliminate the threat of terrorism. However, an inclusionary approach may be the best way to eliminate ISIS' focal points of radicalization (Olidort, 2015).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Islamic State's Formation and Challenges: A Constructivist Analysis

When compared to other existing theories, the constructivist viewpoint may better assess the inception and development of terrorist organizations. Acceptable behavior logic and the actor's own assessment of what constitutes acceptable behavior are both factored into the constructivist approach.

Constructivism is based on doctrinal and ideological structures that, in conjunction with interests, norms, and identity development, generate the logic of properness, as opposed to rationalism's expenditure and interest logics. Therefore, the actions of an organization like ISIS (Islamic State in Syria and Iraq) cannot be reduced to a predictable, manageable, and rational set of individual self-interests. To the contrary, extreme groups' identities and ideologies shape who they are, what they desire, and, in some cases, what they consider to be acceptable actions and behaviors. Whatever perspective one takes, suicide behavior cannot be explained by rationalist options.

Terrorism has been a major concern for governments around the world since the turn of the millennium, but the takfiri movement in the Middle East has just emerged from the shadows in the aftermath of the recent uprisings in the Arab world. It seems to have gotten a lot more vicious recently. Extremist groups like Islamic State (ISIS) have found fertile ground in the Middle East due to the region's preexisting ethnic and religious divisions and the widening of those divisions brought on by the region's ongoing power struggle and lack of a cohesive security structure.

Both the growth of terrorism as a "social threat" and the severity with which a counterterrorism program is implemented are good indicators of the extent to which social constructivists have stated the danger presented by terrorism. At the outset, sociological philosophers agree that the idea that "terrorism is a social construction" is correct. In actuality, "there is no such thing as a given" when it comes to terrorism; rather, it is an interpretation of events and the believed causes behind them. As stated by Yehuda (1993), "terrorism" can mean different things depending on who you ask or what kind of state you live in, which is why "One person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter" is often cited. This is due to the fact that there are several ways to describe terrorism. One definition of terrorism states, "The meaning of 'terrorism' varies depending on the environment, available cultural resources, and combinations of people engaged." (Stump, 2009).

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was followed in implementing this paper. Data and information were collected from various internet websites, journals, and newspapers. The approach to this paper was more exploratory.

Opinions, reasons, and motivations were also brought in. The past incidents in that region were approached and connected to explain the whole event.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Explanation of the Behavior of ISIS Actors Using the Theory of Constructivism:

Studies that use a constructivist approach agree that institutionalized norms are a big part of how actors figure out who they are and what they want. The criteria are used to tell the actors what to do. The standards are the mental and value-based expectations that everyone shares about how actors should act. In this way, an actor's activism is based on the rules and norms that come from the subjective elements' past experiences and cultural backgrounds. In a situation like this, the way people act is explained by the rules, beliefs, and social norms that are in place. Even if the legality and predictability principles are taken to be true, this is still true. So, the ways of thinking, ideas, myths, and ideas that exist in each civilization create a cultural environment that either encourages or discourages violent behavior (Fokouhi, 1999).

When you look at Afghanistan and Iraq, you can see that the pursuit of power has always been ingrained in their culture. In the tribal areas, the security and survival of individuals and tribes in competitions with other tribes over biological resources largely depend on the size of the population, bravery, and combat power of each tribe (Fokouhi, 1999). This is especially true in areas where there are multiple tribes running for the same resources. The use of weapons is something that is common practice among indigenous people. In a scenario like this one, the violence has cultural and social origins, and it is based on this kind of interpretation; hence, criminal organizations can simply and swiftly form.

Rather than being influenced by the collective wisdom derived from the philosophy of power in the political culture of ethnic and tribal cultures and the values and standards, instinctive wants are given more weight. The result of a culture of violence is another culture of violence, which can be interpreted as a reaction to the denial of a group's identity, sense of safety, and the symbolic meaning of its existence. When the tradition and identity of a people are boosted by the intervention of external elements, the power of the people increases (Eftekhari, 1999). Terrorist organizations' actions are the outward manifestation of their innermost concepts, goals, and worldviews, which they organize in a conceptual and semantic network. One's sense of self is a bridge between the inner and outer worlds, between one's cognitive conceptual networks and one's social connections networks.

The constructivist view of identity, identities are formed not by presuppositions but by acts, conversations, and relationships. Organizational identity disputes are more common in countries with a high prevalence of ethnic, religious, linguistic, and racial diversity. Conflicts of this nature can stem from competing needs for recognition and safety. Here, destructive outcomes are minimized by shaping offensive and defensive responses. Based on this logic, radical currents in many places see the expansion of identities as a danger to their own sense of self. This radicalizes them to the point of terrorism (Venndt, 2005). It is a social conceptual construction that is gradually cemented and reinforced by the drivers of identities, norms, culture, and history. As a result, extremism in the Middle East evolves as a result of particular interactions and interventions involving competing identities. The ideological interpretation of religion and ethnicity as a value gives them a sense of community with other extremists, and as a result, they only see the promotion of their own interests being pursued by others. In addition to resorting to the use of force in order to overcome any opposition they face.

Why ISIS Still Can't Be Defeated Only Through Military Actions: Constructivist Analysis

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, traditional International Relations experts and scholars have had a tough time comprehending the War on Terror, ISIS-operations, Al Qaeda's objectives and anything to do

with its Islamic doctrines. The contribution of rationalist theories such as realism and liberalism to the comprehension of the 9/11 assaults motivated by religious convictions was little. ‘Constructivism seems best suited for judging terrorism,’ although there hasn’t been much constructivist research into terrorism (Lynch, 2006).

Individuals are only comprehensible and interpretable via the lens of how they interact with their surroundings and make sense of the happenings around them. As a result, humans construct a cognitive architecture and mental structure based on the sociopolitical climate in their head. These sensations, rather than objective facts and information from the outside world, shape their conduct and identity (Jamali, 2011). The following concepts are included in the radical mentality: the ideology on which extremism is founded, the principles of religious perception, the human being’s attitudes toward the world, particularly the historical development of governments, public relations, organizations, and the advancement of civilization; and the radical mentality’s relationship to the world. To a large extent, extremist behaviors are founded not on objective truths but rather on the perpetrator’s own subjective view of the universe.

ISIS holds the belief that jihadi identity must be acknowledged as a normative value, and as a result, the order and the structure of the society are constructed in accordance with this belief. This process is intrinsically influenced by climate due to its nature. This context is the source of a significant portion of the digitalized power and networking that is utilized by the radicals. ISIS extremists share a number of common characteristics, including a radical ideology, a worldwide radical political Islam, a common and similar understanding of the present circumstances, dependence on international popular networks, and the independence to be financially and materially self-sufficient. Among the most important aspects of this group’s identity are these characteristics.

Islamic State’s rise and growth in Iraq and Syria is due to the identity crisis and extremist groups’ attempts to replace the government’s identity by promoting a new identity. Extremists’ unyielding loyalty to a certain ideology provides them with the most consistent and reliable basis for their behavioral identity (Jamali, 2011).

The core beliefs of an ideological system are easy to understand and clear up any doubts. The person with an unrealistic view of the world has a deeper and more steadfast faith, and while she or he is less likely to struggle with uncertainty, they have a stronger excitement (Jamali, 2011). Because of this, a person who is open to an extremist and radical ideology, like the ones of ISIS, will act terroristically without fear of being killed if he or she is a member of an organization that promotes that ideology. And because of the way its ideas work, this kind of group will always re-emerge, no matter how many times it loses.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The United States may have helped dismantle the proto-state or “caliphate” of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, but it has hardly defeated the group. Also, even if the US had been able to push ISIS out of Syria and Iraq, this would not have been enough to end terrorism if it kept coming back. ISIS gained the most when Syria and Iraq lost their political authority after the Arab Spring. Syrians and Iraqis could get some security from the extremist group, which was what they wanted most at that time. For example, a Syrian in Raqqa, the de facto capital of ISIS, may have hated the group’s ideas but supported its authority because it was better to have some protection than none.

ISIS would have been much easier to defeat if they were just a group of murderous psychopaths and criminals. Its fighters wouldn’t have been able to march into large parts of Iraq and Syria, easily beat U.S. trained security forces, and get the support of some local people at first. How did ISIS accomplish this? ISIS, unlike most terrorist groups, was interested in state building, and this was shown in the group’s propaganda. Before anything else, a state or something that wants to be like a state must be able to keep

some level of law and order. Law can't exist without order, and ISIS's agenda was heavily focused on law.

In this case, terror and state-building went hand in hand. Any group that wants to bring order back to a country after it has fallen apart into warring factions and a lot of crime must have a monopoly on the use of force. To do this, you have to beat any pretenders to the throne. Nonetheless, ISIS began establishing well-developed institutional structures rather quickly, while the international community paid no attention. The complicated legal system, which was based on interlocking Sharia courts, binding fatwas, and complicated tax rules, was a serious attempt to set up a new system. In light of this, it is slightly easier to comprehend how some citizens in a region that has long lacked law, order, and government services could have supported ISIS authority or at least remained neutral.

Avoiding responsibility for failing to defeat ISIS Completely focusing instead on destroying its "physical" caliphate is just as risky. Recapturing cities in Iraq and Syria from ISIS was a huge victory, but the damage done did not "physically" disable the group. Instead, it ignored the ideological aspect, which was involved in the group's formation and again in its resurgence. It is imperative that we speak the truth about ISIS as well as the entire "fight" against terrorism. It was not possible to defeat the Taliban in Afghanistan by driving them into the countryside.

Even if there have been some successes in the fight against terrorism in other parts of the world, it has not been eradicated in any country. Furthermore, terrorists and extremists' capacity to leverage the Internet and global media remains a serious instrument for terrorism and extremism that transcends national boundaries as well as any individual terrorist or extremist organization. This instrument has the ability to reach individuals worldwide. As a result, it is critical to grasp what the United States administration has genuinely declared about the level of activity that ISIS is still carrying out in Iraq and Syria.

The US Central Command has issued regular reports suggesting that ISIS remains a danger. The most recent report and its most critical elements, at the time this piece was published, made it obvious that ISIS had lost a lot of ground but had not yet been vanquished. The threat posed by ISIS is still very real in both countries. Neither Iraq nor Syria "won" the war against ISIS, and the group's influence has spread far beyond their borders. The identity crisis and the attempts by extremist groups to promote a new identity in place of the government's identity have contributed to ISIS's development and growth in Iraq and Syria. The most stable and constant foundation for an extremist's behavioral identity is their unwavering devotion to a particular ideology.

It is not difficult to comprehend the core principles that underpin an ideology; there should be no room for confusion in this regard. Even if an optimist is less likely to have to deal with uncertainty, the excitement level of an optimist who has an unrealistic picture of the world is higher. Because of this, a person who is attracted to an extremist and radical ideology, such as that of Daesh (ISIS), can join an organization that promotes that ideology and carry out terrorist acts without fear of being killed. This kind of organization will keep resurrecting itself even after it has been narrowly defeated time and time again because of the nature of the values it upholds.

Counter Narrative to Defeat ISIS's Ideological Roots

The idea that fighting a terrorist group's ideas is the best way to stop them from doing what they do is not a new one. In fact, governments have been using de-radicalization programs since at least the 20th century, and their use has grown since the rise of extremist Islamist groups like Al-Qaeda (Rachele, 2019).

De-radicalization is usually a process that happens after a violent act. Its goal is to reduce the risk of relapse or stop the spread of violent extremism in sensitive places like detention centers. Most of these programs try to either directly change the beliefs that have led people to join terrorist groups or stop them from doing

violent things. De-radicalization practices are preventative and try to counter the appeal of radical ideologies by offering counter-narratives that use the same pull that terrorists do, but in the opposite way. The goal of these kinds of actions is to break down and discredit the power and appeal of terrorists by making a story that contradicts and eventually beats the one extremists tell (Hemmingsen, 2017).

In addition to trying to counter terrorism, alternative narratives want to give young people new ways to think critically and learn to read and write. Another thing that can be said is that counter-narratives have the potential to help everyone. Efforts in this area are mostly aimed at people who are in extremist groups or who are at risk of becoming radicalized. In this way, not only are reactive responses possible, but also proactive ones (Hemmingsen, 2017). Given this circumstance, it is important to reframe the entire argument on how to combat Islamic terrorism at the ideological level. Understanding what motivates individuals to become radicalized in the first place could have a significant impact. Therefore, counter-radicalization methods should adopt a bottom-up strategy that needs collaboration between governments, civil society, academic institutions, and cultural organizations.

Reframing the battle against terrorism is an ongoing effort, and with the recent emergence of a new scenario on the Internet, the counter-radicalization strategy may hold the key to more successful solutions. Despite this, there is an urgent need for more precise study on counter-terrorism techniques, with an emphasis on the psychological components of recruiting. Despite their flaws, counter-narratives have the ability to inspire a new narrative.

Managing Foreign Fighter Threat

Governments and their allies should take into account the threat posed by both ISIS and non-ISIS fighters when formulating plans to diminish and manage the foreign fighter threat. Governments should set up ways to talk to Iranian militias, Shia fighters, Hezbollah, and Sunni opposition groups, as well as help people who have given up or been taken captive. Helping former fighters and their families reintegrate into society should be the focus. To oppose extremism and promote moderation, a robust community engagement strategy is required, but this must happen concurrently. If governments and their partners are serious about halting the spread of extremist ideology, they must take action both on and off the ground such as on Online platforms. Extremism from both within and outside the Muslim community must be considered in efforts to unite the community both online and offline. These must include the rise of right-wing and anti-Islamic groups as well. Hate crimes, Islamophobia, and the growth of right-wing anti-Islamist populist organizations will worsen the situation and help ISIS and Al Qaeda. In order to attract new members, these organizations aggressively seek out conflict and tension among various communities. Such exaggerations will strengthen the Islamic State's narrative of war on the West and other non-Muslims.

Proposed Strategy to Defeat ISIS

There are steps that the United States administration can take to help improve the situation in Iraq and Syria, make operations more efficient and effective, and contribute to the reduction of root causes including ideological reasons, regardless of which strategy is selected. These steps can be taken without necessarily committing to the long-term democratization of either country.

At the moment, responsibility for the counter-ISIS strategy is shared between two distinct chains of command. The Global Coalition to Counter Islamic State and the Combined Joint Task Force in the Operation in Iraq and the Levant (CJTF-OIR) appear to operate under separate accountability and command structures (Anton, 2016). A lack of cohesion is suggested, whether or not it is warranted, by differences in the campaign's stated goals and terminology, as well as by the presence of two distinct campaign leaders.

This, in turn, adds validity to the findings of expert evaluations that imply the strategy to combat IS does not

have a united vision. The incoming administration in the United States was tasked with the responsibility of working toward unifying the joint and interagency structure in order to increase both the operational efficacy and the strategic potency of the government. It is feasible to choose leadership for the unified organization that is in line with the strategic choice that is being pursued.

For instance, the United States Special Operations Command could take the lead in an ongoing counter-terrorism effort; the Department of Defense (DOD) could take the lead in practical stability to assist in the concentration of military advice and sales; and the Department of State (DoS) could take the lead in legitimate stability to assist in the centralization of diplomatic and economic efforts.

The ability of a president to keep the support of the public and to successfully prepare a military operation is hindered when the president sets goals that are unrealistic. In future articulations of the counter-IS (Islamic State) strategy, the challenges and deadlines connected with the objectives should be explained in greater detail. Having the mindset that you should be prepared for change is an essential component of setting realistic expectations. Dynamism is an essential component of every viable long-term strategy. Nevertheless, in order to satisfy this expectation for vitality, some effort must be made to demonstrate a rational route to achievement. Finding this equilibrium will be easier for policymakers if they use strategic phasing and have more clearly defined short- and medium-term goals.

Finally, Different from the current principle of interests, a friendlier theoretical foundation is needed for counterterrorism efforts. To defeat ISIS, U.S. counterterrorism practically relied on the Iraqi army, the Peshmerga, and other ally groups, leading to a massive and complicated conflict. It would appear that the U.S. and its allies need to employ ground troops in addition to air power. The United States and its allies must demonstrate that they are successful in their efforts to eradicate terrorism rather than creating a new enemy and using conflict to advance their own goals.

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