"Islamic State" and the Transformation of Islamic Discourse in the Middle East

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Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to highlight the origin and evolution of the "Islamic State" (IS) with special focus on the root causes that helped construct its Islamic narrative, such as the idea of the Islamic caliphate. It argues that IS has not concealed all other jihadist groups, and it is just a new face of the same idea associated with political Islam: Salafi-Jihadism. This paper also tries to analyze the changing face of global jihadism through a comparative approach of Al-Qaeda and IS. It has been shown that while both groups have common ideological beliefs, they are in many ways different. By studying and analyzing the Islamic discourse of many Jihadist groups in the Middle East, the paper has showed a case of acute obscurantism which is reflected on the statements and behavior of these groups. However, they are open to communicate between their organizations. For the counter extremism initiatives, the threat of IS and its affiliated groups is not decreasing, but it is changing. What is needed in the region in order to fight this monster is a moment of reflection and reckoning by all Muslims. It requires a revolution in the dominant religious discourse.*

Key Words: *"Islamic State"; Islamic Discourse; Caliphate; "Arab Spring"; Jihadi-Salafism and Sharia Law*

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I. Introduction

The roots of the "Islamic State" in Iraq and Sham" (ISIS) can be traced back to 1999 when the Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi founded the group known as "*Tawhid* and *Jihad* in Mesopotamia. Following al-Zarqawi's pledge of allegiance to Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network on October 17, 2004, the group became known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq. However, Zarqawi's emirate never materialized in the Sunni triangle of Iraq. He was killed by a US force in 2006. His alliances of jihadists were dismantled two years later by the Sahwah Sunni groups, allies of the US army. Abu Omar al-Baghdadi was declared as the group's emir and the organization renamed itself the "Islamic State of Iraq" (ISI). In 2010, the ISI's *Sharia* Council announced that *Baghdadi* had been killed. Afterward, the Mujahedeen *Shura* Council swore allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as ISI's emir.[①]

After the outbreak of war in Syria, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has tried to spread his influence by recruiting more fighters from al Sham's *Jabhat al-Nusra*. In April 2013 al-Baghdadi announced the dissolution of *Jabhat al-Nusra* and the integration of its members into ISI, with the new organization being called the "Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham" (ISIS). By the end of June 2014 Abu Mohammad al-Adnani ISIS spokesman proclaimed birth of the Islamic caliphate and the inauguration of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as Caliph. The organization changed its name to the "Islamic State" (IS) (Byman, D., 2015: 166-168). This growth of the "Islamic State" poses many key issues. The purpose of this article is to answer the following four closely related questions:

  - What are the origin and evolution of IS?

[①] For more details about the historical roots of ISIS see: Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, NY: Regan Arts, 2015; and S. C. Dhiman, *"Islamic State" of Iraq and Syria (ISIS): Reconciliation, Democracy and Terror*, Delhi: Neha Publishers & Distributors, 2015.

- What are the geostrategic positioning of the group and their territorial distribution in the Middle East and Africa?

- What are the strategies, tactics and leadership of IS? How do they differ from those in Al-Qaeda?

- What are mechanisms of finance and recruitment that fuel the group?

- What is the role of the Islamic discourse in curbing their threat?

II. Materials and Methods

According to Steven Brooke (2016), "the rapid proliferation of publicly available data offers new opportunities to test and consolidate our existing understanding of Islamist politics. It can also help us expand to domains that had previously been inaccessible for researchers" (Brooke, S., 2016: January 29). This article utilizes both qualitative and quantitative data. First, it analyzes many documents, including the writings and statements of the IS leaders in the Arabic Language. Therefore, the article reviews some primary works of the Caliph (Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi), and the Leader Khaled Musaed of Jamaat Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis in Egypt. Among other sources, it examines data from other sources, such as Al-jazeera Center for Studies and the Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies.

Second, the article analyzes data on two geographic locations of the IS: the Iraq & Levant and North Africa. There are many challenges in gathering information in some countries, like Egypt, because of the security situation there. Consequently, the article compiles some data from the concerned think tanks, such as the Arab Center for Research and Studies.

This article presents a qualitative analysis of IS in the Middle East based on the collected material. In spite of the knowledge gap concerning the jihadist groups in general, the article intends to

give a clear picture of IS. It explores the rise and evolution of IS before moving to its structure and financial resources. The analysis identifies the common characteristics and differences between IS and Al-Qaeda in terms of ideology, tactics and recruitment. The final part discusses the extension of IS in the Middle East and the trajectory of the global Jihadism and how to counter its threat through reforming Islamic discourse.

III. Findings and Discussion

The Origins and Evolution of the "Islamic State"

There is a clear tendency in the Arab world for the conspiratorial interpretation in order to justify this rapid emergence of the "Islamic State". The organization is currently fighting three regular armies in Iraq, Syria, and the Kurdish regions. It also faces two African armies in Egypt and Nigeria. Is the IS really a product of external factors or is it the result of local factors related to the fragility of the state in the Arab and Islamic regions? (Lister, C., 2016: 19-35).

We can refer to two types of factors that contributed to the emergence of this violent form of radical jihadist movements in the Muslim world. The first type is the direct factors that explain the rapid emergence of the organization of the "Islamic State", and the second type refers to the real indirect factors that help us understanding the ideological structure of the organization.

Direct factors:

- The American Invasion: There is no doubt that the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the subconsequent political instability that led to the collapse of the central state has clearly contributed to the rise of many jihadist organizations that have tried to fill the political vacuum. Noam Chomsky for example argues that the 2003 invasion of Iraq provoked the sectarian divisions that have resulted in the destabilization of Iraqi society. The result was a

climate where Saudi-funded radicals could thrive (Chomsky, N., 2008: July 8).

- Marginalization and radicalization of the Sunnis: There are many reasons that helped the IS to exploit the situation suffered by Sunni Arabs in Iraq. But we refer to the two main reasons: 1) political sectarianism adopted by the 2005 Constitution, which emphasized the distinction between communities and has marginalized Sunni Arabs. 2) Forced displacement of Iraqis on the basis of sectarian affiliation to create a new demographic map based on sectarian lines. Deborah Amos's book, *Eclipse of the Sunnis,* describes the impact of this forced migrations which stir up the historic conflict between Sunni and Shia citizens (Amos, D., 2010).

Indirect Factors: If we move to the real factors which paved the way to the rise of the "Islamic State", we could identify two important factors as follow:

1. The postcolonial state crisis, and more precisely the failure of this state and its inability in achieving development, political reform and social welfare (Yossef, A. & Cerami, J., 2015: 1-25). The Arab popular uprisings in 2011 represented a glimmer of new hope for the Arab masses but the counter-revolution forces, with the complicity of the US and the West, have managed to bury the dream of young people who are suffering from oppression, unemployment, poverty and frustration. The course of events in Egypt after Mubarak's fall have affectsed what is happening in Syria, Iraq and many Arab countries. The high Arab expectations turned to frustrations and disappointments. The "Arab Spring" experience revealed that Arab modernity was an ideology rather than the reality of a community. It turns out that loyalty to the tribe was unseen and when the state failed the people returned to their parochial loyalties again. It appeared clearly in cases like Iraq, Yemen and Libya. Tribal and religious identity in these countries is still alive and resists the modernity paradigm prevailing in most

Arab cities. This phenomenon is one of the clearest indicators which reflect how sectarianism in the Arab world has not faded away or weakened.

From Salafism to Super Salafism: Is "ISIS" position on minorities, women, citizenship, art, literature and religious and political pluralism much different from what is taught in colleges, preached in mosques and written in the literature of Islamic jurisprudence? Al-Qaeda or the "Islamic State" are the final product of the Jihadist-Salafism, a radical Salafist Wahhabism that declare apostasy against any Muslim, in addition to non-Muslims. This trend in takfirist thought is based also on the political theories of both *Abul A'la Maududi* (God's sovereignty over all creation or *Hakamiyya*) and *Sayyid Qutb* (the concept of governance and the division of society into *Jaahili* community and Muslim community) (Moaddel, M. & Talattof, K., 2000).

The notion of modern Jihad inspires the current discourse of militant Islam. In essence, there are four major speculative works that have shaped its legal argument as well as its operational outlook of recent years. The merger between the Wahhabi ideas and the ideas of Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb has produced a politically oriented thought as represented by Ayman al-Zawahiri, the main theorist of Al-Qaeda. Among the most important theorists of present day are, we can cite Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, author of the book, *the Path of Abraham*, published in 1985; Abu Qatada Al Filisteenee, author of the book, *Jihad and Diligence*, published in 1999; Abu Musab al-Suri, author of the book, *Call for Global Islamic Resistance*, published in 2004; and, Abu Bakr Naji, author of the book, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, published in 2008 (Moghadam, A., 2008; Mustafa, H. & Alhies, A., 2014: February 26).

Ideology and Mechanisms of Action

The IS, like Al-Qaeda, belongs to the jihadi Salafism which

support the use of violence to establish "Islamic State". This faction of the Salafi school of thought emerged during the war against the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan. This conflict has led to the radicalization of the religious Salafi School by exposing it to the politicized teachings of the Muslim Brotherhood and other radical groups, such as the Islamic Jihad in a context of real military training on the battlefield. Yet, the "Islamic State" has adopted an extremist version of Jihadi-Salafism under the influence of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, the founder of Al-Qaeda in Iraq.

Therefore, the most important intellectual foundations of the organization of the "Islamic State" are as follows (Wagemakers, J., 2012):

- Reestablishing the "Islamic caliphate and sharia law".
- Prevent the renovation or reconstruction of destroyed churches.
- The Islamic Jihad is global in nature.
- Victory over the disbelievers' aggressions can only be achieved through jihad.
- Establish an "Islamic State" on any liberated land and then move to other Muslim lands, where there exist similar conditions until the complete liberation of all Muslim lands.
- Jihad begins with "near enemy" such as the Muslim rulers and not "far enemy", such as foreign infidels.
- Legalization of Jihad against the Muslim rulers and rival Muslim organizations.
- *Jizya*: a protection tax payable by non-Muslim minorities in Muslim societies.
- Killing a Muslim if he was taken as a human shield by the infidel, a legitimate basis to justify some of the military operations that result in the killing of Muslims.

- Fighting non-Muslims and conquering the world to spread the call of Islam.
- The "Islamic State" has no fixed borders and encompasses many nations and tribes.
- All religions should be devoted to Allah and His word is supreme, whoever tries to prevent that is to be fought.
- People such as women, boys and blind Sheikhs shouldn't be killed.
- Imposing an Islamic dress code, whoever violates this Islamic rule will be beaten with a stick.

Objectives of the "Islamic State" and its mechanisms of action

In 2014 his speech delivered in Mosul, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi asserted that the promised day is coming "when a Muslim walks anywhere as a master" and added that adhering to his advice will enable the "Islamic State" to invade Rome and occupy the whole universe." Clearly, the aim of the state is to rebuild historical models of the Caliphate State. For example, the borders of the caliphate stretched from Spain in the West to parts of China in the East. The borders of the Umayyad Caliphate in the seventh and eighth centuries match the maps published by the supporters of the "Islamic State" on the Internet sites.

The "Islamic State" is different from all jihadist organizations in the region and the world, including Al-Qaeda, in terms of visions, goals and mechanisms of action. All previous jihadist organizations have worked to overthrow the ruling regimes, and the establishment of alternative Islamic systems, while cross-border origination, such as Al-Qaeda, have chosen to fight against the Western countries, mainly the US.

The organization of "IS" was working to fulfill its ideal type of a state through building its own model of the Caliphate. Therefore, the "Islamic State of Iraq", which came into existence in October 2006, and after its expansion outside the borders of Iraq to

include Syria, has renamed itself "Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham" in April 2013. It seemed remarkable that the organization was keen in every phase to consolidate the idea of "the state" as the main goal to be achieved.

Mechanisms of action:

The "Islamic State" has adopted a number of mechanisms and means in order to achieve the state formation, which represents an integral part of its thoughts and beliefs (al-Khatib, M., 2014: November 23). The most important means are:

1. Designing the most radical intellectual system that could marginalize all jihadist organizations, including Al-Qaeda, to the extent that it was criticized by the leaders of the jihadist ideology in the world, such as Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, and Ayman al-Zawahiri. IS tried to attract the most extremist of the world jihadists, so that the organization could lead "the jihadist world" with their assistance.

2. Attempting to impose control over the other jihadist organizations, and the expansion at their expense. The Nusra Front is a clear example.

3. Ability to manage the state, through providing various services to the local population, such as building new markets, transport networks, as well as dams.

4. Building a self-sufficient state through securing the needed economic resources. The organization was able to control many oil fields in Iraq and Syria.

This brief analysis of the objectives of the organization of the "Islamic State" and its methodology at work makes it clear that its main goal is to establish an Islamic Caliphate state on vast areas of the world. The methodology adopted to achieve this overall objective is through excessive violence against targets of different segments of the population, including many Muslims, to impose control over those areas. Based on these two aspects, we can distinguish between the organization of the "Islamic State" and

other militant groups, such as Al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

Of course there are some similarities between Al-Qaeda and IS discourses regarding the focus on the duty of jihad. Both organizations believe that abstaining from jihad while proclaiming to be a Muslim is seen as hypocrisy. They also portray Western countries as nations that are hostile to Muslims. Al-Qaeda and IS both frame their ideologies within the traditional conception of *Dar al-Harb* (house of war) and *Dar al-Islam* (house of Islam), which, within the Salafi literalist context, asserts the incompatibility of Islam with secular law and governance (Holbrook, D., 2015: 93-104).

However, the main differences include:

- Al-Qaeda believes in "Jihad *Al-Dafa*" or the "defensive Jihad". On the contrary, IS believes the duty of Jihadists is to establish the caliphate, and that it can only be achieved by force of arms. This is significant, because in their understanding, once the Caliphate is established Muslims who do not submit to it are considered *Khawarij* (Rebels) and as such can be fought and killed.

- The main narrative of Al-Qaeda's focused on militant activities and terrorism through the glorification of martyrs and the documentation of successful operations. It also promotes the perpetration of "stray dogs" acts of terror by individuals that can have absolutely no formal association with Al-Qaeda. In contrast, the IS narrative largely focused on building an actual state based on a radical, or *takfiri*, interpretation of Islam. IS also appeals for skilled professionals to make *hijrah* (migration) in order to assist in the construction of an Islamic government.

- Al-Qaeda's position towards other sects and religions is based on the distinction between Islam and other religions. Leaders and scholars of other sects, such as *Shiites* and *Alawites*, are considered infidels and the general publics are *Kufar* (apostates) only after establishing proof against them. Christians and *Yazidis* are *Kufar per se*, who must pay taxes to their civilians. In contrast, IS

considered all different religions and sects as *Kufar*. Men should be killed, women and children should be captured and their properties should be seized.

Structure, Finance and Recruitment

The organization of the "Islamic State" is considered more developed and complex than many global jihadist movements. IS's structural features and administrative efficiency are based on the combination of traditional Islamic organizational forms and the modern state. Since the control of Mosul, the number of IS members doubled to reach more than 35,000 fighters, most of them Iraqis and Syrians. IS includes in its ranks more than 9,000 foreign fighters. Yet the basic structure of the elite forces consists of 15,000 fighters.

"Caliph" al Baghdadi is the sole decision-maker in the "Islamic State" and his decisions are implemented with no channel for recourse. As a representative of the Prophet Mohammed, he holds absolute power. The "Caliph" enjoys the qualifications to fill his position, such as knowledge leadership in *Ijtihad*, integrity of the senses, integrity of organs and lineage, i.e., a descendant of Quraysh Tribe. The Caliph pursues all religious and secular functions mentioned in the Sunni Islamic political thought and jurisprudence provisions (Haniya, H., 2014: November 23).

Finance and Recruitment

The "Islamic State" is the best-funded organization in the history of jihadist movements. It has built since the time of al-Zarqawi extended financing networks and resources. The financial committee collects the necessary funds through fundraising from traders and mosques, especially in the rich Gulf States, as well as the money obtained through the acquisition of "liberated" areas.

Since the control of Mosul and large areas in Iraq and Syria, the estimated budget of IS is about two billion dollars. The most important financing sources consist of donations, grants, charity,

zakat funds, kidnappings for cash, and returns of natural and minerals resources.

IS has a well disciplined and well organized media council. This council is made up of four different units: al-Furqan, al-Hayat, al-I'tisam, and Ajnad Foundation. The Al-Furqan Institute for Media Production was established in 2006 by the "Islamic State in Iraq" (ISI). It is considered today the official media bureau of IS and it receives its material from the top leadership directly.

The "Islamic State" has many messages in its media campaign which can be summarized as follows:

- Promoting the Caliphate as a functioning state, with one leader (the Caliph), one flag and one army. The stereotypical image is of a person who have full beard, wearing a turban and black dress and carring a weapon.

- Attracting the young people in all countries of the Islamic world to join the ranks of "Islamic State" in order to fullfill their religious duties.

- Terrorizing the kuffar is the shortest way to accomplish victory. Force should be used against "the Crusaders , the Shiites and apostates", according to IS termenology.

- Showing the positive and the humanitarian aspects of IS in order to improve its image, through distribution of Zakat, alms and relief materials to the needy people (Hussain, G. & Saltman, E., 2014).

Fighting the Monster: The Crisis of Islamic Discourse

The calls for renewal in the Arab and Muslim worlds have come to target directly the dominant Islamic discourse itself. An Egyptian writer argued that, "We must be liberated from the prevailing discourse by declaring war on it, because it is old and has been overtaken by time and change. It is a misleading discourse which does not truly reflect the spirit of Islam and would condemn us to be isolated and alienated from this world" (Higazi, A., 2003: August 13).

This has created a culture that necessitates an active taboo-breaking, and enlightens thought in a way that broadens the horizons of knowledge. However, due to the versatility of approaches to Islamic thinking, the most common discourse for revision and renewal had been to pinpoint the core scriptural references and elevate the principles they provoke above cultural traditions that have historically shaped Muslim lives.

In this light, there exists multiple reasons for the obstruction of the aforementioned renewal process (Hassan, H., 2015: 68-72):

• The gap between Islamic thought in its modern and contemporary stages: The disparity between the two stages is represented by the 19th century work of Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani and the writings of early 20th century.

• The artificiality of the Arab and Middle Eastern states: The rise of modern Arab states has triggered a paradigm shift where the European conception of the state became more preferable than the "regressive" model of Islamic institutions. The negligence of the historic *Qarawiyyin* and the *Zaytuna* universities demonstrate this paradigm shift.

• The lack of adaptability in the Islamic Institution: Islamic discourses in the modern world have long suffered from hardships in coping with the ever-changing historical context. There is no lack of writings and work to prove that the Islamic institution has for long time shielded itself from outside influences and retreated to more traditional thinking.

• The collective disconnectedness of Arab and Muslim scholars from Islamic culture: This happened as the push for following modern ideas and conventions has largely overshadowed the scholars' Islamic perceptions.

• The power of heritage and tradition: Traditional practices have proved hard to break and have by nature strong authority and stigma. This inertia of heritage and tradition limits the tendency to accept changes in the conventional Islamic discourse.

It is also hard to turn a blind eye to the central role of Sharia law in shaping the Islamic discourse. Although a common theme across ideas of Islamic relevance has been the essence of monotheism, coherence and uniformity has still been absent from such idea. Contemporary issues of governance and legislation have instead been a shaping factor in Islamic ideology. Sharia Law has then gained prominence to contextual and tailored ruling extracted directly from scripture. This exempts the Islamic discourse from blindly reinventing old ruling and texts, but to rather build on overarching themes and core principles.

Perhaps a reflective look at such themes and principles will show that renewed Islamic discourse runs on the same principles that run a modern day welfare state; that is freedom, justice, equality, *Shura* (consultation), shared responsibility and oversight. This formulation is not different from what has been perceived by *Imam Al Ghazali* and *Imam El Shatby*, when formulating the five objectives of Sharia. To them, the objective of the *Shari`ah* is to promote the well-being of all mankind, which lies in safeguarding their faith (*din*), their human self (*nafs*), their intellect (`*aql*), their posterity (*nasl*) and their wealth (*mal*). Whatever ensures the safeguard of these five serves public interest and is desirable.

Motives for Change

The traditional Islamic discourse in the Middle East and North Africa has long followed the model of the *Mu'alem*, or the teacher, endowed with vast moral and religious functions in his local scope. A *Mu'alem's* role is mostly moral, encouraging values of moderation, modesty and forgiveness, leading into a universal message. It was often that the ruling elite would facilitate such model to enforce their legitimacy or to achieve stability in times of unrest. However, this model is being critically challenged by a new wave of reformist thought. The generational gap between the *Mu'alems* themselves, and their sons who have been exposed to a different Islamic education has led to a visible change in the

discourse (Hassan, H., 2015: 73-76).

It was clear that this prevailing Islamic discourse was embodied in the famous saying, "The door of ijtihad is closed", which goes back to the third century after *hijrah*. It is a call against independent judgment or opinion. The main characteristics of this discourse are:

- Reliance on the scholarly interpretations and achievements of the predecessors.
- Modeling the present according to the experiences of the past.
- Opposing reform and the exercise of ijtihad under the pretext of violating the true teachings of the religion.
- The inability to cope with challenges of the modern world and to meet its challenges.
- Resort to violence in order to fulfill the desired change.

However, there were many factors that led to the move from "traditional" to "reformist" discourse in the region. The most salient are:

• The organizational force of Islamic movements: The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928, under the leadership of Hassan al-Banna, has long envisioned and advocated an "Islamic Renaissance" project. Such can be seen through the later writings of Sayyid Qutb, which has strongly adapted a narrative of Islamic reform. Likewise, the Islamic movement initiated by Mawdudi in 1941 India, which have inspired multiple reformist trends in the Arab world.

• The resurfacing of the Islamic vision for development after a failed post-colonial era. The Sharia Law and constitutional debates in many Arab Countries in the 1970s proved the relevance of reformist Islamic approach in designing the future.

• The 1979 Iranian Revolution has acted as a role model and a catalyst for many other Islamic organizations in the Middle East to declare their own agendas for establishing their own states. In this

sense, the Iranian revolution can be said to have influenced even Sunni and Sufi movements, which have thrived to follow the Iranian model. Moreover, Iran has tried to gain the hearts and minds of many young Muslims through cultural exchange programs.

• Islamic reformist discourse has offered a substitute for failed secular regimes in the Middle East. Riddled with corruption and lack of democratic transition, Muslim countries started to adapt a religious discourse and to facilitate it as a source of legitimacy. This Islamic reformist discourse has then posed as a substitute for failed postcolonial development models.

• The question of the Western "other" amidst its constant attempts to prove its political and social dominance over the nonwestern world. This has led to a debate of whether to clash or converse, build bridges or establish independence, converge or diverge with the Western counterparts. The Islamic discourse has then found itself in a position in which it has to address this dilemma and raise the question of identity amidst issues of democracy and modernity. It is quite evident, however, that hostility towards the West with its colonial past and support for Israel has fueled many radical Islamic political movements in the Muslim world.

On a related milieu, it becomes possible to take the concept of "State Fragility" as a key driver for the culture of violence and extremism pertaining to IS in Syria and Iraq. This approach has become a suitable framework to discuss radicalism, since state fragility is a sign of the economic and social disenchantment and marginalization of many peoples. Rising rates of poverty and unemployment in Arab states can be used as an analytical framework for the ongoing violence.

IV. Conclusion

Any jihadist organization takes a hierarchical form where it starts with the intellectual nucleus and then a group of theorists who believe in these ideas and then comes the role of preachers who take the task of intellectual recruitment which explains the extension of these groups across the space and communities. This article has concluded that all jihadist groups have in common the following issues:

- Fighting for the Cause of God and living in God's prescribed way.
- Believe in the promise of victory or martyrdom.
- Faith in the group, not symbols.
- Adopting the jihadist idea according to the Muslim Brotherhood.
- Existence of an intellectual source of theorists aimed at recruiting and providing support to the organization.

To conuter the growing threat of radical jihadist movements, two approaches of regional and international response can be adopted. The first approach is the more favored and decisive militaristic one, which is adopted by most Islamic countries as the prospect in a zero-sum game. For example, a coalition of 60 countries led by the US is fighting against IS in Iraq and the Levant. The contributions made by each country differ.

Although the militaristic approach is more favored and effective as a short term solution, the second approach aims to tackle the sources of terror and fundamentalism on the long term. This soft approach stresses the importance of critically analyzing the discourses of violence in the light of issues of poverty, corruption and marginalization. A comprehensive approach would then entitle an educational reform and a revision of the normative religious discourses.

It is important, in this light, for any approach in combating

such radical organization to address the root causes, before scavenging outcomes and constructing exit strategies. Whether we discuss the "Islamic State" in Iraq and Syria or other areas of conflict, the solution must be looked at politically. A political solution would then prompt long-term development, ensure principles of democracy and inclusivity and instill the rule of law and values of citizenship.

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