

II. Policy Briefs

Four Questions on ISIS:

A “Trend” Analysis of the Islamic State

by Boaz Ganor

Abstract

During the past year, the Islamic State (IS) has taken control of extensive areas of the Middle East. Its military achievements, extreme and historically unprecedented barbarism, success in recruiting thousands of young people from around the world to its ranks in Iraq and Syria, its store of financial resources and, above all, its skilled use of social and other media to publicize its terrorist acts and spread its propaganda, have all made IS an increasing and alarming threat to global security.

Although experts on terrorism, security officials and decision makers worldwide concur that IS poses an unparalleled threat, they disagree about the answers to the following four key questions: What is the nature of the Islamic State?; Are the doctrines of the Islamic State an innovation?; What are the Islamic State's aspirations? and, What is the Islamic State's strategic situation? How we answer these four questions will affect not only our understanding of the nature, aims and activities of the Islamic State; it will also dictate what counter-strategy should be implemented in order to stop, if not trounce, the Islamic State.

Keywords: ISIS; ISIL; Islamic State; IS; Terrorism; Counter-Terrorism

Introduction

During the past year, the Islamic State (IS) has taken control of extensive areas of the Middle East. Its military achievements, extreme and historically unprecedented barbarism, success in recruiting thousands of young people from around the world to its ranks in Iraq and Syria, its store of financial resources and, above all, its skilled use of social and other media to publicize its terrorist acts and spread its propaganda, have all made IS an increasing and alarming threat to global security.

Although experts on terrorism, security officials and decision makers worldwide concur that IS poses an unparalleled threat, they disagree about the answers to the following four key questions:

1. *What is the Nature of the Islamic State?* Should IS be regarded as a terrorist organization? Does its scope of operations, paramilitary activities, involvement in guerilla warfare and insurgency, and control over vast territories and populations not stretch the definition of a terrorist organization?[1]
2. *Are the Doctrines of the Islamic State an Innovation?* By its actions, is the Islamic State introducing new doctrines and concepts, or is it merely implementing and refining modern terrorism strategies, which aim to spread fear and anxiety to achieve political goals?
3. *What are the Islamic State's Aspirations?* Are the Islamic State's aspirations limited to the Middle East, or does it see itself as *avant garde*, spearheading an operation whose objective is global? Is the Islamic State striving for hegemony and, ultimately, to establish a caliphate in Syria, Iraq and the Levant? Or does it see such a caliphate as only the first step in its drive to establish a global caliphate? In this regard, how does IS differ from Al-Qaeda, if at all?[2]

4. *What is the Islamic State's Strategic Situation?* Following the successful military campaign of summer 2014 that enabled IS to seize extensive swaths of Syria and Iraq, the organization's progress seems to have stalled – in part thanks to the establishment of a broad coalition of international allies, whose goal was to halt the organization's advance and eradicate it. Does this mark “the beginning of the end” for IS? Is it on the brink of disappearing? Or, despite the air and ground military campaign of the international coalition, will the Islamic State recoup its losses and experience a resurgence, pushing past Syria and Iraq?[3]

How we answer these four questions will affect not only our understanding of the nature, aims and activities of the Islamic State; it will also dictate what counter-strategy should be implemented in order to stop, if not trounce, the Islamic State. To this end, I will analyze the essence of the Islamic State and revisit its definition as a “terrorist organization”.

What is the Nature of the Islamic State?

As is well known, for the nearly half-century since the emergence of modern terrorism in the 1960s [4], no one international definition of terrorism has become consensus[5]. On the contrary, most researchers and counter-terrorism experts see “terrorism” as a loaded, problematic term, and have therefore avoided using it, favoring alternatives to describe and define the phenomenon we experience as terrorism[6]. This hesitance to define terrorism has grown concurrent with the increasing involvement of Islamists in the perpetration of terrorist attacks in the Middle East and elsewhere, out of a fear of besmirching Muslims as a whole and provoking their opposition. In an attempt to circumvent this problem, and in service to “political correctness”, decision makers have chosen to refer to terrorist attacks carried out against Jewish and other targets throughout Europe as “hate crimes”, and to their perpetrators as “violent extremists”[7]. However, insistent replacement of the loaded term “terrorism” with terms that are seemingly more neutral only serves to hinder an effective response to the phenomenon. “Violent extremists” may be driven by any number of motives to achieve any number of objectives – as witnessed by the brutal acts committed by members of criminal organizations and cults. “Escape” from the need to define terrorism to more palatable terminology turns the act of definition into a useless tool, which merely paves the way for a “photo opportunity” of mock international unity in the face of heinous acts. Above all, the lack of an essential consensus on a definition of terrorism impedes the formulation of a real and effective international campaign against terrorism.

Moreover, the reluctance to use the term “terrorism” stems from its negative connotation, which various countries have manipulated to portray their opponents as “terrorists”. Yet it is precisely this negative connotation that is now needed in naming and shaming IS. If we define the Islamic State as a terrorist organization, we may then differentiate it from the rest of the Muslim world, including those Muslims who hold radical but non-violent religious views. If we define terrorism as “a *modus operandi* by which violence is deliberately used against civilians to achieve political goals”[8], we clear the way to label IS a terrorist organization, thereby obviating any potential justification for its barbaric actions. Labeling any organization a terrorist organization is, first and foremost, a way of saying that that organization has violated a moral boundary by deliberately and systematically targeting civilians. No argument – be it political, socio-economic, ideological, or religious – justifies the targeting of innocent civilians, and the Islamic State is a terrorist organization expressly because it perpetrates extremely barbaric attacks – including mass murder, kidnapping and beheading, mutilation, rape and maiming – against the civilians under its control and elsewhere in the world.

At the same time, the Islamic State is not *only* a terrorist organization. Its operatives also engage in guerilla warfare, military attacks against other non-state actors, and insurgency against the Iraqi and Syrian armies. [9] Concurrently, others of its members engage in “law enforcement” among the civilian populations under its control, and in service provision to these same populations. Specifically, immediately after taking over a city or town, the Islamic State imposes Shari’a (Islamic) law, which it enforces with extreme and terrifying violence to ensure compliance; at the same time, it provides essential welfare, education, and religious services (Da’wa) to the citizens who have come under its control. These varied actions make the Islamic State a “hybrid terrorist organization”[10] – that is, an organization that operates simultaneously in the (illegitimate) military-terrorist sphere and in the (pseudo-legitimate) civilian sphere. In this sense, the Islamic State is no different from other hybrid terrorist organizations like Hamas in the Gaza Strip and Hezbollah in Lebanon, which also control a given territory and govern all aspects of the lives of the people living there.

It is important to note, however, that IS has gone a step further than Hamas or Hezbollah, by deeming itself “the Islamic State”. IS’s declaration of itself as a state is designed to promote it as an Islamic caliphate (in parts of Iraq and Syria) and its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as the caliph. Needless to say, IS’s attempt to position itself as a sovereign state should not be condoned, even though it sees itself as one and controls extensive territory. Indeed, IS has not been recognized by any international institution, state or entity.

In light of the above, we may answer the first question by determining that the Islamic State is a “hybrid terrorist organization”, a sub-state actor, which operates simultaneously in the military, civilian and political spheres. Through its terrorist acts and crimes, IS severely challenges international norms, defies morality, and breaks international humanitarian law. In so doing, IS has positioned itself as an enemy of the enlightened world.

Are the Doctrines of the Islamic State an Innovation?

To answer the second question – is IS introducing an innovative *modus operandi* or is it merely using the strategic framework of modern terrorism more efficiently – I will analyze the characteristics of modern terrorism, as it has evolved during the past half century.

Modern terrorism emerged in the 1960s[11] as a result, in part, of certain countries’ use of terrorist proxies to promote their interests and spread their ideology.[12] In addition, the increasing cost of conventional warfare and the threat of unconventional warfare, the burgeoning of technology and, especially, innovations such as television stimulated the growth of modern terrorism.[13] Beginning in the late 1960s, we can identify the development of successive waves of terrorism. Each wave would swell when a terrorist organization employed a violent means of achieving its political aims, which was perceived as being effective and efficient and which therefore was then copied by other terrorist organizations. To illustrate: during the 1960s airplane hijacking was the preferred *modus operandi*; during the 1970s terrorists favored hostage negotiations; and during the 1990s suicide attack became the dominant mode of attack and remained so into the early 21st century. These successive waves of terrorism, and the transition from one to another, can be viewed as the development of consecutive trends: each time a new form of attack was deemed effective, terrorist organizations would adopt it. In this context, we can see the Islamic State as the harbinger of a new trend in terrorism.

Albeit, IS did not invent the strategy of modern terrorism, whose essence is to spread fear and terror to advance chosen aims, but it certainly has honed this strategy, taking it to a more extreme level of barbarism, cruelty and violence than ever seen before. IS’s terrorism and guerilla warfare have one goal: to instill horror and dread. The beheading of captives, the immolation of a Jordanian pilot, the mass public executions, the mutilation of civilians and other heinous acts intensify the fear imposed by the terrorist organization on

its various target audiences. However, extreme cruelty would not in and of itself be sufficient to achieve the desired effect. To bring its message home, IS has developed a deft system of “translating” fear and loathing so that they can be disseminated through the media to its target audiences: opponents and enemies, followers and supporters in the Muslim world, the civilian populations under its control, and the international audience.[14] IS’s leadership has not only comprehended and adopted the strategy of modern terrorism, but has made unprecedented, sophisticated use of the Internet and social networks such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to reach vast audiences while evading censorship. Moreover, it appears that IS’s leaders have cracked the code of what becomes popular on the Internet; they have succeeded in skillfully editing their video clips such that they quickly “go viral”. The viciousness of the terrorist attacks themselves and the choice of camera angles used to film them, along with psychological warfare and intimidation, have intensified IS’s influence. Like the horror movies about zombies and the violent video and computer games that have become so popular in the West, IS’s video clips pique the curiosity of young people worldwide. As I will detail below, the Islamic State’s sophisticated propaganda and visual fear-mongering have succeeded in promoting three of its goals: to gain control of more territory in Iraq and Syria; to recruit young people to its arenas of battle; and to cow those under its control into obedience.

1. First, the Islamic State’s strategy of fear was designed to help it expand its territorial control. During the past year, IS struck dread into the hearts of the Iraqi and Syrian armies and the Kurdish militias that rose to oppose it. Often, when these fighters were exposed to IS’s heinous acts – either online or on the battlefield – they chose to lay down their arms[15] (which were then plundered by IS), don civilian clothes, and run for their lives lest they fall captive to IS and suffer the atrocities they had seen. This enabled IS to rapidly conquer extensive territory, and afforded it the opportunity to amass state-of-the-art weapons, which were originally supplied by the US and other countries to the armies and militias opposing it.
2. Second, IS has succeeded in using the Internet and social media to transmit a message of cruelty, which has won the hearts and minds of those young Muslims who have come from around the world to join its ranks, or who have conducted lone wolf attacks of their own. Its message has inspired marginalized Muslim youth in Europe and the West, second- and third-generation immigrants (some of them with a criminal past) who are disaffected, frustrated, seeking a sense of identity and belonging, full of hatred for the societies that have not adequately integrated them, and facing a bleak future with few prospects for development and self-actualization[16]. When these problems are compounded by real personal and family distress, such young people become easy prey for IS’s Internet propaganda, which seems to offer an outlet for their frustration and yearning for power and control. The Islamic State’s use of images of brutality, coupled with its message of victory, spark these young people’s curiosity and yen for adventure, give vent to their loathing and sense of helplessness, and take advantage of their adrenaline-propelled hormones – to the point where they are willing to leave home to join IS in Iraq or Syria or to purchase weapons and initiate attacks where they live, usually without any contact with IS, let alone direct orders from it. Already in 2014, IS had recruited some 10,000 impassioned and incensed Muslim youth to its struggles in Syria and Iraq[17] - a figure that has probably doubled since then. Some of them return home after having spent time with IS in these countries, where they were both trained to fight and exposed to an intensified and accelerated process of radicalization. In other cases, so-called “lone wolves” have been stirred by IS’s instructional videos and other materials that it posts to the Internet with the express aim of their being used or imitated.
3. Third, the profound unease aroused by IS’s nauseating violence and propaganda has yet another goal:

to ensure the complete obedience of the civilians under its control. In this, the IS is no different from other sinister dictatorships and totalitarian regimes that have used cruelty and brutality to assure compliance and suppress opposition.

We may therefore conclude that IS has not invented any new strategies of violence, but rather has enhanced the strategies of modern terrorism. By spreading terror and panic among its target audiences, it has garnered concrete military gains and achieved its psychological aims.

The Islamic State's achievements cannot be understood without taking into account the religious component of its essence. Its main target audience is young Muslims everywhere. IS captivates these young people, not only by virally disseminating its messages of victory and barbarism, but also, and perhaps mainly, by inviting them to join an alternative conceptual system. IS offers these young people a new identity, a sense of belonging, and a different set of values and beliefs: that of the Salafist-jihadist interpretation of Islam. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who has appointed himself the new Muslim caliph and the successor to the Prophet Muhammad, calls on these young people to accept what he defines as the religious imperative of restoring Islam to its former glory. He demands that they take an active role in the fight against the infidel "enemies of Islam"; using the conspiratorial claim that Islam is currently in an existential struggle against "heretics" from within and without. The young Muslims exposed to this religious propaganda are ordered to join in the "defense of Islam" and sacrifice their lives to defeating the infidels. IS leaders and propagandists cynically exploit Islam to arouse, recruit and motivate Muslim youth to take radical, violent action, and even to commit suicide for the cause. To paraphrase Karl Marx, IS exploits religion as an "opium of the masses", which it manipulates to justify a viciousness that knows no restraint or moral inhibition.

If we ignore the Islamist-religious dimension of the Islamic State, we risk steering our analysis away from the root causes of radical Islamist terrorism and failing to find the appropriate means of consistent and effective action against it. At the same time, laying the blame for the heinous acts of Islamist-jihadist extremists such as the Islamic State at the doorstep of Islam is also wrong; in fact, it is no less dangerous because, in defiance of reality, it gives the Salafist-jihadist interpretation of Islam more prominence than it warrants, thereby excluding the vast majority of Muslims – who do not subscribe to this interpretation or support such acts – from playing an active role in destroying IS, in particular, and radical Islamist-jihadist terrorism in general. In this respect, the trend exemplified by IS reflects not a problem with Islam, but a problem *within* Islam, one that requires in-depth internal analysis and criticism, first and foremost by Muslims themselves.

What are the Islamic State's Aspirations?

The third question we would address concerns whether the Islamic State is a local or global phenomenon. On one hand, there is a tendency to view IS as a local phenomenon limited to parts of Iraq, Syria and even the whole of the Levant (Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, etc.).[18] This tendency is based on the history of the organization and the beginning of the dispute between al-Zarqawi, who headed an early version of the Islamic State between 2001 and 2006, and al-Zawahiri, who during those same years served as a deputy to Osama bin Laden and as the spiritual leader of Al-Qaeda. At that time, Al-Qaeda intended to promote a global Islamic caliphate, and feared the diversion of resources, power and focus to local Islamic caliphates in one or another territory. In contrast, al-Zarqawi emphasized the need to liberate Iraq from the American occupation and establish an Islamic caliphate there. Ostensibly, this dispute seemed to concern timing – that is, whether the global campaign to establish an Islamic caliphate should precede the campaign to establish local caliphates, or vice versa – absent any question as to the ultimate goal of establishing a global caliphate. When Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi took control of the Islamic State in 2011, his goal seemed to be to establish an Islamic caliphate first

in Iraq, and then in Syria and the Levant. In fact, the Islamic State's aim of expansion developed as its control of territories in Iraq and Syria expanded; this is reflected in its name changes: from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), to simply the Islamic State (IS), without any territorial designation. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's global aspirations developed over time, as is illustrated by his public speeches. His self-appointment as caliph and as the successor to the Prophet Muhammad can be seen as an expression of his global aspirations, perhaps even of his megalomania. The Islamic State's global ambitions were also stoked by its military successes and by the viral propaganda that quickly made it a role model for other individuals and terrorist organizations, including those that had previously sworn allegiance to Al-Qaeda and bin Laden but which now switched their allegiance to IS and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the new caliph.

As the heir of Al-Qaeda, IS is the new trend in modern terrorism, an inspiration to other terrorist networks and organizations, and individuals. Analysis of the evolution of modern terrorism reveals many instances in which an organization split up when some of its members left because they believed its leadership was too moderate, too willing to compromise, not militant enough, or not sufficiently dedicated to achieving the goals for which it was established. The dissident members then form a splinter organization, which is usually more violent and dangerous than its predecessor. Such splinter organizations tend to claim that they are "the real thing", the keepers of the flame who are loyal to the goal, unlike those in the mother organization, whom they claim have deviated from the path. This is illustrated by the Real IRA, which split off from the IRA; the PFLP/General Command led by Ahmed Jibril, which split off from the PFLP led by George Habash; and Hamas, which defines itself as "the real thing" vis à vis Fatah. In the case under review, it would seem that many radical Islamists are beginning to perceive IS as the "real thing", as opposed to Al-Qaeda. Although in its nascency, this process may be expected to expand, increasing the power of IS and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi at the expense of Al-Qaeda and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Regardless of whether this was al-Baghdadi's intention all along or whether circumstances led him to make establishing a global caliphate IS's ideological platform, IS should today be regarded as striving to extend its authority to networks, organizations and individuals around the world. At present, the Islamic State is focused on Syria and Iraq, and is developing an agenda that includes Libya and the Sinai Peninsula, but if it succeeds in stabilizing its rule in the areas under its control, we can expect it to expand further. Alternatively, if IS loses its territorial strongholds in Iraq and Syria, we can anticipate that it will not disappear, but rather will take on another form based in territories such as northern or central Africa, for example, or in Southeast Asia. This is what happened to Al-Qaeda, which changed following the loss of territory in Afghanistan, and especially following the killing of bin Laden. If and when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is killed, IS will likely change its nature and rate of expansion, although the course this change will take will naturally depend on the identity and capabilities of al-Baghdadi's successor – specifically, whether he is able to fill al-Baghdadi's shoes and inherit his status as caliph.

What is the Islamic State's Strategic Situation?

This insight brings us to our fourth question about the Islamic State: what is its position today? Is it stagnating? In retreat? Or can we expect it to grow stronger in the near future? Many researchers believe that IS and al-Baghdadi have made a staggering number of enemies because of IS's violence and cruelty to Muslims and others, the danger it constitutes to the world, and the challenge posed by the foreigners who fight in its ranks, as well as because of al-Baghdadi's megalomaniac agenda. For example, Shi'ites, Christians, Yazidis and Kurds in Iraq and Syria – all of whom have suffered and continue to suffer greatly at the hands of IS – are actively fighting it. Even other Islamist organizations active in Syria, such as the Al-Nusra Front (some of whose members used to belong to IS), the Muslim Brotherhood and, of course, Iran's proxy Hezbollah – are opposing IS no less than is Assad's army. Multiple countries are fighting IS, among them

Saudi Arabia (which supports the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria just as Iran supports the Assad regime); Jordan, which wishes to avenge the brutal killing of its pilot and which fears IS will advance to its border; and an international coalition of the Gulf States and Western countries, led by the United States. That IS's acts have given rise to the establishment of this coalition is unprecedented, even if the coalition has made do with an ongoing air campaign and limited achievements on the ground in Iraq and Syria, and has yet to wage an extensive ground offensive.

Beyond the difficulty of making additional military gains in Syria and Iraq, IS may yet have to cope with an economic crisis. Thanks to its takeover of several oilfields and of gold and monetary reserves in the commercial banks of the cities it has conquered, the Islamic State has larger financial coffers than do other terrorist organizations. In addition, its policy of kidnapping foreigners and demanding large ransoms for them has swelled its income. However, it may reasonably be assumed that without additional significant military victories, the Islamic State's financial resources will eventually dry up. Since IS does not have an ally that could support it financially, and since it has no sea access, the organization may find itself in a financial crisis, unable to restock its weapons or meet the demand for the essential supplies it needs to keep itself running.

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the members of the coalition fighting IS have differing, sometimes even opposing, interests. For example, the interests of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States differ from those of Iran, Hezbollah and the Assad regime. These differences make it difficult to undermine IS and translate the fear it instills into an effective, unified strategy to neutralize it. It is also important to remember that so far, the air strikes against IS have been limited in scope and, at present, most members of the coalition are unwilling to embark on a ground campaign against IS. Moreover, some of the countries that are ostensibly part of the coalition are simultaneously maintaining informal or even formal ties with members of the Islamic State. For example, large amounts of oil are being piped to Turkey from oil fields now in the Islamic State's purview, for a price that is financial oxygen for IS[19]. Consequently, it seems that the campaign currently being waged against IS in Syria and Iraq – given its level of intensity, the lack of an extensive ground operation, and the conflicting interests of the coalition members – is unlikely to neutralize or eradicate IS. The growing support for IS among other Islamist-jihadist organizations (such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines and Ansar Bayt al Maqdis in the Sinai Peninsula), the strengthening of its branch in Libya and elsewhere, and the success of its viral propaganda campaign all guarantee that IS will continue to present a significant local and global security threat.

Conclusion

To summarize the four questions I have tried to answer here, we can see the Islamic State as a new and dangerous trend in modern terrorism, one that has brought the heartlessness and barbarism of terrorism to previously inconceivable extremes. However, the Islamic State has not changed the rules of the game or altered the strategy of modern terrorism adopted by multiple organizations worldwide during the past half century; rather, it has intensified and enhanced that strategy through its skillful wielding of propaganda. At present, the Islamic State is enjoying growing popularity among young Muslims, who consider it to be the “real deal” compared to rival organizations and ideologies. IS is exploiting the chaos that has ensued from the Arab Spring, especially in Syria, Iraq and Libya, to conquer large swaths of territory. It is also exploiting the confusion and indecision in the policies of Western countries, chiefly the US, concerning the Arab Spring – the result of unstinting support for any process that appears to promote “the will of the people”, even when that process is actually a springboard for the overthrow of an existing regime and its replacement by an Islamist-fundamentalist one based on Shari'a (Islamic) law, under the guise of democracy. At the same

time, IS activists and supporters are exploiting the liberal-democratic values and slack immigration policies of Western countries, especially those in Europe, and of the European Union's belief in multiculturalism, accord and cooperation (as evidenced by the Schengen Agreement, which permits the free passage of people among countries in Europe, without border checks or luggage inspection). Moreover, the Islamic State is brainwashing young second- and third-generation immigrants to Europe, recruiting them to its ranks and inspiring them to carry out "lone wolf" terrorist attacks in Western countries.

In order for Western countries to effectively counteract the trend of IS, they must first abandon political correctness and "call a spade a spade": they must define the Islamist-jihadist terrorist threat as such. It is first necessary to recognize that the enemy is not just one lone wolf, or a group of violent extremists, or a certain terrorist organization; rather, it is the Islamist-jihadist ideology and world view, which distorts Islam. True, this world view is accepted by only a fraction of the members of the Muslim Nation, but they are a very vocal and dangerous fraction, and their doctrines must be acknowledged for what they are and neutralized if this new trend in the evolution of local and global terrorism is to be addressed effectively.

Therefore, Muslim clerics and religious leaders have a key role to play in formulating a doctrine that will combat the message of the Islamic State. They must proffer and disseminate an interpretation of Islam that constitutes an alternative to the religious laws and teachings being warped and misused by jihadist terrorists. Their key role will be not to defend the Western world or other religions and cultures but rather, first and foremost, to defend Muslims from Islamist jihadists, to defend their own religion from those who are trying to twist it and drag believers nearly 1,500 years back in time. Also, Muslim clerics should take a stand against Islamist-jihadist ideology so as to mitigate the waves of "aftershock" that follow jihadist terrorist attacks in Western countries, which are manifested as Islamophobia.

In addition, the entire world – Muslims, Christians, Jews and others – must unite around a normative standard that prohibits intentional terrorist attacks against civilians and refuses to accept any religious, political or operative justification for deviation from this standard. An interfaith agreement is needed, which will divorce the personal, religious value system of a man and his Creator from political policies and goals. The spiritual leaders of various religions must jointly sign a pact prohibiting the use of violence for religious propagation, forbidding forced conversion, and preventing the conquest of territory in the name of religion. Only thus will it be possible to counteract the expanding scope of international terrorism emanating from the madrasas (Islamic schools) of local and global Islamist-jihadist terrorist organizations, and particularly of IS, the severity of the Islamist-jihadist threat, and the implications of IS for the stability of Arab regimes and for the lives of the citizens of Arab, Muslim, Western and other countries. This must be accompanied by a broad yet focused and effective military campaign against terrorist organizations in general, and against IS and its offshoots in particular.

In formulating such a doctrine, it will be necessary to distinguish between good and evil, between those who hold pragmatic religious views, and those who pose as pragmatists but ally themselves with thugs. There are no shortcuts, and there can be no leniency, in the war against terrorism, which cannot be waged well with a wink and a nod and lip service. The war against terrorism is first and foremost a war of values, a war for morality and ideology. It is a lengthy war of attrition, with military, psychological and social components – but it is not a holy war between religions. It is a war between civilization and barbarism.

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Notes

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