Rise and Fall of Isis – Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Isis) Terrorist Organization; An International Contagious Virus in the New World Order?

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Abstract

From 2013 until the winter of 2016, ISIS has been in confrontation with Iraqi, Syrian, and Turkish security forces, rival Free Syrian Army, Kurdish Peshmerga fighters, as well as Russian, Iranian and United States led Coalition forces. The group's skill was confirmed by the seizure of crucial provinces in Syria and the quick collapse of Iraqi forces in Mosul and elsewhere in northern Iraq, under the determined assault of outnumbered fighters in the years 2014 and the beginning of 2015. ISIS's clearance of the Sunni areas of the central Iraq to the west and north of Baghdad and the threat to the Kurdish regional areas alarmed the governments across the whole Middle East and the Western powers, particularly in 2015, and during that period, it is generally feared that Saudi Arabia and Jordan might be the next ISIS targets. However, in the year 2016, the strong position of ISIS has declined in both Syria and Iraq particularly immediately after the intervention of Turkish Armed Forces to the Syrian territory against ISIS and the re-organization of the Iraqi Army under the consultancy of United States advisors.

In Middle East, ISIS marks a new threat to the regional security order, at a time of Arab Spring uprisings within the Arab societies and creeping sectarianism fueled mainly by the geostrategic rivalry between Shia and Sunni states of the region. ISIS not only threatens the survival of the people from autocratic regimes, but also the stability of neighboring countries. For military events on the ground to go beyond progress in resolving conflicts and addressing problems of which ISIS is a symptom would not form a

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development as far as international security is concerned. To the extent that events in Syria and Iraq do have something to do with a threat of terrorism in the West, that threat will depend not so much on how quickly ISIS expires but rather on what is left after its expiration. Adapting to the new peaceful environment and solving Iraq and Syria problems by mutual understanding will empower the regional countries to limit the spread of this condition. Failure to do so will not only result in a durable threat from ISIS to the region as well as the western counties, but also flowing threats that rise because of continuing challenges to state structures in the Middle East and human security to the democracies in the West.[1]

Keywords: *Terror, security, war, stability, violence, Salafism*

INTRODUCTION

Security may be described as freedom from such phenomena as threat, danger, vulnerability, menace, force and attack.[2] According to the studies about the international terror and security, there are many forms of security, of which international security, national security and human security are the most significantly known, and that the exact meaning of security as such and for each subtype is not only developing but continuously contested as well. It is also suggested by academic environment that the classic civil human rights, in fact, accept four different concepts of security: international security; negative individual security against the state; security as justification to limit human rights; and positive state obligation to offer security to individuals against other individuals.[3] Most important notion that must be focused on is radical Islamism on terrorist attacks. In the following parts of this paper, the features of this type of new security threats will be deeply examined. Terrorism can be accepted as the most significant threat to all kinds of security in these days, especially after the 9/11 attacks committed against the United States (US). Even though the notion of terrorism became so popular and so disputable in the recent years, the roots of terrorism can be traced back to the Scarii Zealots, who were the assassins under the Roman law in the 1st Century AD. With the French Revolution, the meaning of this term became equal to fear, during the administration of Jacobins. The time of anarchism was tried to be

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[1] Jessica Lewis Mcfate, The Isıs Defense in Iraq and Syria: Countering an Adaptive Enemy, *Institute for the Study of War Middle East Security Report 27, May 2015*, p.33

[2] Van Kempen, Piet Hein; "Four Concepts of Security; Human Rights Perspective", *Human Rights Law Review 13- 1 (2013), Oxford University Press, 4 February 2013*, pp.1-23

[3] Van Kempen, 1

suppressed by the actions of the Jacobins to compel the opponent groups by guillotine executions. The French Revolution also introduced the term "terror" to our vocabulary. Most terrorist organizations have understood revolution as secession or national self-determination. This principle, that a people should govern itself, has originated from and protected by the American and French Revolutions. This period initiates the modern notion of terrorist movements generating violent actions to threat the governmental organizations and civilian lives for their political purposes. The modern type of terrorist organizations does not hesitate to obtain heavy arms and harm civilians in mass attacks. The modern terrorism notions have different waves that are affected from the global changes and through these changes, terrorist organizations alter their strategies to realize their aims against authorities.

Right now, as defined in The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11 by David C. Rapoport there are 4 specific phenomena affecting the norms and the actions of terrorist organizations. The first wave covers the years from 1880 to 1914 – until the years of World War I – which is the age of anarcho-terrorism. The second wave is considered to take place from 1919 to 1998. The breakdown of the multinational empires and consequently the post-colonial period of independence caused the ethno-centric terrorist movements. In that period, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Basque region and PKK in Turkey can be the examples of the ethnic terrorism. In the third wave, new-leftist ideology became the trigger of the new terrorist approach. Through the new attitudes in terrorist movements, many of them adapted many ideologies together. Like PKK, many of the ethno-centric terrorist movements express themselves to be Marxist, Leninist, Stalinist or Maoist to collect international support in a bipolar world led by the Cold War. However, the fourth wave of the terrorist approaches caused one of the bloodiest violations in the history, which is the religio-centric terrorism. Al Qaeda, Taliban and the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS) induced many historical actions which were resulted in global range migrations and thousands of civilian deaths. The fourth wave have led to the international security politics after the 9/11 attacks to Twin Towers, which was the first foreign terrorist act in the US soil. After this attack caused many civilian deaths, the US has started Global War on Terror, which was the hunting of the members of the Radical Islamist terrorist organizations that were

the establishments which accept and declare the US and Israel as their eternal enemies with their Western enemies. This international counter attack to radical ideas of Al Qaeda, opened the way of more radicalized armed groups after specific regional conflicts, like the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf Wars. All these problems given above bring a question in mind. When the effect of the radical Islamist groups is regarded in Western World through their recruitment systems, can it be said that the religious terrorist organizations, like ISIS, are the new plague for World history?

The waves of the new terrorist attacks in Paris, France, Belgium Airport, Ataturk Airport and lately Istanbul Night Club attack during the early hours of the year 2017 in Turkey, led the international community to focus, again, on the emerging threat against their way of living generated by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Indeed, regarding the ISIS case, from beginning to nowadays, it is clearly seen that the terror group was described as the cause of all the above mentioned phenomena and fit into all forms of security listed in previous paragraph.[4] Moreover, the acts of ISIS match the definition of security that can be used and is being used as a political, sometimes even an ideological instrument to govern and reorder society.[5] Today's ISIS's black flag has been raised in a dozen countries outside of Syria and Iraq. The self-proclaimed caliph demands the obedience of all Muslims worldwide. The ISIS claims affiliates in Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Algeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Tunisia, the North Caucasus, and terrorist attacks have been carried out in the West, including the United States. Although there are some doubts regarding the authenticity of these claims and the seriousness of the threat that the Islamic State's brand of jihad will spread on a global scale, it is a widely agreed reality that the terrorist organization still is a source of threat, danger, vulnerability, menace, force and attack to the

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[4] The Soviet defeat and subsequent withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 left victorious Arab mujahideen adrift. Many retired from their jihadi adventures returning home to North Africa and the Middle East. Others remained in Pakistan, committed to fighting jihads in other theaters, establishing a network that in 1991 would officially become known as al Qaeda. With time, Osama Bin Laden aimed al Qaeda's ideology at the United States whom he believed to be the 'Far Enemy' who propped up the 'Near Enemy'–local apostate Muslim dictators and their regimes. Al Qaeda and ISIS operate in several contexts: global Salafism, intra-jihadi strife, Sunni alienation from and armed opposition to Shi'a-dominated governments in Baghdad and Damascus, the Arab-Persian conflict, Sunni Arab monarchies, sectarian conflict, and the war against the West. These contexts continually interact with one another. See, Frederick W. Kagan, Kimberly Kagan, Jennifer Cafarella, Harleen Gambhir, and Katherine Zimmerman: "U.S. Grand Strategy: Destroying ISIS and al Qaeda, Report One- Al Qaeda and ISIS: Existential Threats to the U.S and Europe", ISW –Institute for the Study of War, January 2016, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/PLANEX%20Report%201%20--%20FINALFINALFINAL.pdf.
[5] Neocleous Mark, "Critique of Security", *Edinburgh University Press 2008*, pp 4-5.

international security, national security and human security ever seen as far as religious basement is concerned. In this context, rather than other terrorist organizations, ISIS is a dangerous threat that attacks not only individual security, but also national and international security.[6]

1. A THEORETICAL EXPLANATION: UNDERSTANDING COMPLEX NATURE OF RELIGION AND TERRORISM

Terrorism is certainly a form of political violence caused coordinated destruction, but this is not the only definition for terrorism, there are also other collective events, such as race riots, some protest events, or violent encounters between rulers and their subjects. There can be several questions to understand the theoretical framework of terrorism in the light of this definition. After Cold War, changing ideology initiatives produced a different motivation or rhetoric. There is a surprisingly wide range of religious terrorism threats; the coming of a fifth wave must stand in line with all sorts of other criminal violence and overtaken secular leftist or radical ethnic separatism that become the main driver of terrorist attacks on global sphere. This indicates terrorism is not only served as political violence, it can also rely on religious, ideological, nationalist, ethnic or personal goals, and terrorists may be personally motivated by a sense of humiliation, perceived injustice, or socioeconomic deprivation. Indeed, according to Global Terrorism Index, religious extremism has become the main driver of terrorism in modern world.[7] For that reason, it should be asked why religiously motivated terrorism is becoming more common and why new religious terrorism waves are more deadly. To clarify the point, the fundamental ideologies leading the religious terrorism in the modern world must be considered in order to grasp the impacts on religious terrorism. In parallel with that, Richard T. Antoun states that "the religious orientation views religion as relevant to all important domains of culture and society."[8] Moreover, Steve Bruce divides fundamentalism into two distinct types: firstly, communal (giving Middle-Eastern Islam as an example); secondly, individual (giving strict Protestant conservatives

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[6] Lewis Jessica D., "The Islamic State: a Counter-Strategy for a Counter-State", *Institute for the Study of War, Middle East Security Report 21, July 2014*, pp.2-4

[7] The report recorded 18,000 deaths in 2013, a rise of 60% on the previous year. The majority (66%) of these were attributable to just four groups: Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Boko Haram in Nigeria, the Taliban in Afghanistan and al-Qaida. "Religious extremism is the main cause of terrorism, according to report", The Guardian, 18 October 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/nov/18/religious-extremism-main-cause-of-terrorism-according-to-report,

[8] Antoun (2001) p2.

as an example).[9] In order to analyze today's greatest problem, which is extremist religious terrorism in global range, in first hand, one must focus on the theory of the religious extremism that cause terrorism by several actors such as; Al Qaeda and ISIS. For understanding religious extremism that cause terrorism, we must understand the fundamentalist approach to religion.

Fundamentalism, in a basic sense, is a reaction against modernity and there are also other aspects of the concept adopted by its followers. To analyze the Al Qaeda and ISIS as a religious extremist movement, fundamentalism alone is not enough to explain the aspects of these groups. As a result, our focus moves on Islamic Religious Fundamentalism and its features. Anti-modernity is the most intensive characteristics of fundamentalism that is a type of a religious framework evolved to defend religion in front of the modern world necessities. Thus, the rejection of the modern world means to be against the Western world and their innovations (Toft et al., 2011). In addition to this definition in God's Century, sociologist of religion David Lehman describes "fundamentalist religious globalization" as the way fundamentalists establish themselves a new culture "without acknowledging this new culture."[10] The anti-modernity aspect of religious fundamentalism brings the understanding of myth of the Golden Age. The Golden Age of the religion indicates where religion is pure and perfect according to their subjects. However, the Golden Age, as a period, can differ from one interpretation of religion to another. The religion of Islam is one of the obvious examples for the variability in the explanation of the Qur'an. The goal of the religious fundamentalist ideology is its relationship to religious texts. According to them, the holy texts are fundamental, essential and authentic. They are considered the inherent and infallible sources for religious authenticity and are to be taken literally. Today, there are two popular explanations among the devoted people of the religious fundamental groups, which are Wahhabi and Salafi movement. Regarding the religious terrorism in 21st century, Al Qaeda and the ISIS are two important Salafist groups of the fundamentalist. In the light of this, these two terrorist groups' followers believe the Golden Age of Islam to be the

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[9] Bruce (2008) chapter 1, page 8-9. Chapter 3 of his book covers the communal form, and chapter four covers the individual kind.

[10] Lehman, David (2002). "Religion and Globalization". In Linda Woodhead, Paul Fletcher, Hiroko Kawanami, and David Smith (eds.), Religion in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations. London: Routledge, 299-315. Sourced from "Migration and the Globalization of Religion" by Caroline Plüss (2011) p493-4, 498.

term of the Prophet Mohammed (Peace be Upon Him) and his Caliphates. There was an absence of distinction between public and private spheres during that period. Also, there was hierarchical and patriarchal relationship between genders at the time, which indicates the public in male domination. According to literal interpretation of Qur'an, the Salafists must meet the Golden Age's way of life. There are some restrictions in member's daily life in Salafi movement. The members who are selected by special recruitment procedure generally pursue specific dress codes or rhetoric derived from the Prophet's time (PBUH).

The affiliation in the religious fundamental groups starts with an election among the members, and those members are expected to espouse the requirements of this group, immediately after being chosen. The examination of group psychology may be more helpful toward understanding the role of religious factors together with other factors in fundamental ideology and religious terrorist violence. In his article "The role of religious fundamentalism in terrorist violence: A social psychological analysis", M. Brooke Rogers says "A discussion of terrorist group dynamics cannot take place without first grounding the group interactions in the social psychology of ethnocentrism and intergroup conflict." The religious fundamentalist groups keep their minds straight and dedicated. The controversies are clear in their understandings, the relation between right and wrong, good and evil or salvation and damnation are accrued. For that reason, the difference between the Western world and themselves has sharp edges. According to the Islamic thought adopted by these fundamental groups, the Western world is the sinner. To control this depravation of the Western world, the belief of Jihadism is very common among the Islamic religious fundamental groups. Former Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood ideologue Sayyid Qutb states that offensive jihad is a radical belief that can be traced to the dark cells., Egypt's concentration camps of the Nasser Era can be accepted as a birth place of offensive jihad. Qutb was also one of the residents of this camp and he was one of the original theorists of modern Islamism by defining his radical thoughts. Due to Jihadist comprehension in Islamic world, there are two different types of Jihad explication to fight with infidels who live in the Western world; the first, The Little Jihad that includes the fight with sword. According to Islamic Doctrine, the physical jihad (The Little Jihad) refers to a defensive measure to be permitted only during acts of aggression upon the Muslim Community (Ummah).

Additionally, The Great Jihad that aims to conquer the corrupted minds with the philosophy of Islam. However, to Qutb, jihad was not simply a tool limited to the defensive struggle against external aggression nor was it restricted to the spiritual jihad (inner struggle).

Rather, he consigned the physical jihad to an illimitable utilitarian contrivance to be employed for an offensive assault in order to reform societies by spreading Islam, and to liberate all men, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Beyond the Cold War era in the world politics terrorist attacks tactics, reflecting new symptoms that are identical to the transformation conflicts nature, there has been a rise in the proportion of terrorists motivated by religious concerns, and there is a significant correlation between religious motivation and lethality. Indeed, the ongoing new terrorist violence that concerns the international community is mostly religion based and motivated by "sacred values". Also, destructive attack methods such as suicide bombing, martyrdom and the use of weapons are symbolic features of religion based terrorism. Furthermore, members of terrorist organizations expressing dissatisfaction in nation-state politics in the name of religion aim at realizing their ideologies in parallel to political motives. Such as ISIS misreading Western Democracies for being unfair and weak. They assume their ideologies and principles are just, stronger, determined, and powerful and the God will assists from its side perspectives. Except their way, all other political systems which do not have sufficient faith in God, will basically become out of heart in terms of human civilization.

2. THE INFLUENCE OF ISID IN THE MIDDLE EAST REGION

Understanding salafism has a crucial importance in the explanation of the influence of ISIS in Middle East region. Salafism, paradoxically, as an apolitical ideology, has become a major force in the world politics, beginning with the Arab Spring that started in January, 2011. This movement also marked a significant turn regarding the Islamism in the twentieth century. The events of the Arab Spring have led to new political realities in the Arab world and paved the way for the ISIS to form a so-called state on the soils of Iraq and Syria. It is encouraged by "Arab Spring" movements, like the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan and Egypt; ISIS played a leading role in the Sunni uprising after the operation of US led coalition in Iraq at the beginning. The ISIS movement today is in open

confrontation with the Iraq and Syria regime, and suffers from external intervention. The disastrous outcome of the Arab Spring for Syria, Libya, and Yemen as well as the banning of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have strengthened the movement's influence in the region, especially in Syria. Its political future in Iraq now depends on government's decisive acts, but mostly on its ability to solve internal discriminatory politics in the country, although Syria's future depends on the success of the opposition forces excluding ISIS. This article presents a research on the threat of radical groups of warring factions during the Syrian Civil War so far, particularly the rise of ISIS[11] in an academic point of view, and argues that the consequences of the Arab Spring has had a serious positive impact on the ISIS both in Iraq and Syria, moreover, in the region. The outcomes of the research demonstrate that the serious international and regional efforts would be required to diminish not only ISIS's previous military-political role and influence, but also the other terrorist movements in the region.

The impact of 9/11 changing the main governmental regulations and actions that decide to fight against terrorism under the rule of law which is called War on Terror is being universally discussed. One of the main incidents that happened in 1948 is the declaration of Israel's independence, in consequence of which the first Arab- Israel War has erupted. The belligerents of this war, Israel and the Arab League which is a collective force including Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, fought in the second stage of 1948 Palestinian War (Tal, 2005). Obviously, the main reasons of this war were the independence declaration of Israel.

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted a proposal which was called UN Partition Plan for Palestine –UN General Assembly Resolution 181 III— was a step for solving the Arab-Jewish problem (United Nations, 1990). This resolution brought a specific condition in the Middle East. After Israel gained its independence, most of the Jews migrated to Israel from all over the world. In contrary, most of the Arab population had to mobilize from the territory that they live in where today happens to be the Israeli territory. Many civilians have died during this process. Moreover, the distribution of oil, as a new resource, started to gain importance in

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[11] Daesh sounds similar to an Arabic word that means to bruise or crush; the group's leaders consider the word insulting. This article unintentionally uses ISIS rather than "Daesh" to strip away any religious or political legitimacy that the acronym suggests.

the Middle East region and for the whole world. Through the territorial problems in the region, nationalist movements had spread (Peteet, 2005). In a nutshell, first Arab- Israel War resulted with the victory of Israel. However, it was a beginning of an endless crisis in the region.

Suez Crisis is another issue that affected the whole region. Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser declared the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company in 1956; this situation caused a critical tension between Egypt, Britain, and France.[12] Nasser described himself as a representative of the third world countries. When we come to the year of 1967, Six Day War was confronted. When we look at the Six Day War, Syria was a part of this conflict against Israel, and the results were similar to the first Arab-Israeli Wars (Mann, 2013). This war had important results for the Middle East, though; Golan Heights were captured in Syria by the Israeli forces. The importance of the Golan Heights was related to water sources. The conflicts between Israel and Arab world were a longstanding competition. In 1973, The Yom Kippur War arose. This War started with an unexpected Arab attack on Israel on Saturday, the 6th of October.

It can be clearly seen from the historical background of the conflicts; the struggles of the authorities for productive lands lead to instability in Modern Middle East. The Iran-Iraq War was miscellaneous, and it contained religious differentiations, political varieties and border debates. This was the other reason for the inconstancy in the region. Conflicts continued as old Sunni-versus-Shia and Arab-versus-Persian religious and ethnic disputes, and grew to a personal hostility between Saddam Hussein and Ayatollah Khomeini.[13]The Iran-Iraqi War in 1988 was the turning point for the Middle East region, and it demonstrates The Soviet Union and other Western powers seeing Iraq, as the balancer of the newly changed regime of Iran. For that reason, they let Saddam to export weapons into the country. The western powers supplied chemical and biological weapons to Iraq to help Saddam's administration (Bulloch & Morris, 1989)"title" : "The Gulf War: Its Origins, History and Consequences", "type" : "paper-conference"}, "uris" : ["http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=4caec9a9-043b-4d5d-b129-3ed48d306cd6"] }],"mendeley" : {"formattedCitation": "(Bulloch & Morris, 1989.)

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[12] https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/suez
[13] http://www.iranchamber.com/history/iran_iraq_war/iran_iraq_war1.php

However, as it is a well-known fact, the claims on the mass destruction weapons under Saddam's Iraq which was intervened by international collective forces after Saddam had invaded Kuwait, where is a critical point for the Middle Eastern petrol transfers to West, in the early 1990's. The so called humanitarian intervention led to the overthrow of the whole Saddam administration members from Iraq, and such a reduction in the number of bureaucratic people created an extreme authority gap. Saddam was very powerful in controlling the local tribes who belonged to various backgrounds and believes. After he was captured by the US, those people decided to establish a new form of authority which is against leadership. In a roundabout way, this situation helps a movement like ISIS to rise in a very strong way and in a short time. When the actions of ISIS are compared with the system of Taliban and al-Qaeda; ISIS is more lethal, and the recruitment process is more widened. ISIS can attempt to kill many people even the Sunni Muslim civilians, however others follow a path to separate sinner and inner.

3. POLITICAL CONSTRUCTION OF CALIPHATE OR FAIL OF SYKES-PICOT[14] IMPOSITION

Hundreds of Syrians have lost their lives in almost five years of armed conflict, which began with anti-regime ruins before escalating into a full-scale civil war in the year 2011 in Syria as an aftershock of "Arab Spring".[15] The opposition's demands included economic, social and political rights, and the regime not being overthrown caused the catastrophic outcomes in a few years. Millions of people other than the protesters were forced out of their homes, as the forces of President Bashar al-Assad and those opposed to his rule as well as jihadist militants from opposition battle against one another. Below is the chart of the designated current warring factions and the parties of the confrontation in Syria, in the brutal civil war.

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[14] Syces-Picot Agreement; available online at; http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/britain-and-france-conclude-sykes-picot-agreement
[15] Joya Angela, "Syria and the Arab Spring: The Role of the Domestic and External Factors", Understanding the Syrian Crisis: Causes, Actors and Outcomes, International Conference "The Arab Spring: Between Authoritarianism and Revolution", March 12-13, Center for the Advanced Study of the Arab World at Durham University, United Kingdom 2012, p.32

Table 1: Messy relations in Syria in the beginning of the conflicts

	ISIS	TUR	US/EU	SDF	IRAN	RUS	FSA	SYR. Gov.
ISIS	-	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
TURKEY	E	-	F	E	N	N/U	F	E
US/EU	E	F	-	F	E	E	N	E
SDF	E	E	F	-	N/M	F	E	E
IRAN	E	N	E	N/M	-	F	E	F
RUSSIA	E	N/U	N	F	F	-	E	F
FSA	E	F	F	E	E	E	-	E
SYR.Gov.	E	E	E	E	F	F	E	-

(F: Friendly, E: Enemy, N: Neutral, U: Unfriendly, M: Mistrust)

Pro-democracy protests rose in the March of 2011 in Syria, following the security forces opening fire on demonstrators and killing several; more protesters took to the streets. Since the major unrest began in March 2011, various reports suggest the number of Syrians that were killed to be between 17,000 and 18,000.[16] The unrest triggered countrywide protests demanding President's resignation. The government's use of force to crush the dissent merely hardened the protesters' resolve. By the mid-summer of 2011, thousands were taking to the streets across the country. Opposition supporters eventually began to take up arms, first to defend themselves and later to expel security forces from their local areas. The regime maintained the use of deadly force against its citizens in continued to violate international human rights and humanitarian law as well as its agreement in November 2011;[17] the Arab League plan to engage in reforms and cease killing civilians.[18]Although for many years prior to 2011, the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad had maintained a consistently flirtatious relationship with Sunni jihadists, under the new circumstances, they have become the most dangerous enemies for each other now. Thus, Damascus can no more aim at manipulating them into acting as proxies for Syria's agenda of regional policy.

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[16] Sharp Jeremy M.,Christopher M. Blanchard,"Armed Conflict in Syria: U.S. and International Response", Congressional Research Service (CSR) Report for Congress July 2012.

[17] Available online at; http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12794882

[18] Syrıa 2012 Human Rıghts Report, available online at; https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2012/country-chapters/syria

4. THE FALL OF AL QAEDA, THE RISE OF ISIS

The moment it felt an unfortunate, appropriate international recklessness, the radical jihadi group ISIS has captured Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city; Tikrit, Saddam Hussain's birth city; and many other towns along the way on its fast advance through Iraq.[19] Furthermore, with the help of former Baathists and Sunni tribal forces, the group made its way toward Baghdad. ISIS' astonishing success could be a sign of a structural change within the radical terrorist movement. ISIS assumes the role of Al Qaeda, as the movement's leader. His power struggle and the friction between the two groups is not new. Meanwhile the relationship did not reach a breaking point until April 2013, when ISIS expanded its movement into Syria and attempted to attach the local Al Qaeda branches under its authority.

After multiple failed attempts at mediation by various leading sheikhs in the global jihadist community, the two groups split permanently when the leader of Al-Qaeda central formally repudiated ISIS.[20] Not only Al Qaeda's leader, but also other branch leaders rejected this fait accompli and tried to calm the dispute by announcing that Al Qaeda would remain responsible for jihad in Syria and ISIS would keep to Iraq. ISIS immediately refused to accept this decision and continued its expansion into Syria, trampled other Syrian rebel groups, including radical Islamists. When ISIS' overreach provoked a backlash, opposing rebel groups mounted a counteroffensive and they sided with the anti-ISIS forces. By February 2014, the split between ISIS and the Syrian opposition had led Al Qaeda to disown the group.[21]

The differences between ISIS and Al Qaeda are not just about power and control of the jihadi movement. As important as these features are, the groups have serious differences when it comes to strategy, tactics, and Islamic authority. Their characteristics differ from each other such as the implementation of strict Islamist laws and the understanding of right of one group to enforce its authority over all others. The groups don't disagree about the legitimacy of these things, but Al Qaeda is more tolerant, and ISIS

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[19] Shaul Shay, "The Threat of The New Caliphate", International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), August 2014, p.5

[20] Available online at; http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/02/03/al-qaeda-denounces-syrian-jihadistgroup-isis.html

[21] Hubbard Ben, Al Qaeda Breaks With Jihadist Group in Syria Involved in Rebel Infighting, the New York Times, Feb. 3, 2014, available online at; http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/04/world/middleeast/syria.html?_r=0

is generally more radical and inflexible. ISIS' display of power, particularly the military successes, brought the group considerable rewards, so ISIS captured huge amounts of military equipment, and liberated hundreds of fighters from prisons in the territory that is now under its control.

Furthermore, ISIS' reputation rises among radicals, and these successes will transform into more money and volunteers for the organization. In this context, ISIS is able to mobilize those forces rapidly along the disappearing border between Iraq and Syria, which it gradually controls more, and organizes even more motivated campaigns in Syria. The terrorist group's march through Iraq also diminishes Al Qaeda's profile while raising ISIS'. ISIS seems to be realizing the reestablishment of the Caliphate, although Al Qaeda has started the march toward same direction thirteen years ago by its greatest achievement which is 9/11 attacks. Al Qaeda controlled territories that were smaller in size and significance than what ISIS controls today.[22]

In accordance with its success, ISIS gained legitimacy and overwhelmed Al Qaeda's main tactic to delegitimize the movement. Until now, Al Qaeda's strategy had been slightly successful, so some jihadi scholars released messages of support for Al Qaeda and strongly condemned ISIS fans. However, all that plays to ISIS' favor since young jihadist give more respect to warriors than to religious scholars. As far as symbolism is concerned, ISIS holds a territory larger than many countries[23] and owning this amount of land works to ISIS' advantage. Unfortunately for Iraqis and Syrians, ISIS' losing its gains seems unlikely to happen. It is unpredicted that the collapsing Iraqi military is which is ill-equipped, to quickly reverse ISIS' progress since it is the result of a well-thought-out plan that was structured for a long time. Additionally, individuals like winners and, unlike Al-Qaeda, which has not had a clear victory in a decade, ISIS continues to build its prestige and legitimacy within the overall movement.[24]

Al-Qaeda knows that ISIS is an extremely capable force whereas its battle achievements do not make it any more appealing as a government. To succeed in the competition with ISIS, Al Qaeda could try to beat it in some

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[22] Caris Charles C. & Samuel Reynolds, "ISIS Governance in Syria", Institute for the Study of War, Middle East Security Report 22, July 2014, pp.24-25

[23] Cockburn Patrick, "ISIS consolidates", London Review 36, no.16, pp.1-2, August 2014, available online at; http://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/no16/patrich-cockburn/isis-consolidates.

[24] Zelin Aaron Y., "The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda for Supremacy of the Global Jihadist Movement", The Washington Institute for Near East Policy no.20, June 2014, p.7

way such as through advances against the Assad regime, medium scale operations in the Arabian Peninsula and in North Africa, and individual or lone-wolf type terrorist attacks in the western countries. Continued success for ISIS, of course, is by no means guaranteed, especially given the group's tendency to overplay its hand with locals.[25]

5.   WHAT DOES SALAFISM WANT?

In the wake of serious terror attacks in addition to the group's statements, social media posts, videos and also the flood of concurring information, ISIS seems bent on confrontation with the West. Although the relationship between the group's strategy, politics, and religious ideology is complex, understanding it is the first step for confronting it in the correct way. Meanwhile, the problem is relatively easy to state, but extremely difficult to solve.[26]Although Salafism is characteristically nonpolitical, leading Salafists criticized political groups, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood for being distracted by modern concerns. Since a definition of Salafism is in order, some Salafists choose to remain outside of the political arena altogether, while others jump right in. Like the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafism is often lumped together with Islamism, although they are practically not the same thing. The Muslim Brotherhood seeks to introduce Islam into the political sphere while Salafism is strictly Sunni and discusses an obscure theological concept than any mention of strategy or goals. Although some type of Islamism accommodates the trappings of modern political life, the Salafists' do not. Meanwhile, the Arab Spring saw the formation of Salafist parties participating in post-revolution political transitions by betraying the Salafist principles of rejecting modern institutions. For some Salafist groups, participating in political processes has been a clever strategic choice, keeping them out of their local governments' targeting sights. This choice has opened them not only to the criticism of other political parties but also other Salafist groups, thus this issue has cost them their popular supporters to regard them as betrayers to the principles in favor of their political needs, moreover, this also brings us to the case of ISIS; it openly rejects the political jargon of constitutions and modern politics.

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[25] Zelin, 6
[26] Kagan Kimberly, Frederick W. Kagan, & Jessica D. Lewis, A Strategy to defeat the Islamic State, Institute for the Study of War, Middle East Security Report 23, September 2014, p.6

> *"Some Salafis violate ideological principles by forming political parties (e.g., Egypt, Gulf States), with some arguing that this is justified as a way of perpetuating their mission of purification and education (al-tasfiya wa-l-tarbiya)."*[27]

ISIS texts, much like those of other Salafists, are filled with discussions of the hadith, early Islamic theological concepts, and statements from specific pre-modern figures thought to uphold the Salafist faith. Nevertheless, ISIS, unlike Al Qaeda, has been able to make its theology applicable to real-world political objections and won recruits by promising true Islam and it seems that it deems military training of secondary importance as compared to the effort that it puts into cultivating the combatants' desire to fight.[28] The terrorist organization dedicates big energy to classroom tools explaining its theological views, and eventually, its success will depend on this dense and concentrated program. Its firm commitment to establishing a theologically faithful state rather than a modern political one makes a trustworthy reputation among its believers. To achieve his educational goals, The Islamic State sometimes appropriates schools and other institutions, giving those working within them the "option" of keeping their positions, but surely under its control and in educational aims of the organization.[29] Although ISIS's territorial expansion in targeted lands and attacks on the Western countries will continue to attract local populations and adherents, those are not the only reasons for its successes.

The group's doctrinally consistent bypassing of Western political culture has allowed it to gain so many recruits. The ISIS' attacks to the West created a broad international consensus that the terrorist organization is on the march and must be stopped. The United States had announced as much in September 2014 that the United States would seek to "degrade and ultimately destroy" the group, but cautioned that the campaign would be long and difficult. Washington settled on a gradual approach that involved a very limited application of force rather than to commit ground forces. In fact, this slow strategy had given ISIS time to combine its control, train terrorists, and set in operatives in the region. Under these suitable

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[27] Olidort Jacob, "Salafism: Ideas, Recent History, Politics ",Available online at; http://www. washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/other/Salafism-Olidort-2.pdf

[28] Siboni Gabi, "The Military Power of the Islamic State", The Institute for National Security Studies, January 2015, p.65

[29] Khatib Lina, "The Islamic State's Strategy: Lasting and Expanding", Carnegie Middle East Center, June 2014, p.7

circumstances, unlike Al Qaeda, which does not directly manage the daily operations of its franchises, ISIS claims to have direct control over the fighters and residents in its territory, thus applies a new type of less flexible and hierarchical structure.

Also, winning the territorial battle would deprive ISIS of important practical and propaganda advantages such as the taxes and other resources available to ISIS because it controls territory and a civilian population will be gone. The idea that ISIS victories are ordained by God and that therefore Muslims should join it will be undermined.[30] The most recent message by Al-Qaeda leadership on beginning of the year 2017 marks a new escalation between the two rival groups, and attacks ISIS leadership strongly.[31] It coincides with military operations against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, which have, to some degree, cut back the group's human and financial resources. Meanwhile, Al-Qaeda is striving, once again, to become the top terrorist organization in the world after declining on the organizational and operational levels.

6. UNITED STATES AND ITS RESPONSE TO ISIS THREAT

The United States' bitter experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan shaped its initial response to ISIS. However, after the entrance of ISIS to the regional Picture, "Containment of the Violence Policy" of the US administration was changed, and it was understood that strategy was no longer valid. Rather than the strategy of staying away from Middle Eastern conflicts, a gradual increasing in US involvement in Iraq and expanding the U.S. bombing campaign to Syria was preferred by Washington. The main problem of defeating ISIS commitment was the need for ground forces, which the United States has been reluctant to provide. Instead of direct application of U.S. power, empowering allies to assume a greater share of the burden strategy has worked well.

The US support for the Kurdish people is only valid for the Kurds who lives in Syria. To be clearer, as we all are familiar, after 9/11 USA have sent troops to Afghanistan and Iraq, and when Obama came to power, he promised that all the US soldiers will be withdrawn from Afghanistan and

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[30] Smith Ben, Claire Mills, "Syria and Iraq: update July 2017", Briefing Paper Number CBP 8011, House of Common Library, 21 July 2017, p.28

[31] Available online at; http://english.aawsat.com/2017/01/article55365124/zawahiri-strongly-criticizes-baghdadi, accessed on; 09 January 2017

Iraq. As a democrat president, he made this promise. In the process between 2012 and 2016, the USA did not exist in Middle East territories physically. In parallel with this, Obama created cooperation between Kurds and the US in order to protect its own interests in the Syrian issue.

What is the US aim towards Syria? This question is also important to understand why the USA supports Kurds in the Syria region. Basically, we can say that, the prime purpose of the US is to prevent establishment of a radical religious state in Syria. The US is the archenemy of the radical religious groups. The US has always two types of plans on the foreign policy, the long term plan and the short-term plan. Supporting Kurds on Syria is the short-term plan of the US. Another important point that is related with the US and ISIS is the US government seeing PYD and YPG as important forces in front of ISIS. Although there are immense contradictions which all came from Turkish authorities, the US found the Kurdish forces in Iraq and Syria to be reliable and highly capable allies. According to US, Kurdish forces courageously blocked ISIS's advance and recaptured most of the ISIS occupied areas in Iraq and Syria including so-called ISIS capital city Raqqa, thus cutting all lines of communications of terrorists. However, rather than Iraq Kurdish Peshmerga forces, Syrian Kurdish rebel YPG[32] which is an extension of PKK terrorist organization, is seen as a friendly force even for the US, since they are engaged in fighting the ISIS.[33]

The above mentioned optimistic approach is not valid in ISIS-controlled territory. Sunni Arabs who object to ISIS are likely to fear Kurdish expansionism and may join hands with ISIS to resist their advance, since Kurdish victories in the Arab territories have already been met with accusations that the Kurds are trying to expand their control at the expense of the locals. Therefore, sectarian apprehension would make relying on Shia forces in Iraq to capture ISIS occupied lands even more challenging. It is clear that the Shia-dominated regime in Iraq is not going to surrender control to allow an American–Sunni partnership and insist that any support

[32] The Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat, PYD) is a Kurdish faction, founded in 2003. PYD is ideologically, organizationally and militarily, affiliated with the PKK terrorist organization. The People's Defense Corps (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel, YPG) is the PYD's armed branch.
[33] Hassan Hassan," Unconditional U.S. Support for Kurdish Forces in Syria Harms the Anti-ISIS Cause", The New York Times, 24 February 2016, available online at; http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/02/24/are-kurds-allies-or-obstacles-in-syria/unconditional-us-support-for-kurdish-forces-in-syria-harms-the-anti-isis-cause

to the Sunnis must be passing through the central government.[34] So far the conditions are not different in Syria, and Sunni Arabs view Assad's regime as dangerous and threatening as ISIS. Although anti-PYD sources claim that the PYD staged uprisings in coordination with the regime and alleged that regime had handed over five provinces to the PYD, the gains of PYD in previously Sunni-majority areas are mostly appreciated by Syrian Sunni population.[35] It is actually true that the PYD's enhanced control in the north arguably presented potential benefits for the regime, and forced other armed opposition groups, obstructing their access to border areas by raising the movement's profile, and worsened fears among many Syrians as well. In the end, and regardless of whether the regime and PYD might have cooperated and to what extent, the PYD secured several areas of the north, while the regime took no action to recover them.[36] United States' resistance to the pressures to escalate its involvement in conflicts against regime forces caused failure of the "train and equip" program of US[37] and Turkey.[38] The few individuals that enrolled in the program were killed or forced to surrender their weapons.

When it was widely accepted that the ISIS threat is too urgent to simply wait for the proto-state to collapse from within after the Paris attacks, US strategy was modified. It is seen that the slow progress in Iraq and Syria only increases the threat of terrorism abroad. Although members of the international community can be expected to strengthen their ability to stop terrorist threats through more robust internal security and better international cooperation, U.S. recognized that ever-greater burden sharing cannot substitute for its deeper involvement. The key to dealing with the threat is to quickly and effectively face ISIS in its strongholds in the Middle East. Contrary to the expectations of some politicians and political thinkers[39], previous U.S. strategy did not cover direct military intervention,

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[34] Hinnebusch Raymond, "The American Invasion of Iraq: Causes and Consequences", Perceptions Spring 2007, p.19

[35] US Defense Secretary Ash Carter's testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, December 9, 2015, available online at; http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/633554/carter-says-isil-must-be-defeated-in-its-parent-tumor?source=GovDelivery

[36] International Crisis Group, "Syria's Kurds: A Struggle Within a Struggle", Middle East Report N°136, Brussels, 22 January 2013,pp.15-16

[37] Blanchard Christopher M., Amy Belasco, "Train and Equip Program for Syria: Authorities, Funding, and Issues for Congress", Congressional Research Service Report, June 9, 2015, pp.1-2

[38] Byman Daniel, "Six Bad Options for Syria", The Washington Quarterly, Winter 2016, p.171

[39] Kagan Kimberly, "U.S. Role and Strategy in the Middle East: Syria, Iraq, and the Fight Against ISIS", statement before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations September 16, 2015, pp.2-4

and "Enabling local forces -- not substituting for them -- is necessary to ensure a lasting defeat of ISIL" was declared as a new strategy.[40]

The new U.S. administration primarily needs to rethink key aspects of the struggle against not only the Islamic extremism, but also all types of terrorism itself. U.S. and Western partners need to see it as a continuing threat that will be present for, at least, the coming decade, regardless of what happens to ISIS. They also need to consider how this threat is tied to the confrontation between Iran and most Arab states, and the growing tensions between Sunnis and Shi'ites. They need to stop thinking largely in terms of terrorism and consider the threat posed in terms of insurgency and efforts to seize control of largely Muslim states. They also need to address the fact that any strategy based on counterterrorism alone will fail unless they also cooperate in addressing the causes of terrorism, insurgency, and unrest.[41]

7. RUSSIAN POLITICS AND SYRIA INTERVENTION WITH TARGETING ISIS

After the collapse of USSR, as a newly emerged system, Russia adopted some basic strategies for its foreign affairs in a very similar way that existed before. After the Arab Spring movements and the civil war in Syria, Russia tends to collaborate with Iran and China which were allies for a long time. One must bear in mind that, today, Putin's Russia plays a key role on the Syrian Civil war. Furthermore, it helps Turkey to fight with ISIS in parallel with Euphrates Shield Operation as an indirect way with the aircraft bombings. Following its general support for the hard-pressed Assad regime, Russia moved to establish a small task force in regime-controlled territory near the north-west city of Latakia in September 2015, and then started attacks using strike aircraft and helicopter gunships at the end of the month[42]. Firstly, according to the Russian leadership, the move reconfirmed Russia's status as a crucial power, and secondly broke down its international isolation by diverting attention from Ukraine. Also, United States softened its position on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad,

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[40] US Defense Secretary Ash Carter's testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, Washington, April 28, 2016, available online at; http://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/744936/statement-on-counter-isil-operations-and-us-military-strategy-in-the-middle-east

[41] Anthony H. Cordesman, "Rethinking the Threat of Islamic Extremism: The Changes Needed in U.S. Strategy", *Center for International Strategic Studies, January 3, 2017*, p.2

[42] Rogers Paul, Richard Reeve," Russia's Intervention in Syria: Implications for Western Engagement", Oxford Research Group Global Security Briefing, October 2015, p.2

whose resignation is no longer considered a precondition for settlement. Most importantly, winning some applause in the EU may create conditions for sanctions relief.[43]

In the beginning, Russia mounted an intensive information campaign to highlight the significance of what it was doing. Later, it gradually accelerated the degree of intervention and initially used relatively old aircrafts and unguided bombs. Russia added to these efforts by firing cruise missiles from warships in the Caspian Sea which overflew Iran and Iraq with the agreement of these governments, even if to be resulting with the deaths and injuries of civilians.[44]

Most of the Russian air strikes have been against the forces opposed to the Assad regime rather than IS, and indeed, IS used the opportunity to make gains on the ground against anti-Assad forces pre-occupied with fighting Syrian Army units.[45] One of the reasons of the Russian operations timing can be considered as an easing of the intensity of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, and assist to emphasize Putin's firmness that Russia is still a great power beyond its near environment. Bearing all these factors in mind, Putin, of course, fears IS' advance however, less than he fears the collapse of the Assad regime.

Russia's direct involvement in the war in Syria is not likely to secure anything more than tactical or localized victory for the Assad regime. Therefore, it is a fact that Russian military operations in Syria did not directly affect ISIS since they did not directly aim ISIS. On 14 March 2016, Russian President Vladimir Putin surprised the world with an announcement of the withdrawal of Russian troops from Syria. The move was unexpected and has raised questions as to whether Russia will really pull its forces out of Syria and what might have prompted the decision to announce the withdrawal and, as always, the market implications of the decision were discussed.[46]

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[43] Adamsky , "Putin's Syria Strategy: Russian Airstrikes and What Comes Next", Foreign Affairs, October 1, 2015, p 1, available online at; https://w ww.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2015-10-01/putins-syria-strategy
[44] Amnesty International, "Russia's Statements on its attacks in Syria unmasked", Amnesty International Report 2015, pp.7-8,
[45] Genevieve Casagrande, "Russian Airstrikes in Syria: November 30 - December 6, 2015", Institute for the Study of War, December 8, 2015, p.1, available online at; http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-airstrikes-syria-november-30-december-6-2015
[46] O'Grady Bill, "The Russian Withdrawal", Advisor Perspectives, March 22, 2016, p.1

However, the question that has risen all over the international area after Russian's sudden withdrawal is "what remained in Syria?". As the departure of Russian forces from Syria already continues, the evidences of constructions at Russia's main air bases in the country demonstrate Moscow's intention to keep an eye on the strong military presence there. Particularly, at the air base in Latakia province and the naval base at Tartus. Having declared victory while maintaining its war-fighting capacity in Syria, Russia has left key questions unanswered: Will it reduce its military role and, if so, to what extent, where and against whom? [47]

The game that Russia is playing in the region by using the ISIS threat has created another dangerous relation. Despite significant cooperation with Turkey in Syria, Russia has continuously provided diplomatic channels for the PYD, which Turkey considers a terrorist organization, therefore Ankara feels uncomfortable with Moscow's non-transparent dialogue with the PKK.[48]

Unlike Turkey, the Russians and Israelis are effectively coordinating their Syria policies, both politically on the different pages. Israel does it mainly because it has no choice in the problem, while Russia does it because it neither needs nor wants to open yet another front, in addition to all the other fronts it already opened in and out of the region. However, it is not unimaginable that future developments could test this relation, with either positive or negative results.[49]

8. EUROPE VS. ISIS OR ISIS VS. EUROPE

Foreign fighters have long been a key element of transnational jihadist movements. In the 1980s, foreigners flocked to South Asia to fight alongside the Afghan mujahedeen. The same thing occurred to a lesser extent in Bosnia and Chechnya in the 1990s and again following the invasion of Iraq in 2003. However, the Syrian civil war and the subsequent

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[47] International crises Group, "Russia's Choice in Syria", Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N.47, Istanbul/New York/Brussels, 29 March 2016, p.1

[48] Özertem, Hasan Selim, "Turkey and Russia: A Fragile Frıendship", Turkish Policy Quarterly, Volume:15 No:4, p.134, available onlie at: http://turkishpolicy.com/files/articlepdf/turkey-and-russia-a-fragile-friendship_en_4553.pdf

[49] Magen Zvi, Russia and the Challenges of a Changing Middle East: A View from Israel, Russia and Israel in the Changing Middle East Conference Proceedings, Memorandum No. 129, July 2013, p.32

rise of the ISIS have broken new ground. Never before have jihadi foreign fighters rallied at the speed and scale as they have in the territory that ISIS now controls.[50]

Today, ISIS is using its foreign fighters and safe haven in Iraq and Syria to execute a terror campaign within Europe and support a larger strategy to punish, destabilize, and polarize the West. ISIS's suicide attacks in the various cities of Europe demonstrate that the jihadist threat to Europe is beating domestic and international law enforcement efforts. ISIS is successfully using its safe haven in Iraq and Syria to train hundreds of foreign fighters for external attacks and these terrorists benefit from wide-ranging support networks across the European continent.

The logistical requirements for facilitating European foreign fighter travel into Iraq and Syria can also export those fighters from ISIS's safe havens back to Europe. Individuals motivated by ISIS are active across Europe, particularly in France, Belgium, Germany, and the United Kingdom. ISIS linked attacks and arrests in Europe are different from ISIS's activity in Turkey, which reflects a spillover from ISIS's campaigns in Iraq and Syria as well as ISIS's campaign to attack the West.[51]An official ISIS media outlet affirmed in a publication released in January 2016 that rather than aiming to destabilize Europe through remarkable attacks, ISIS also seeks to worsen tensions between European states, raise defensive requirements within those states, cause an environment of fear, and inflict additional economic damage on Europe. The attacks to European Union states may strengthen voices calling for some exits from the union since some claim that the attacks proved Schengen free movement and lax border controls are a threat to security.

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[50] Hardin Lang and Muath Al Wari, "The Flow of Foreign Fighters to the Islamic State Assessing the Challenge and the Response", available online at; https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2016/03/17/133566/the-flow-of-foreign-fighters-to-the-islamic-state/, accessed on; 20 January 2017

[51] Gambhir Harleen , "Isis's Campaign in Europe: March 2016", Institute of the Study of War, March 25, 2016, available online at; http://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isiss-campaign-europe-march-2016#sthash.K9g5rJDF.dpuf,

Therefore, increasing pressure on European security and unity will open opportunities for ISIS to expand attacks to "crusaders".[52] ISIS particularly aims to destabilize Europe through polarization, which it calls "destroying the gray-zone." ISIS hopes the attacks in its name will provoke state and social backlash against Europe's Muslim communities, encouraging radicalization and jihadist recruitment. Such reactions have surfaced due to the attacks in European metropolitans already, as in the instance of "de-Islamizing the West" concept and the American President's suggestion of patrolling Muslim neighborhoods and banning Muslims from entering the U.S during his election campaign.[53] ISIS will likely exploit these actions in order to claim itself as the defender of Muslims in a broader cultural war, furthermore, it likely does so in order to strengthen xenophobic organizations and rhetoric in Europe, thereby fueling anti-Muslim sentiment and encouraging cultural polarization.[54]

In sum, there is much that can be done to reduce the threat of ISIS terrorist attacks in the West. However, almost inevitably, there will be some terrorist attacks in Europe carried out by returnees from Syria or Iraq. Terrorism cannot be destroyed, it can only be controlled by the common efforts of decisive democratic countries. Nevertheless, Europe already has very effective measures in place to reduce the threat of terrorism from ISIS returnees greatly, and it is also better to stop anti-Islam rhetoric as well. Those measures should be improved in cooperation with all actors and, more importantly, these actors must be adequately resourced against to all kind of terror without any discrimination. Still, the average of success cannot be precision. If it is, European counties are doomed to failure and, worse, doomed to an overreaction which will waste resources and cause dangerous policy mistakes.[55]

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[52] Sanderson Thomas M, "The Paris Attacks: A Strategic Shift by ISIS?", Statement before the House Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, December 2, 2015, p.3

[53] Diamond Jeremy, "Donald Trump: Ban all Muslim travel to U.S."CNN report, December 8, 2015, available online at; http://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/07/politics/donald-trump-muslim-ban-immigration/,

[54] Institute for the Study of War, Iraq Situation Report: March 15-21, 2016, available online at: http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/iraq%20SITREP%202016-03-21.pdf,

[55] Byman Daniel, Jeremy Shapiro, "Be Afraid. Be A Little Afraid: The Threat of Terrorism from Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq", Foreign Policy at Brookings, Policy Paper Number 34, November 2014, pp.22-23
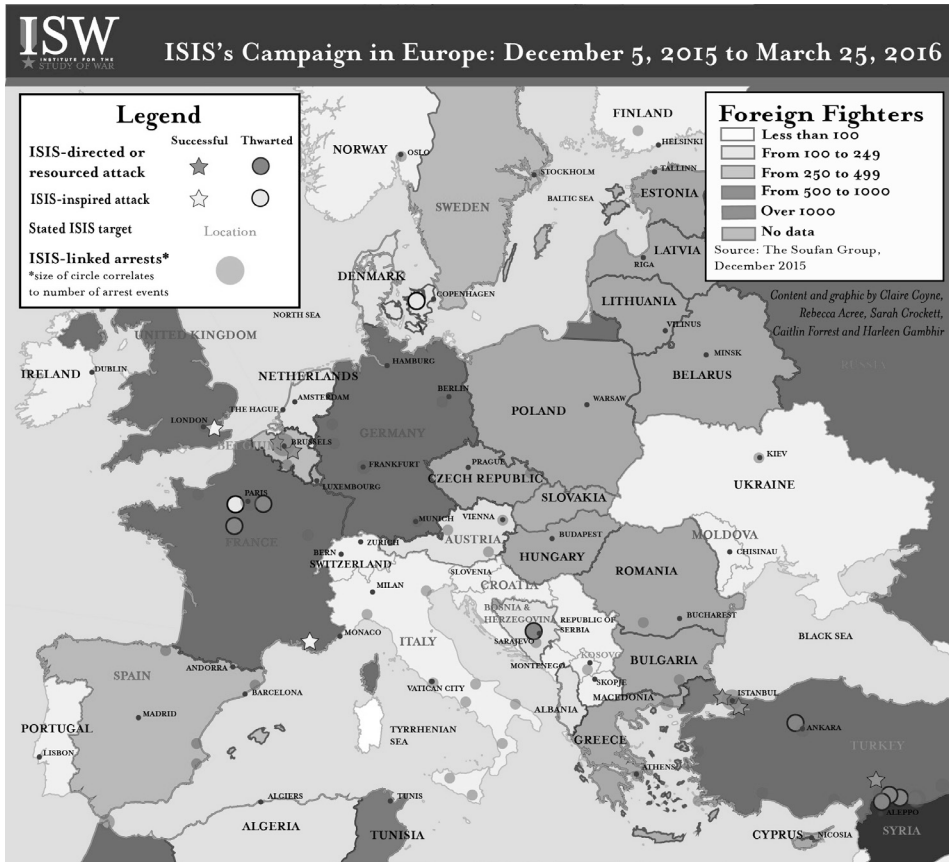
Map 1: ISIS's Foreign Fighters

9. IRAN VS. ISIS

Syria is a symbol of Iranian power in the region. Iran's alliance with the Assad regime allows it to spread out its influence on the Mediterranean coastline. For this reason, when civil war broke out in Syria, Tehran committed itself to support the government with money, equipment and military assistance in secrecy in the beginning. However, in September 2012, Iran admitted that its elite forces was present in Syria to provide advice, moreover, Iran was shipping weapons and personnel to Syria via Iraq.[56]Actually, to preserve Iraq's and Syria's territorial integrity, as far as the ISIS threat is concerned, Iran opted to arm proxy groups and provide political, military, economic and humanitarian aid to Shi'i and Kurdish

[56]Charbonneau Louis, "Exclusive: western report—Iran ships arms, personnel to Syria via Iraq", Reuters, 19 Sept. 2012

stakeholders in these countries, mostly weapons and ammunition to the Kurds in Iraq and to the regime armed forces in Syria.[57]

According to Muhammad-Javad Zarif, Iran's foreign minister: "The menace we're facing, and I say we, because no one is spared, is embodied by the hooded men who are ravaging the cradle of civilization."[58] Although he indicates the possibility of rapprochement between Washington and Tehran against ISIS by this rhetoric, actually he sends messages to all the related states in order to warn them against the general threat coming from ISIS. However, under such expressions of concern is a strategy. Although the permanent destabilization of the Arab heartland would probably be a major victory for the ISIS, Iran, as a key ally of the Iraq's Shiites and the Alawite Bashar al-Assad regime, is using ISIS' ascendance in the Middle East to consolidate its power.[59] Though it has had trouble controlling independently-minded Iraqi Shiite leaders, Tehran achieved a definite success since the U.S. withdrawal from the region in 2011. With the rise of ISIS, and the consequent rise of Iranian hard power, Tehran has become noticeably less concerned about Iraqi perceptions and intra-clerical harmony.[60] Unless ISIS tries to establish terrorist cells inside Iran's Sunni minority communities, Tehran might want to pursue the current balance in the Syria and Iraq with its current profile.

Otherwise, to protect its own territorial integrity, Iran may get involved in the regional clashes intensively and more openly. In other words, a new question comes to our attention: Does Iran uses ISIS for its own interests? Shifting the conflict towards the Mediterranean by using ISIS is a way for Iran. This is the critical point for the Iran and ISIS dilemma.

10. TURKEY VS. ISIS

For 2016, it must be said that Turkey has had very rough times in its domestic politics as well as in the international arena. Domestic terrorism had increased in the Eastern part of Turkey, and the military operations attempted to finish Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). However, it is not only the domestic politics, but also the organizational domestic factors that

[57] Iran provided weapons to Iraqi Kurds; Baghdad bomb kills 12', Reuters, 27 Aug. 2014
[58] Takeyh Ray, Reuel Marc Gerecht, "Iran's ISIS Trap How Tehran Uses the Terrorist Group to Get Ahead", Foreign Affairs, November 2015, available online at; https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2015-11-15/irans-isis-trap
[59] Ibid
[60] Esfandiary Dina and Ariane Tabatabai, "Iran's ISIS policy", International Affairs 91: 1, 2015, p.8

caused incredible instability. Turkish people had to experience a military coup in 15th of July due to the actions of military members who belonged to a terrorist organization of Gulen movement (FETO). In addition to these security threats, the biggest threat was coming from Turkish Southeastern borders which are controlled by ISIS militants. Thus, Turkish authorities decided to take an action against human rights violations in Syria with the operations that are backed by Free Syrian Army (FSA or in Turkish ÖSO). By this choice, Turkish parliament aimed to diminish the terrorist attacks attempted by ISIS. Nevertheless, with the recent attacks, it can be analyzed that ISIS' intensifying its organizations and attacks in Turkey caused many civilian deaths. What began as another Arab Spring uprising against an autocratic ruler has expanded into a brutal proxy war that has drawn in the regional and the world powers. Most of the players feared the ISIS more than they do the repressive Assad regime and thought "better to have a regime and a state, than not have a state"; this approach runs counter to Turkey's strategy, which has as its centerpiece the ouster of Assad. Turkey, starting from the beginning, without any policy change, argues that defeating the Islamic State is secondary to the overthrowing of the Damascus government and that once Assad is gone, the Islamic extremists will disappear.

However, ISIS is not the primary concern for Turkey. As it was mentioned before, most of the Kurds involved in the battle in Syria are members of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its armed fraction PYD which is a branch of Turkey's long-time foe, the PKK that is known as a terrorist organization.

Although PYD is the only serious military force resisting the Islamic State aside from the Syrian Army, the PKK and ISIS are the same for Turkey and it is wrong to see them differently. They need to be dealt with jointly.[61] Since PKK is officially designated as a "terrorist organization" by the U.S. and the European Union, US initially was reluctant to support a group tied to the PKK. However, Americans have done a 180-degree turn, supplying the PYD with arms, ammunition, and food despite Turkey's strong opposition. Another turn came later from US once more and the U.S. defense chief admitted during testimony before a Senate panel that the PYD and YPG are

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[61] Tabler Andrew J., Soner Cagaptay, The U.S.-PYD-Turkey Puzzle, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 23, 2015, available online at; http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the.u.s.-pyd-turkey-puzzle

lined to the PKK terror group. Secretary Ash Carter said "yes" when asked by one of the Senators whether the PYD and its military wing, the YPG, are aligned with the outlawed PKK terror group.[62] Turks' other insistences are the "safe zone" that includes the five northern cities that are Idlib, Latakia, Hasakah, Jarablus, and Kobani, a hefty slice of Syrian territory and also a "no fly zone". Meanwhile, for the United States, establishing a safe zone by force would certainly violate international law unless it had UN sanction, which Russia is unlikely to permit.[63] Also, Kurdish allies of US in Kobani see the "safe zone" as just an attempt by Ankara to meddle in Kurdish affairs. Though it has risks, the "no-fly zone" would not be terribly difficult, but in that case the U.S. would essentially be at war with Syria.[64]

As for equally targeting the Islamic State and Assad, even the Turkish public does not support that. Part of this hesitation is the fear that the war will spill over Turkey, something that has already certainly happened. There have been several car bombings and suicide attacks in the Turkish major cities that killed hundreds of civilians and wounded even more. While blaming Syria, PKK/PYD and ISID for these attacks, Turkey repeated her offers regarding the safe zone as the only solution to stop terrorists.[65] In the last decade, even in the beginning of the Syrian civil war, it was argued that Turkey would own, lead and serve the new Middle East.[66] Instead, now there are three enemies for Turkey in Syria where there was only one enemy once; the Assad regime, the PYD and Daesh. Until one or two years ago, there was an autocratic regime in Syria and people seeking their rights.

Now Turkey no longer knows where the bullet comes from.[67] Turkey has little interest in contributing to a proxy war in Syria and has repeatedly urged the international community to intervene in order to put an end to the violence. Accordingly, Turkey has long pushed for a negotiated end

[62] Turkish Anadolu Agency, "US defense chief admits PYD, YPG, PKK link", 28 April 2016, available online at; http://aa.com.tr/en/world/us-defense-chief-admits-pyd-ypg-pkk-link/563332

[63] Zanotti Jim, "Turkey: Background and U.S. Relations in Brief", Congressional Research Service Report, March 18, 2016, p.9

[64] Cale Salih, "Turkey, the Kurds and the fight against Islamic State, European Council on Foreign Relations, September 2015, p.6

[65] Sengupta Anita," Turkey, Syria, and the Islamic State", Observer Research Foundation Issue Brief issue; 136, March 2016, pp.2-5

[66] Barkey Henri J. "Turkey's Syria Predicament" Survival: Global Politics and Strategy. 25 Nov 2014. p.128

[67] Today's Zaman," Turkey says ISIL convoy hit necessary as threat comes near us, 2 February 2014, available online at; htp://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_openPrintPage.action? newsId=338305

to the crisis, which has become a nearly impossible goal considering the rise of ISIS. The rise of ISIS only divides the moderate opposition and delays the end of the Syrian civil war. Furthermore, there is no strategic benefit for Turkey in case ISIS makes gains against Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq and Free Syrian Army (FSA) in Syria, which are both the closest allies of Turkey.[68] ISIS shifted its attack campaign in Turkey in 2016 and may intend to provoke broader conflict within Turkey to change Turkish government's attention away from external politics to internal problems.

11. "WAR ON TERROR" MEANS "WAR ON ISIS"

As far as the fight against terror is concerned, the liberation of Raqqa in the year 2017 marked the transition to the post-ISID period in Syria and Iraq. An intensive aerial bombardment by the US-led coalition helped secure victory in Raqqa for the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which was formed in 2015 by the Kurdish Popular Protection Units (YPG) militia and a number of smaller, Arab factions. Since early June, coalition planes have carried out almost 4,000 air strikes on the city. Estimates of the number of casualties vary. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based monitoring group, said at least 3,250 people had been killed, among them 1,130 civilians. Other groups say the total was higher. The UN estimates about 270,000 people fled their homes during the SDF offensive.[69]

Moving forward, the main item on the region's agenda will be the creation of functional mechanisms capable of preserving the territorial integrity of both countries since there are still security challenges in the region, citing plans to eliminate terrorism and sectarianism. It is currently argued that aggravating rivalries would be counterproductive and that the only real solution is good governance not only in Syria and Iraq but other conflict-ridden countries as well.[70] Whether Western publics have much appetite for supporting that is open to question. All states need to focus on the fact that some terrorist violence can be contained and defeated in detail, but long-lasting victory is not possible until the causes of terrorism itself are mutually addressed as well as sustaining the coordinated fight against all type of terrorist movements.

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[68] Judson Sally, Kadır Ustun, "Turkey's Isis Challenge", The SETA Foundation at Washington, D. C., September 2014, p.3

[69] Available online at; http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27838034

[70] Counter-terrorism Pitfalls: What the U.S. Fight against ISIS and al-Qaeda Should Avoid, International Crisis Group, 22 March 2017

Syrian civil war in 2013 and ISIS' territorial conquest in 2014 set off a massive human migration which was more than five million as refugees, and another 6.5 million were internally displaced. This facilitated the efforts of ISIS in using the refugee situation in various ways: ISIS used the wave of refugees to beat the efforts to track their terrorist movements since disagreements between Western states about border controls and intelligence sharing, particularly in European Union, will only continue to aid ISIS.[71] Also through terrorist attacks, the group will continue to manipulate Western publics to further polarize populations against the migrants, which will alienate domestic minority groups, particularly Muslims.

In the future, ISIS will continue to rely on returning experienced terrorists from Syria and Iraq to arrange attacks as well as local volunteers who are willing to either help or engage in their own less sophisticated attacks, and even the lone-wolf types.[72] It is all too easy to call for a new intense military action and new security measures, as part of a natural human reaction to the shocking, horrible, brutal events around the world. However, despite these reactions, ISIS will likely continue to attempt attacks not only in Syria and Iraq, but in western countries as well. It is known and generally accepted that, its supporting worldwide networks may enable ISIS's operatives to launch operations in every part of the world to punish members of the anti-ISIS coalition.

To face the ISIS threat, the world must understand that ISIS as well as various other proponents of radicalism, are part of a new chapter in the book of Terrorism. As a non-state actor, ISIS represents a transformative movement in the politics of the Middle East, one that is qualitatively different from its predecessors.[73]

A well-known story in many war areas is the failing of the society's value system and this generalized break down of values is particularly true for the territory controlled by the Islamic State. For nearly thirty years, people in the region have been involved in various forms of black marketing and

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71 Syrian Refugee Flows Security Risks and Counterterrorism Challenges, Preliminary findings of a House Homeland Security Committee Review, November 2015, p.2
72 Gardner Frank, "Europe Could Feel the Backlash from Jihadist Conflicts," BBC, 30 November 2013, available online at; http://www.bbc.com/news/worldmiddle-east-25155188
73 Gerges Fawaz A. "ISIS and the Third Wave of Jihadism", Current History, December 2014, p.343

smuggling activities for getting around the dictatorships in the region and today to ensure funding of the Islamic State.[74] Economically, The Islamic State has income from oil sales, taxes on businesses and individuals, the sale of captured equipment, the operation of stolen factories, and a variety of more traditional criminal activity such as kidnapping for ransom, looting, extortion and protection money.[75]

ISIS is more than a terrorist group and it is important to keep in mind that ISIS is not Al Qaeda. ISIS-motivated network in the world is well-trained, well-supported, and well-supplied operatives. Their tactics were improved on hot battlefields such as Syrian and Iraqi battlefields, not at terrorist camps or in the caves of the mountains, as was the case for Al Qaeda. Furthermore, many ISIS members are citizens of European Union countries travelling on European documents not the Middle Eastern passports, which gives ISIS an absolute advantage as it raids unexpected targets. Again, ISIS is not just a terrorist group, therefore counterterrorism won't be enough for an organization consisting of more than 30,000 fighters, which is able to field a real army, hold territory in Iraq and Syria, and confront military forces.[76]

Counterterrorist tactics will not be sufficient unless they are settled into a comprehensive, combined strategy that considers the full range of activities, meaning everything from military operations to humanitarian assistance. Now, using military force in Syria and Iraq is essential for beating ISIS, however, a viable political objective is needed.[77] There are broader risks in relying too much on the military operations as an answer to ISIS. To counter ISIS's terrorist attacks, it is better to stabilize the surrounding area firstly, and then find an immediate applicable international solution for the massive number of Syrian refugees who are still in the region.

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[74] Brisard Jean-Charles, Damien Martinez, "Islamic State: The Economy-Based Terrorist Funding", Thomson Reuters, October 2014, p.6
[75] Barrett Richard, "The Islamic State", November 2014, p.10
[76] Schmid Alex P, "Foreign (Terrorist) Fighter Estimates: Conceptual and Data Issues", ICCT Policy Brief October 2015, p.14
[77] Christopher M. Blanchard, Carla E. Humud, Mary Beth D. Nikitin, "Armed Conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. Response", Congressional Research Service Report October 9, 2015, p.27

How much territory IS has lost since January 2015

Source: IHS Conflict Monitor

IS control, 5 January 2015
IS control, 18 December 2017

BBC
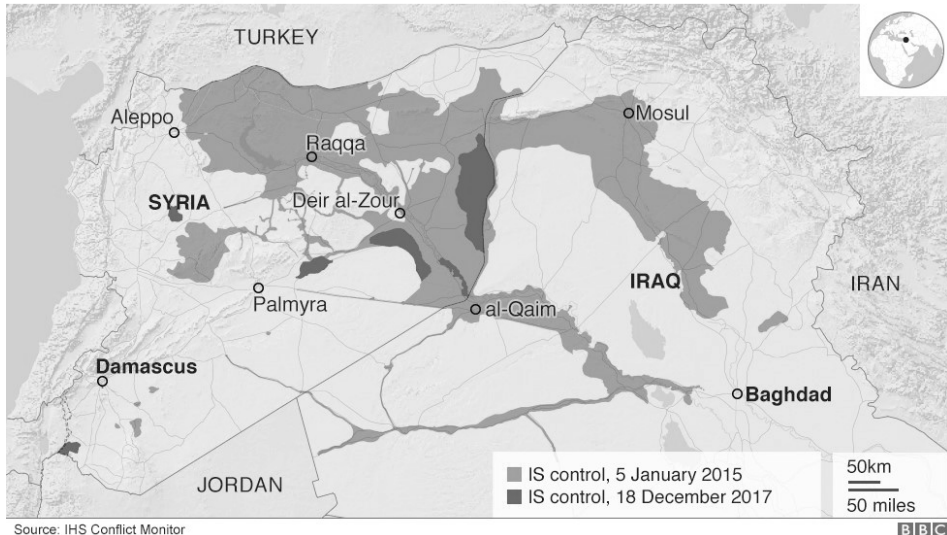
Map 2: IS' territorial loses

Later, in both Syria and Iraq, an extensive strategy needs to be built, developed and implemented that clearly targets ISIS' major assets, specifically its incomes, the flexibility of its forces, its leadership and command structure, its use of social media, and the ongoing regional instability.[78] This will be no short order, of course, but the consequences of not trying are too severe. This is why comprehensive agreements and broad statements of good intentions are sometimes possible, but only because no one takes them seriously. Like many samples in diplomatic arena, they survive the meeting that produces them, however, die upon engagement with reality.[79]

It should also be considered that the failed governance and breakdown of the Syrian state due to the brutal civil war, ISIS threat and external support have enabled the Kurds' Democratic Union Party (PYD) which is an affiliate of the terrorist Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), to advance its leftist-nationalist agenda and has been in a political advantage by the open support of United States. However, Kurds do not, on their own, have the

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[78] Lister Charles, "Profiling the Islamic State", Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper Number 13, November 2014, p.38

[79] Cordesman Anthony H., "Cooperation in Counterterrorism: Rhetoric vs. Reality", Center for Strategic& International Studies, October 2015, p.1

political or military power to determine the consequence of the conflict or their own future. Both will be up to their relations with other pieces of the Syrian opposition as well as on the arrangements of regional or global powers due to their landlocked position and politics dependent on external patronage.[80]

As far as Turkey's warnings and points regarding the danger of PYD-PKK partnership concerned, new formations may cause new skirmishes in the region. So, what are the implications of these complex dynamics on regional stability, and Syrian end-states? The question remains therefore as to how much damage the Islamic State will be able to inflict before it dies away. Military action will limit its physical reach but will not destroy its appeal either in Iraq and Syria or further afield, unless there is something available to take its place. There is no going back to how things were. The dynamics of the Middle East and its social and political development will all look quite different by the time the ISIS disappears. It is up to the regional powers, helped by the international community, to ensure that what comes afterwards harnesses the energy of dissent in a more positive direction.[81]

Table 2: Changing messy relations in Syria.

	ISIS	TUR	US/EU	SDF	IRAN	RUS	FSA	SYR. Gov.
ISIS	-	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
TURKEY	E	-	F	E	N	N/U	F	E
US/EU	E	F	-	F	E	E	N	E
SDF	E	E	F	-	N/M	F	E	E
IRAN	E	N	E		-	F	E	F
RUSSIA	E	N/U	N	N/M F	F	-	E	F
FSA	E	F	F	E	E	E	-	E
SYR.Gov.	E	E	E	E	F	F	E	-

(F: Friendly, E: Enemy, N: Neutral, U: Unfriendly, M: Mistrust)

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[80] Gunes Cengiz, Robert Lowe "The Impact of the Syrian War on Kurdish Politics across the Middle East", Chatham House research paper Middle East and North Africa Programme. July 2015. P.13
[81] Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State", The Soufan Group, November 2014, p.58

The war against ISIS is a critical national security interest for not only the states in the region, but also for the countries worldwide. It not only threatens to create a major center of terrorism and extremism in a critical part of the Middle East, and one that could spread to threaten the flow of energy exports and the global economy, but also to become a major center of international terrorism. It is important to understand, however, that ISIS is not the only cause of instability in the region, and not the only threat caused by spreading sectarian and ethnic violence. Although the political rhetoric about "war" is unavoidable, a formal declaration of war against ISIS with international networks is not very much possible.

As it is noticed the Islamic State has fallen just as quickly as it has ascended, but it very well could maintain its powerful influence in the jihadi world. It means that ISIS may become more dangerous outside and inside Syria and Iraq after those countries are cleared.

• Long-term guerrilla campaigns could continue in Iraq and Syria. Although ISIS has largely been removed from its city strongholds, it remains a presence in sparsely-populated desert areas.

• ISIS leaders and fighters could disperse to its so called other provinces. Libya, Egypt, Afghanistan and Yemen, all have areas held by forces that have declared themselves to be a part of ISIS. Those safe havens for terrorists could be strengthened.

• ISIS fighters could return to their home countries in the Middle East and Europe particularly, and use their experience to mount attacks at home.

• ISIS could become more like Al-Qaeda, inspiring and organizing attacks rather than holding territory and prioritizing the 'far enemy' rather than the 'near enemy' – meaning that European and Asian countries would be more at risk. ISIS has already claimed responsibility for several attacks in Europe.[82] Also the last quarter of the outgoing year witnessed a few spectacular attacks by the Afghan and Pakistan affiliates of the ISID, which raised many eyebrows regarding the group's strength, capability, and future prospects in the region.

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[82] Smith and Mills, 28

CONCLUSION

The DAESH's strategy was not geared toward negotiating some lasting political solutions, but to exacting ongoing revenge, polarizing societies to exacerbate divisions. The sectarianism in today's Iraq and Syria has been the product of collective action fueled, in part, by "the question of who is a true Muslim and, equally important, who should dominate the Muslim world."[83]

The exaggerated sense of Sunni Arab marginalization, which gave rise to the Islamic State, draws on Sunni political exclusion as well as how the Sunnis collectively perceive the Islamic history and their place in it.[84] Therefore, historicized grievances "whether well-founded or questionable," have provided the easiest way of mobilizing and ultimately weaponing sectarian identities.[85]

Many aspects of the sectarian and ethnic tensions within Iraq and Syria have grown far worse since the beginning of the fighting in each country, and to achieve any lasting form of stability and security is even more difficult. If these issues are not addressed now, there is a serious risk that ISIS may only be the prelude to far worse problems. Both the West and the Muslim states have focused too narrowly on the symptoms of ISIS extremism rather than curing the disease. Movements like ISIS are the symptoms of the disease of terrorism, and not the cause.[86] Thus, the rhetoric of cooperation in counterterrorism comes easily while the reality comes hard since the nations have very different views of who is a terrorist and who is a freedom fighter. While all nations at least claim to oppose terrorism as they individually define it, they do not agree on who should be called a terrorist, on the relative priority for counterterrorism over human rights and civil liberties, or the priorities that should be given to a specific threat.

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83 Ofra Bengio and Meir Litvak, *Sunna and Shi'a in History: Division and Ecumenism in the Muslim Middle East* (Gordonsville, VA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 1-16. The notion of collective action refers to Craig Calhoun, "The Problem of Identity in Collective Action," in Joan Huber, ed., *Macro-Micro Linkages in Sociology* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1991), as cited in Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), fn. 16, p. 20.
84 Brandon Friedman, Uzi Rabi, Sectarianism and War in Iraq and Syria, available online at; http://www.fpri. org/article/2017/01/sectarianism-war-iraq-syria/, accessed on; 22 January 2017
85 Jeremy Black, Clio's Battles: Historiography in Practice (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015), pp. 216-219.
86 Cordesman, 67.