

ADDRESSING TERRORISM

IN

**IRAQ SYRIA
AND BEYOND**



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Addressing Terrorism in Iraq, Syria, and Beyond

Introduction of the Committee

The United Nations Security Council is one of the six organs of the United Nations, which was created after World War II. It holds primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security and is the principal crisis-management organ of the UN. The Security Council consists of 15 members, with 5 permanent members, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, China, and the Russian Federation having the right to veto any substantive Security Council resolution. The remaining 10 non-permanent members are elected on a regional basis to serve two-year terms.

To ensure the respect for human rights for all, the Security Council addresses issues that include civil wars, arms control, natural disasters and terrorism. It calls upon the parties in a dispute to settle through peaceful means yet reserves the power to impose sanctions and authorize the use of force to maintain international peace and security. It is also charged with accepting new members to the United Nations and approving any changes to the United Nations Charter.

Statement of the Problem

History

In 2003, the coalition led by the US launched the Second Gulf War in Iraq and overthrew the former Saddam-Hussein-led government. In order to eliminate terrorism and potential violent threats against Western countries, the coalition also exercised control over some main cities, Baghdad especially, and obtained the benefits of oil excavation. Nevertheless, this action, often viewed as revenge over the 911 Terrorist Attack, led to a more serious regional chaos resulted from al-Qaeda along with the intensifying conflicts between the East and the West.

Al-Qaeda, majorly formed by Sunni militants, is responsible for several attacks on civilian and military targets in various countries, including the well-known 1998 US embassy bombings and the September 11 attacks. Its moves resulted in the US government launching the "War on Terror". With the withdrawal of the American troops in Iraq and the conflicts between the Syrian Shia paramilitary forces and Sunni

Arab tribesmen, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) started to grow sturdily under the protection of al-Qaeda.

The Rise of ISIS

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), formed in 2013 as ISIL, stands with al-Qaeda as one of the most dangerous terrorist groups now in the world. It is an Islamic rebel group that controls territory in parts of Iraq and Syria and also operates in Libya, the Sinai Peninsula and other North African and Middle Eastern regions.

The establishment of ISIS aims towards a “caliphate”, which is defined as a state that should be ruled by a single political and religious leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, according to Islamic law. Despite being limited to Iraq and Syria, it has promised to “break the borders” of Jordan and Lebanon and “free Palestine.” Its objectives and motives attract the support from Muslims across the world, demanding that they all swear allegiance to its only leader.

The estimated territory that ISIS controls is still unclear today, but eight million people are believed to be living under partial or full ISIS control, where it implements a strict interpretation of Sharia, forcing women to wear veils, non-Muslims to pay a particular tax or convert, and imposing punishments that include floggings and executions to those who don't abide.

Moreover, brutal tactics have included mass killing, abductions of members of religious and ethnic minorities. Beheadings of soldiers and journalists have ignited fear and outrage amongst many around the world and have even prompted the intervention of the US military. The rapid advance of ISIS across Iraq and Syria has thrown the Greater Middle East into chaos and encouraged Western countries to get involved. Nations such as the US, Russia, the UK, France and Germany have all sent troops to the region and added complexity to the issue.

Problem of Iraq

In the summer of 2014, ISIS fighters swept across Iraq, with the jihadists forcing Iraqi military and a large portion of the city's population to flee. The largest prize ISIS claimed was the city of Mosul, one of the biggest oil-producing cities in Iraq where Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared the caliphate. With the largest population of roughly 600,000 residents remaining, Mosul is the key strategic point under ISIS control

among all its territories.

Considering the worsening situation, the US-led coalition has conducted more than 10,000 airstrikes against ISIS targets in Iraq since the ISIS invasion. Along with the US support, Kurdish militias, Sunni Arab tribesmen, Shia militiamen, and of course, the Iraqi government, all took part in the seemingly endless battle in the region.

In March 2016, the Iraqi government announced the launch of a military operation to retake Mosul, but so far the campaign has only made incremental progress, reclaiming a series of villages with the help of the US-led coalition against ISIS. As the Iraqi military lacks the troops to launch a full-scale assault on the city, it has left the battle progress stalemated. It is still unpredictable in these days to tell what consequences the conflicts would lead to, not to mention calling an end to the war.

Problem of Syria

Throughout the Syrian civil war, the Syrian government, the Syrian rebellion, ISIS, Kurdish fighters and the great powers such as the US and Russia have all been involved in this complex conflict. The tension of the region is still an unsolvable issue.

The current President Bashar al-Assad of the Syrian government has been accused of complicity with ISIS by numerous opposition and anti-Assad parties. Sources have indicated that the Syrian government has tactically avoided ISIS forces so as to weaken the rebellion force such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

It is said that the Syrian government has purposely ceded territory to ISIS and thus enlarged ISIS's influence amongst the world. With the secret help from the Syrian government and civilians' supports, ISIS rapidly and vastly penetrated into the Northern and Western region and occupied some vital facilities, e.g. control of taxation, banks, oil and gas reservoirs, etc. In addition, the Assad government has been said to surreptitiously bought oil from ISIS as the ISIS facilities supply electricity to government-held areas and the government-operated power plants supply ISIS-occupied areas.

Moreover, Russia has been the ally of the Syrian government since the Cold War. During the Syrian Civil War, the Syrian government is supported by military and financial assistance from Russia in order to fight against the rebellion force FSA that

has the United States' aid.

As two main parties are fighting the issue of the jurisdiction of the Assad government, ISIS simultaneously occupied the northern part of Syria and has conflicts with both parties and the Kurdish Fighters. Recently, Russia reached a consensus in ceasing fire in the region with the US and agreed to together confront ISIS and terrorism around the globe. Though Russia released its goodwill, it is widely believed that the situation in Syria would still be complicated in the following years.

Terrorism beyond the Middle East

Besides countries in the Middle East such as Syria and Iraq, there are also other nations around the world that suffer from the endless catastrophic terrorist attacks and all forms of the extension of terrorism. The 9/11 Terrorist Attack, for example, is widely viewed as the biggest terrorist attack in the past decades. Al-Qaeda brought about this assault as a response to the 2003 US invasion in Iraq, or even earlier, the United States' support to the establishment of Israel.

Terrorist attacks take different shapes, including bombings, kidnappings, hijackings and assassinations all over the world in the past decades due to various reasons. Nevertheless, out of all aspects, religion conflicts result in most attacks, especially when the far-right religious groups spread hatred all around the world. From al-Qaeda to ISIS, their beliefs deeply penetrate into every corner around the globe, seizing control of religious fanatics, and simultaneously leave the world in utter confusion.

Key Players and Bloc Positions

The United States of America

Terrorist attacks on US soil have caught the high tension of the United States of America to defeat terrorism since 2001. The Department of Homeland Security was created hence to prevent the expansion of terrorism and to keep the safety of US citizens. The US is seriously concerned about the situation in Iraq and Syria due to its long history of involvement in Iraq. Moreover, there have been many calls for it to intervene in Syria.

Since 2014 the US has sent troops to assist Syrian rebels and launched campaigns of airstrikes against ISIS affiliates in Iraq. In August 2014, the US managed to lead a

coalition composed of partial NATO members and Arab allies to expand the airstrikes to prevent the expansion of terrorism. Recently, most US internal debates focus on how to defeat ISIS and terrorism, rather than stopping the Syrian Civil War.

The Russian Federation

The expansion of Islamic radicalism on the southern border of Russia is a big threat to the Russian Federation. The Russian government supports the creation of a broad anti-terrorist coalition to fight against ISIS militants. Alongside with many of other leading world powers, it has taken up arms and committed to fight against ISIS and terrorism. In September 2015, Russia began launching airstrikes against rebels, saying ISIS and all terrorists were targets.

However, in Syria, Russia is allied with the Assad government. Russia has been under scrutiny ever since its airstrike campaign which supposedly targeted the ISIS terrorists but instead were accused of hitting groups that were against the Assad government. The refusal to join the US coalition in fighting ISIS only made the situation worse. Moreover, the shooting of a Russian plane by NATO member Turkey further heightened tensions between the US coalition and the Russian government. Nevertheless, Russia is actively combatting against global terrorism and ISIS.

France

France had been launching airstrikes on ISIS only in Iraq, yet had resisted airstrikes in Syria because it did not want to declare any political bias toward Syrian entities that would potentially harm its national security and international peace. However, following the ISIS-claimed terrorist attack on Charlie Hebdo in the beginning of 2015, France joined the US-led coalition's military operations of airstrikes against ISIS in Syria.

On the night of 13 November 2015, gunmen and suicide bomber hit a concert hall, a major stadium, restaurants, and bars in Paris, leaving 130 dead and hundreds wounded. These attacks have prompted France to increase its airstrikes in Syria and raised the national security alert to the highest level. France is now one of the most important players against terrorism in the UN Security Council.

Turkey

Turkey serves a crucial role in the ever-growing presence of ISIS in the Middle East region and provides numerous benefits to the war against terrorism. It joined the US-led coalition in 2014, and launched a major military intervention in Syria in a coordinated campaign with Syrian opposition fighters to fight against ISIS. Following an ISIS bomb attack in July 2015, it further agreed to let the US coalition to use its air bases for strikes in Syria. Turkey has suffered many terrorist attacks throughout 2015 and 2016.

While ISIS has extended their control into Turkish territory, the Kurds, an ethnic group that lives mainly in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran, has added complexity to the tension in this region. Turkey is still in conflict with the Kurds and is especially wary of any action that could make the Kurds move towards creating a Kurdish state within its border. Turkey maintains a proactive role in its troubled southeastern neighbors and currently hosts over one million Syrian refugees within its borders.

The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is another active force in taking part in the military effort against ISIS. As one of the western coalitions defeating terrorism, it also plays a leading role in the Global Coalition of over 66 partners committed to defeating ISIS. In early September 2014, British former Prime Minister David Cameron began voicing his support for British airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq, and the Parliament subsequently voted overwhelmingly in favor of authorizing airstrikes on Iraq. In late 2015, the UK authorized more aerial bombing campaigns against ISIS.

David Cameron also stated that the UK would help arm Kurdish forces, support the Iraqi government, keep supplying humanitarian aid, and coordinate with the United Nations to battle ISIS. According to the UK government's website, the UK has already pledged £79.5 million in humanitarian aid in the Middle East.

China

Since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011, China had upheld the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign countries despite the fact that it has been working closely with the Russian Federation in the United Nations Security Council and sharing similar views on events both on regional and global levels.

With the rapid evolution of ISIS, however, China is concerned that its oil fields in Syria and Iraq would be inflicted with devastating losses if they were to fall in the hands of ISIS. In addition, the issue of ISIS infiltrating the province of Xinjiang has also disquieted China a great deal, and China is now willing to strengthen cooperation with its Syrian counterparts. The Chinese army has stepped up military support for the Assad government and announced their intention to provide training to Syrian troops and humanitarian aid to the Assad government. China's escalating role in Syria makes it maintain a responsible attitude on the Syrian issue.

Germany

Germany joined the US-led operation towards ISIS after the permission of the parliament. Following the two attacks by terrorists pledging loyalty to ISIS and a deadly shooting rampage in Munich, the German government further proposed a broad range of measures to reinforce its security against ISIS and terrorism. The proposed measures, including closer monitoring of refugees and enhancing surveillance, are comprehensive and many of them seem likely to win legislative approval, but they also prompt the concerns of privacy and civil liberties that are deeply valued by the country.

Islamic nations

The Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism was initially formed by 34 nations in the Muslim world as an intergovernmental military alliance against ISIS and other counter-terrorist activities; it rose to 39 countries by March 2016. The alliance is based in a joint command center in Saudi Arabia to protect the Muslim countries regardless of sects, and its operation includes exchanging information, providing equipment, and training. It also reaffirms that it would operate in line with the United Nations, and is expected to deploy military forces to fight against ISIS.

Questions to Consider

1. What are the motives, including economic, political, and religious factors, of joining terrorist groups?
2. Are stricter border controls necessary and effective?
3. Is it possible to stop terrorist financing? How?
4. Is there a way to establish peace between Assad and the Free Syrian Army? What measures can be taken?
5. How can the rapid development of the Internet and social media help spread terrorist messages and recruitment?
6. Is negotiating with terrorists possible?
7. Should there be a platform for the exchange of information? Who should supervise it?
8. Who can UNSC cope with to strengthen regional cooperation?
9. What can be done to the civilians in Iraq and Syria and the refugees abroad?

Suggestions for Further Research

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<http://www.cfr.org/iraq/islamic-state/p14811>
- CNN: ISIS Fast Facts
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- United Nations Action to Counter Terrorism
<http://www.un.org/en/terrorism/>
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<http://time.com/isis-mosul/>

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