

International Terrorism and Conflict Management in the Middle-East

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Abstract

The study investigated the ISIS International Terrorism and Conflict Management in the Middle-East. The study is a documentary research and data were analyzed through qualitative method and used strategic theory to explain the issue understudy. The ISIS inspired terrorist attacks in the Middle Eastern states and beyond and the attendant carnage have assumed a deadlier dimension, with obvious implications for humanitarian causalities, especially the USA citizens, her allies and her places of interest across the globe. The counter-terrorism strategies deployed by the U.S government and others to combat the ISIS menace and mitigate the attendant humanitarian causalities succeeded in reducing the activities of ISIS in Iraq and Syria and beyond, but the terrorist group has not been effectively eradicated. Consequent upon the adverse imperialistic foreign policy of the U.S as a major cause of ISIS terrorist activities in the Middle East, this study recommends that the United States of America jettisons her provocative imperialistic foreign policy actions and resort to an overhauled foreign policy grounded on the principle of egalitarianism, justice, equity and fair-play as well as welfare (not warfare). This shall engender a genuine global peaceful co-existence and socio-economic cum political development, devoid of subjugation of man by man and nation by nation. With respect to the defect in the global coalition against ISIS, the study urges the members of the global coalition against ISIS to deploy ground troops in addition to the aerial bombardment strategy to Syria to fight ISIS since the crucial follow-up on the ground was left in the hands of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) which has been regularly accused of having ties with extremist groups such as ISIS.

Introduction

Terrorism has been a major challenge to global development since the early 21st century. It has become a major security issue and the source of instability both at the global and sub-regional levels. Terrorism can be politically or socially motivated, it often arises most times as a result of frustration which often stems from imbalance of power, power disparity, unfair resource allocation, tamper on religious belief, imperialism and the effect of colonialism. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is a terrorist group that originated from the Al-Qaeda operating mainly in Iraq and Syria including Yemen, Lebanon and other parts of the Middle East as an unrecognized Islamic state. ISIS, an extremist militant group rules by Wahhabi/Salafi law.

ISIS was formed on the 29th of June, 2014 by Abu Musab who was originally part of Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network. Since declaring its caliphate on the 29th of June 2014, the self-

proclaimed state has conducted or inspired terrorist attacks in Iraq, Syria and several other Middle Eastern states where its carnage has taken a deadlier toll, and killed at least 3000 people and injured thousands more, both inside and outside Iraq and Syria (Lederman, 2015). A series of coordinated bombings and shootings across central and northern Iraq killed 98 people and left 240 wounded in March, 2014 (Roberts, 2015).

Conflict management strategies have been adopted by nations that are directly or indirectly targeted by ISIS terrorism to cripple their terrorist activities through different military strategies like the deployment of troops in affected areas, spotting and stopping terror plot and so on. The USA in its bid to effectively combat the ISIS has adopted a number of population and enemy centric strategies. These strategies were taken to neutralize terrorists, their organizations and networks to render them incapable of using violence to instill fear and coerce governments or societies to achieve their goals.

Conceptual elucidations of Terrorism, Conflict Management and Resolution

Conceptualizing Terrorism

Terrorism has proven difficult to conceptualize (O'Neill, 2002a; Schmidt and Jongman, 2005) and the mosaic of meanings ascribed to the term have quite often been subjected to dispute from various quarters; thus leading to an ever growing variegated, and sometimes contradictory, definitions of the term. As Krueger and Maleckova (2002) had observed, there are more than 100 diplomatic and academic definitions of terrorism. Indeed, useful definitions have been proposed among scholars and policy makers alike, with some focusing solely on non-state actors while others incorporate and accentuate state actors alongside non-state actors (Primoratz, 2004; Schmid and Jongman, 2005; Lizardo, 2008; Jackson and Sinclair, 2012). However, there is yet no consensus regarding what essentially and precisely constitutes terrorism; hence, the concept is arguably very elusive since what it is usually referred to has surfaced in "so many different forms and under different circumstance" (Weinberg et al., 2004, p. 778).

This definitional conundrum discerningly dubbed the "Bermuda Triangle of terrorism" by Brian Jenkins of the RAND Corporation - one of the first researchers in the field of terrorism is affirmed by Philip Schlesinger who argues that "no common agreed definition can in principle be reached, because the very process of definition is itself part of a wider test over ideologies or political objectives" (cited in Schmid, 2004b, p. 375). In agreement, another expert, Bowyer Bell observed that the very word terrorism becomes a litmus test for strongly held belief, hence a brief conversation on terrorist issues with almost anyone reveals a special world view, an interpretation of the nature of man and his personal but biased version of conflict and its use for socio-political ends.

The concepts of Conflict Management/Resolution

Conflict resolution is often confused with the term conflict resolved. Conflict resolution is primarily not conflict resolved, but agenda setting on peace principles. It is defined by Heitler (1990) as the attainment of a solution that satisfies the requirement of all the seemingly conflicting forces and thereby, produces a feeling for all participants". Wallenstein (2008) defines conflict resolution as a situation where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solves their central incompatibilities, accept each other's continued existence as parties and cease all violent acts against each other. It is essentially aimed at intervention to change or facilitate the course of a conflict.

According to Albert (2001) conflict resolution serves three purposes namely: minimization of chances of destructive conflicts, stabilization of cessation of destructive conflicts as to prevent escalation, and prevention of outbreak of a full-blown conflict done by uprooting the basic reasons for the conflict. According to Heitler (1990) a "cooperative process of conflict resolution must entail the following:

- i. The Positions: These should be made known. These are the initial statements of the warring parties as regards to what they want and are saying.

- ii. Explore Underlying Concerns: These are the concerns of the parties. These interests are lying behind the initial positions made known and act as stepping stones to addressing the issues at stake.
- iii. Joint-Problem Solving: this should be practical in the true sense of it. It involves selecting mutual satisfying solutions. This is when the two warring parties cooperatively explore their underlying concerns and work out ways of attaining a resolution.

According to Heitler (1990), the exploration of their underlying concerns and interests often disclosed that conflict actually involves concerns and complementarity. The solutions should equally complement each other's needs irrespective of their incompatibility.

Conflict resolution can be both formal and informal. Also, it can either aim at resolving to terminate conflicts in an open and predictable process in accordance with legal principles or focus on efforts to increase cooperation among the parties to a conflict and deepen their relationship by addressing the conditions that led to the dispute, fostering positive attitudes and allaying distrust through reconciliation initiatives, and building or strengthening the institutions and processes through which the parties interact. Conflict resolution tends to emphasize intervention by skilled but powerless third parties working unofficially with parties to foster new thinking and new relationships.

It is important to note that there is no ready-made conflict resolution for every conflict. It differs from one conflict case to the other. However, through exhibiting various styles and approaches, conflicts can be handled. It is a process that requires more of a cooperative, dialoguing and joint problem solving processes. In all of these, the essence of conflict resolution is to uproot the major cause of the conflict in question.

Theoretical Framework

Strategic theory was employed in analyzing ISIS international terrorism and conflict management in the Middle-East. Strategic theory argues that states and other competitive entities have interests that they will pursue to the best of their abilities. Interests are desired end of states such as survival, economic wellbeing, and enduring national values. The national/personal elements of power are the resources used to promote or advance these national and personal interests. In very many cases personal interest is reinterpreted and ingrained as national interest by both state and non-state actors alike. The strategic theorists Colin Grey, Thomas Schelling and others, according to Eze (2014) maintain that, there is a deployment of available resources to gain any objective and this is an endeavor to relate ends to means. They further argued that actors behave rationally in pursuit of their aims. That is, an actor's decisions are made after careful cost-benefit calculation and the means chosen seem optimal to accomplish the desired end.

United States of America for instance has exhibited its objective in the Middle East which is to combat the rising activities of terrorist groups like ISIS. This is because of the strategic interests in terms of its protective partnership with the state of Israel on one hand and its dependence on crude oil from the Middle East on another hand. Therefore peace in the region is critical to its domestic economic and strategic health. The strategic theory states that political actors formulate objectives that are guided by interest. Hence, USA has devised courses of action which are political (diplomatically), military, economic and social to combat these terrorist activities. Consequently, USA has deployed resources (means) to pursue this greater end. These means are both tangible and intangible in nature.

History of ISIS Terrorism in Middle East

ISIS was formed in 2014 by Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi who was originally part of Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network. Even though Zarqawi laid the ideological foundation for ISIS, his early years were hardly the paragon of Islamic purity. In his teens, after the death of his father, Zarqawi dropped out of school, engaged in petty theft, and was a heavy-drinker. To prevent his further demoralization, his mother enrolled him in Islamist courses. An introduction to

Salafism, a doctrine promoting religious purity and literal interpretation of the Qur'an, had a transformative influence on Zarqawi, and prompted him to commit his life to pursuit of religious glory. His career as an aspiring jihadist began in 1989 when he went to Afghanistan to join the Mujahideen fight against the Red Army.

Nonetheless, Zarqawi stayed in Afghanistan as a reporter, using that time as an opportunity to construct a social network of likeminded extremists itching to resume the fight against the perceived enemies of true Islam. In 1992, he returned to Jordan where he collaborated with his spiritual teacher Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, whose ideological sophistication and advanced knowledge of Islam further strengthened Zarqawi's commitment to the black and white worldview endorsed by Salafism. In 1994, before they managed to execute a terrorist plot they were spinning, Zarqawi and Maqdisi were both arrested for possession of guns and explosives (Warrick, 2015). In 1999, Zarqawi was released from prison through Jordan's King Abdullah general amnesty. By then he already had an operational plan and reached out to Osama bin Laden to get the blessing and organizational support from the AQ leader. They met, but according to all accounts, the meeting did not go very well for Zarqawi (Warrick, 2015). Bin Laden was offended by Zarqawi's radical views on killing Muslims and by his arrogant and disrespectful behavior. Zarqawi's lack of sophistication, criminal past, and tattoos did not create a good first impression on Bin Laden either (Weaver, 2006). Despite that, in recognition of Zarqawi's initiative and drive, Bin Laden agreed to finance him with AQ money to set up a training camp in Herat in western Afghanistan.

Due to Zarqawi's contacts and organizational skills, his terrorist cell grew fast, but in 2001, he was driven out of Afghanistan by the US invasion. He spent the next two years travelling between Iran, Jordan, and Iraq to expand his network further. In early 2003, he established in the western Iraqi province of Al Anbar the Jamaat Tawhidwal Jihad in Iraq, the forerunner of ISIS (Gerges, 2016). At that time, Zarqawi was in close contact with another jihadist group operating in Iraq - Ansar al Islam. His ambitions were lofty and his targets – correspondingly grand. The major aim has been to remove the western occupation of the Middle East and replace it with Sunni Islamist regime (Crenshaw, 2014).

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) blazed onto the terrorism scene in a spectacular way on 29 June 2014, the first day of Ramadan, with its self - proclamation of the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate that stretched across eastern Syria and much of northern and western Iraq. ISIS's leader Abu Bakr al -Baghdadi also declared himself the Caliph and leader for Muslims everywhere.

ISIS establishment of the Caliphate allows it to exert state - like control over physical territory, thereby differentiating itself from all other terrorist groups, including the hitherto dominant Al Qaeda. At the same time, it also gives it an aura of divine sanction, which adds to its legitimacy in the eyes of radicalized Muslims who have bought into the romanticized notion of Islamic Caliphate peddled by ISIS through its tech - savvy propaganda machinery. ISIS 'territorial ambitions extend beyond its territories in Syria and Iraq. It has also declared "wilayat" (provinces under the ISIS Caliphate) in parts of Nigeria, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, North Caucasus and the Afghan - Pakistan region. That ISIS was able to recruit tens of thousands of foreign fighters into its ranks and radicalize many more across the globe with its virulent brand of ideology can be attributed to its ability to fully exploit the internet and social media platforms to seek out potential recruits to its cause. At the same time, it also harnessed the diversity within its ranks to produce sleek propaganda campaigns which are customized to tap into the existing grievances of the communities it is targeting to galvanize into taking up arms. That said, ISIS's appeal has begun to ebb from 2015 onwards as the brutality and extreme violence that it espoused began to turn off would be supporters.

The rise of ISIS is the cumulative effect of the imperialistic decisions, actions, inactions, practices and injustices of the U.S. and her allies against the Middle East (Eze, 2015). As Mclean (1996, p.492) notes, one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter. Eze (2015) recounts how the US in her quest to foster her adverse imperialistic foreign policy through the instrumentality of naked power, directly and indirectly invaded Lebanon, Cuba, Dominican

Republic, bombarded Libya's Tripoli and Benghazi in 1986, and masterminded pro- U.S. regime change and killing of Colonel Muammar Ghadaffi in 2011. Similarly, the U.S. government invaded Panama in 1989 and removed General Manuel Noriega as president because he was no longer serving U.S. interest. It also unilaterally invaded and effected pro- U.S. regime change in Iraq and death of Saddam Hussein in 2003, invaded and effected pro-U.S. regime change in Afghanistan in 2001, formed the backbone of Israeli's continued settlement buildings and occupation of Palestinian lands contrary to U.N. resolution 242 of 1967. So also was U.S.'s invasion of Haiti and ousting of the recalcitrant General Raoul Cedras for the restoration to power of pro-U.S.'s president, Jean Bertrand Aristide (Eze, 2000). These sudden displacements of longstanding regimes, unleash not just severe political activism but cultural vacuums and extreme instability.

These hegemonic practices on the part of the U.S. government are infuriating to some nationalistic individuals and groups of the victim nations. When they eventually retaliate (such as the 1988 Pan-Am Airliner bombing over Scotland or the September 11, 2001 attacks on the U.S.) it is termed terrorism (Eze, 2015 p. 69). Osama Bin Laden also exposed how the U.S. and her allies (like Israel) caused the September 11, 2001 catastrophic attack on the U.S. World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. In his video tape (released by Al-Jazeera on November 1, 2004 cited in Eze, 2015) addressed to citizens of the United States, Bin Laden dismissed as rhetoric claims by U.S. president George W. Bush that the attack occurred because Islamic extremists hate freedom saying; if Bush says we hate freedom, let him tell us why we didn't attack Sweden for example.

ISIS International Terrorism and Conflict Management in the Middle-East

At the beginning of September 2014, US authorities announced the creation of a broad international coalition to fight the Islamic State'. In the end, 74 countries made a commitment to fight against these terrorists. The actions of the international coalition were to focus on providing military support for the allies fighting the jihadists; obstructing the flow of foreign fighters; eliminating the sources of financing for the organization; and providing humanitarian aid. Some countries would provide military support through the provision of weapons, equipment, provision of advice and training. Others were directly involved in the air campaign against the jihadists (Department of State, 2014).

The Resolution 2170 of the UN Security Council in 2014 was to serve as the legal basis for the actions of the international coalition. This resolution called on all Member States to help stop the flow of foreign fighters into the ranks of the jihadists and suppress the financing of extremist groups in Iraq and Syria through more effective border control, and to improve the exchange of information and cooperation between specific government organizations (Security Council, 2014a).

The United States' assessment was that if it were to act alone, it would find itself quickly adrift in a complex social, political, ethnic, and religious struggle. Thus, Washington worked hard to form a coalition of states that, despite competing ultimate aims have come together to confront ISIS. By the end of 2017, the coalition included 74 member countries, with the United States carrying the bulk of the military burden (BBC News, 2018). Although not a member, Iran has made substantial contributions of material and manpower, reportedly including two brigades of volunteer Revolutionary Guards units and a large number of Guards officers. Russia, unwilling to join the U.S.-led anti-ISIS coalition, began pushing a limited number of its own military forces into Syria in August and September 2015, offering to lead its own military coalition to strike at ISIS if Syria's Assad were to agree. Though often maligned, the United States' construction of its now four year-old coalition has meant that ISIS has been confronted with a set of encircling adversaries in a much shorter period than has been previously witnessed against a militant jihadist organization.

For offensive and defensive reasons, Strategic theory underscores the deployment of resources to achieve certain tactical objectives. As explained both state and non-state actors (terrorist organizations) have objectives and to make these objectives actionable, critical resources (kinetic

and non-kinetic are deployed.) Both sides of the conflict divide utilize procedures that are congruent to the elaborations of Strategic theory. In effect it becomes who actually is more efficient and effective in the deployment of her resource assets to achieve particular goals. A dimension to this is that even for terrorist organizations conflict is not an end in itself but a means to the actualization of key objectives; state power, liberating human rights, self-determination, discrimination, racism, economic liberty and others. Conflict has its crucial impact, it needs to be resolved for national and international progress and development to be made. Without a semblance for peace and order, anarchy would rapidly emerge. This perhaps explains the perspective of not only the US but other states such as Nigeria, Kenya, France and Russia's bold stand on strategy (kinetic and non-kinetic) as key to conflict resolution.

Conclusion

The ISIS inspired terrorist attacks in the Middle Eastern states and beyond and the attendant carnage assumed a deadlier dimension, with obvious implications for humanitarian casualties, especially the USA citizens, her allies and her places of interest across the globe. The counter-terrorism strategies deployed by the U.S government and others to combat the ISIS menace and mitigate the attendant humanitarian casualties succeeded in reducing the activities of ISIS in Iraq and Syria and beyond, but the terrorist group was not been effectively eradicated.

It is pertinent to underscore the point that even though the US spearheads conflict resolving strategies especially the quick resort to kinetic resolution agenda and platforms, the same US operates a military industrial complex that drives an adverse imperialistic foreign policy, that is regarded as a major cause of ISIS terrorist activities in the Middle East, this study recommends that the United States of America jettisons her provocative imperialistic foreign policy actions and resort to an overhauled foreign policy grounded on the principle of egalitarianism, justice, equity and fair-play as well as welfare (not warfare). This shall engender genuine global peaceful co-existence, socio-economic and political development, devoid of subjugation of man by man and nation by nation.

As regards the critique of the preponderance of military strategy over political strategy, the paper recommends the utilization of political strategy that will ensure a lasting reconciliation and the development of a consensus between ethno-religious and minorities in the Middle East especially Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Somalia. This situation can also be used by Nigeria, Tchad, Cameroon, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, and the Central African Republic to end terrorist insurgency and usher peace. This paper proposes that in Iraq, Yemen, Myanmar and Somalia for instance, authorities form an inclusive new government which would represent the interest of all citizens, not just specific social groups. This is because the fractious nature of these countries and their longstanding divisions create a suitable socio-cultural and economic environment for the development of terrorism.

With respect to the defect in the global coalition against ISIS, the study urges the members of the global coalition against ISIS to effectively deploy both kinetic and non-kinetic resources to resolve immediate and remote causes that led to the creation of such groups in the first place. The extensive use of ground troops in addition to the aerial bombardment strategy are commonplace but the deployment of non-kinetic tactics such as, negotiations, general dialogues, international third party mediations and provision of social amenities to citizens generally would yield more lasting conflict resolving results.

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