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التقرير الأسبوعي لمراكز الأبحاث الاميركية

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نشرة دورية تصدر عن وحدة رصد النخب الفكرية في مراكز الابحاث الاميركية

مركز الدراسات الأميركية والعربية

داعش رعاية اميركية ممولة عربيا

تمددها استدعى تحجيمها والحفاظ عليها

وتصويب تشغيلها في مشروع تفتيت الوطن العربي

المقدمة:

اسس خطاب الرئيس اوباما ارضية للتغطية الاعلامية، بشقيها العام واهتمامات النخب السياسية، بعد طول ترقب وانتظار لما سيترتب عليه من رؤى وخطط مستقبلية، دغدغ مشاعر الجمهور واحبط آمال معسكر الحرب الذي سعى لاطلاق فصل جديد من الحرب المعلنة ضد الدول الوطنية.

سيركز قسم التحليل الكشف عن كنه لغة الدبلوماسية والشعارات المنمقة في الخطاب، الذي رمي لتوظيف فزاعة داعش واساليبه الدموية كمدخل لاعادة تكريس احادية زعامة اميركا وتقسيم المنطقة مجددا "بايدي ابائها وتمويلهم" ايضا. سورية هي الهدف الثابت غير المعلن في الخطاب الذي بشر بحرب جديدة مفتوحة الافاق والازمنة.

توقيت الخطاب له بعد داخلي محلي، سيما وانه جاء عشية احياء ذكر "الحادي عشر من سبتمبر"، ورغبة من الرئيس تعديل ميل ميزان الرأي العام المائل ضده وضد حزبه تمهيدا لخوض الانتخابات المقبلة بعد نحو 50 يوما.

ملخص دراسات ونشاطات مراكز الابحاث

خطاب "استراتيجية" اوباما

رأى الجزء الاكبر من النخب الفكرية ان خطاب الرئيس اوباما الاخير، بخصوص داعش، ينطوي على العديد من الثغرات، اتساقا مع ساسة وقادة الحزب الجمهوري. وقال معهد المشروع الاميركي ان الرئيس "لا يدرك ان الغارات الجوية الدقيقة لن تكفي .. انظروا الى مثال اليمن. اما الصومال فما يشهده من استقرار لا يعود جراء الغارات الجوية المحدودة بل لاحتلال قوات الاتحاد الافريقي البلاد بغية مقارعة (تنظيم) الشباب في معاقلهم واماكن اقامتهم." و اضاف ان الاطراف جميعها تتطلع الى "استراتيجية متبلورة، بيد ان مسألة الأمن القومي لا ينبغي ان التضحية بها على مذبح النزوات الدبلوماسية، او صوابية الرؤيا السياسية، او تحريف التاريخ."

حث معهد كارنيغي صناع القرار على ضرورة انخراط السعودية لتعزيز نجاح جهود التصدي لداعش "بصرف النظر عن مشاطرتها ايران عدائهما للدولة الاسلامية، اذ انها قلقة لما ستؤول اليه الامور في كل من العراق وسورية بعد القضاء على داعش،" وهاجسها الشاغل هوية ومستقبل البديل لحكومي دمشق وبغداد اللتين "يتعزز بقاءهما بغياب بدائل اخرى. وعليه، فان استمرار الوضع الراهن في سورية والعراق من شأنه توطيد نفوذ ايران في المنطقة."

تناول معهد كارنيغي ما اسماء "تناقضات وعدم اتساق سياسة الرئيس اوباما حيال داعش،" مناشدا البيت الابيض التزام وضوح الرؤيا حول "حقيقة التهديد الذي تمثله الدولة الاسلامية وانتهاج مقاربة واقعية للعقبات التي تعترض سبل القضاء عليها،" ويتعين عليه ايضا "مصارحة الشعب الاميركي بالخطوات التي ينوي الاقدام عليها لتلافي بروز مجموعات مشابهة في اعقاب اندحارها."

سلط مركز الدراسات الاستراتيجية والدولية الاضواء على "القيود التي تحد الرئيس اوباما من مواجهة شاملة ضد داعش .. سيما وان الغارات الجوية لها مفعول محدود لاحتوائها، الامر الذي يستدعي القيام بحملة جوية اوسع للاحاق الهزيمة بداعش في العراق وكذلك حملة (موازية) للاغارة على اهداف في سورية .. لتقليص الدولة الاسلامية الى الحجم السابق لفصيل صغير متطرف يحظى بدعم محدود." واوضح ان الغارات الجوية ستستغرق وقتا طويلا "عند الاخذ بعين الاعتبار ضرورة تخفيض عدد الضحايا المدنيين والاضرار الجانبية الاخرى."

استعرض مركز التقدم الاميركي ما اسماء "الاستراتيجيات" المطلوب اعتمادها للاحاق الهزيمة بتنظيم داعش، موضحا ان احد اعمدتها الفعالة "يتطلب اعادة تنشيط سيل الدعم لقوى المعارضة السورية كي تتمكن من انشاء بديل ثالث معارض للدولة السورية من ناحية، والدولة الاسلامية من الناحية الاخرى." واوضح ان الدعم "يجب ان يتضمن توفير 500 مليون دولار من مساعدات اضافية طالب بها الرئيس اوباما .." واذاف انه بعد الاعلان عن تشكيل التحالف الدولي الجديد "يتعين على تلك الدول - لا سيما المملكة المتحدة والمانيا وتركيا والسعودية والامارات - اقران التزاماتهم اللفظية بتوفير موارد مالية وسبل دعم تكمل التزامات الولايات المتحدة لمحاربة داعش."

معهد كاتو بدوره طالب بانتهاج "استراتيجية محدودة للاحاق الهزيمة بالدولة الاسلامية .. اذ ليس من الضروري نشر قوات برية اميركية للقيام بمعظم العمليات القتالية." فتتنظيم داعش "يشكل تهديدا ثانويا في اسوأ الاحوال باستطاعة الولايات المتحدة التحكم به .. عبر غارات جوية مركزة ضد عناصره المتطرفة، وتوفير مساعدات عسكرية للقوات الكردية والعراقية لتقوم بمواجهته وتقايس قدراته." وحث الرئيس اوباما على "اعتماد ذلك النمط المحدود من التدخل، ومعارضة الدعوات لنشر القوات العسكرية الاميركية في حملة واهمة اخرى لبناء دولة في الشرق الاوسط."

كثيرا ما اشارت وسائل الاعلام الاميركية المتعددة للقدرات التقنية المتاحة لتنظيم داعش، تناولها معهد ابحات السياسة الخارجية بالقول ان نشر "اشرطة الفيديو البشعة تخللتها رسائل تفيد بان الدولة الاسلامية نشأت لتحكم تلبية لمصالح المسلمين في المناطق تحت سيطرته .. تم اخراجها باسلوب يذكرنا بالافلام الوثائقية التي تنتجها وكالة التنمية الدولية الاميركية وفصائل السلام تمجد فضائل برامج المساعدات الاميركية." ووضح ان التقنية والرسالة المتطورة لتلك الاشرطة "تروى وتترجم للانكليزية، تستهدف المهنيين في الغرب، وتحرض على هجرة المسلمين الى (مناطق) الدولة الاسلامية لتوفير الرعاية لمواطنيها والمساهمة في توسيع رقعة الخلافة الجديدة." وبلغ رقي لغة الخطاب الى مرحلة اعلن فيها عن "انشاء هيئة لحماية المستهلكين .. وتوثيق بالصورة لمشاهد تنفيذ حكم الاعدام بالمخالفين للشريعة الاسلامية، والانجازات الميدانية، وكذلك حضور بعض المجندين الجدد حول العالم."

تركيا

حذر معهد صندوق جيرمان مارشال من تنامي مشاعر العداة للمهاجرين في تركيا، اذ كشف تصاعد اعداد المهاجرين عن "قضية كانت خفية لوقت قريب: تعصب المواطنين الاتراك ضد المهاجرين .. توجه يعززه خطاب السياسيون والاجهزة الاعلامية." وحث صناع القرار على ضرورة التصدي لتلك الظاهرة واتخاذ التدابير الكفيلة باحتوائها.

التحليل:

اوباما يستنجد بداعش لانقاذ رئاسته وحزبه من السقوط وتحضير المسرح للعدوان على سورية

سبر اغوار خطاب الرئيس اوباما

سورية، وان غاب حضورها، هي الهدف غير المعلن في خطاب الرئيس اوباما، وجموع التكفيريين من داعش واخوانها ومشتقاتها هم الادوات التي تتوي "الاستراتيجية" الاميركية استخدامها في اعادة رسم خارطة الوطن العربي والاقليم في طبعته الجديدة. داعش مجرد ورقة او وسيلة من وسائل الضغط تستخدم عند الحاجة، وتُركن جانبا عند انتفائها. السفير والمستشار الاميركي الاسبق لأقليم كردستان العراق، بيتر غالبريث، اوضح ان "الدولة الاسلامية تخدم الجهود (الغربية) في قتال نظامين مدعومين من ايران في العراق وسورية."

في البعد المحلي الداخلي، شكل الخطاب بعد طول انتظار محاولة لمحاكاة الاعتبارات السياسية المحلية، في ظل مناخ الانتخابات القادمة، عبرت عنه احد الصحف الكبرى بعنوانه افتتاحيتها "اوباما يعلن الحرب على نتائج الاستطلاع المتردية." وهو يفسر ايضا مغزى تكرار الرئيس اوباما استخدام مصطلح "استراتيجية" في خطابه لتعديل تصريحه السابق بأن بلاده "لا يتوفر لديها استراتيجية" واضحة المعالم للتصدي لداعش.

دأبت استطلاعات الرأي المحلية، في الآونة الاخيرة، على ابراز تدني نسبة الدعم الشعبي للرئيس اوباما سيما وان "عددا كبيرا منهم لا يأخذ تصريحاته حول السياسة الخارجية على محمل الجد .. واعربت نسبة مذهلة منهم، 55%، عن حرجهم وارتباكهم من عدم توصل الرئيس اوباما لبلورة استراتيجية للتصدي للدولة الاسلامية لحين اللحظة." تأييد الرئيس اوباما لم يتعدى نسبة 32% من الاميركيين، عشية القائه خطابه؛ وهو يدرك بوعي تام تداعيات ذلك على نتائج الحملة الانتخابية المقبلة.

خطاب اوباما تتضمن العديد من المفردات والمفاهيم المبهمة التي ستشوش الوعي العام الاميركي، بتركيزه على المصطلحات المتعددة لتنظيم داعش وهمجيته، بينما في الحقيقة كان يرمي لحشد الدعم الشعبي بكافة اطرافه لشن "جولة" جديدة من الحروب الدموية في المنطقة، يورثها لخليفته المقبل، بالتساوق لما ورثه عن سلفه جورج بوش الابن. الاستاذ الجامعي فيجاي براشاد اوجز الخطاب بأنه "مربك جدا وانطوى على لغة خطابية متقنة تخلو من مفاهيم استراتيجية" يمكن البناء عليها. ومضى موضحا ان "الدولة الاسلامية توفر مبررا بتوقيت مريح لشن غزو دموي آخر يتبعه عدد من سنوات الاحتلال والتدجين والترويض والمقاومة".

حذر الرئيس اوباما الشعب الاميركي والغربي عموما من خطورة عدم التصدي لداعش. "هؤلاء الارهابيون باستطاعتهم تشكيل تهديد ينمو خارج حدود تلك المنطقة - ومن ضمنها الولايات المتحدة .. لن اتردد باتخاذ ما يلزم من اجراءات ضد الدولة الاسلامية في سورية، والعراق ايضا ..". بينما في الواقع ناقضه الرأي بعض اركان ادارته، احدهم جنيفر لاسلي، ضابط استخبارات في وزارة الأمن الداخلي، قائلة ان "الدولة الاسلامية لا تشكل خطورة على الولايات المتحدة في المدى المنظور"، في شهادة ادلت بها امام اللجنة الفرعية للأمن الداخلي في مجلس النواب. المفارقة ان شهادتها وشهادات مماثلة لآخرين جاءت قبل بضع ساعات من القاء اوباما خطابه المذكور.

وعليه، يمكننا القول ان الحرب العدوانية الثالثة على العراق قد اتضحت معالمها، وانعشت مرة اخرى احلام المحافظين الجدد بنسخة اوباما، لتقسيم العراق وفق محاصصة طائفية وعرقية. ما يعزز ذلك هو افصاح اوباما واركان ادارته بأن "الحملة ضد الدولة الاسلامية" ستستغرق بضع سنين، الى ما بعد انتهاء ولايته الرئاسية. جدير بالذكر ان دوائر صنع القرار، لا سيما في المعسكر الصناعي الحربي، روجت لاحتلال العراق منذ زمن باعتباره "منصة انطلاق تكتيكية" لخدمة اهداف اعادة رسم حدود منطقة الشرق الاوسط برمتها. (في هذا الصدد يرجى مراجعة اصدارات مؤسسة راند بتاريخ 6 آب 2002)

تردد وقلق في الغرب

روج الرئيس اوباما وكافة الوسائل الاعلامية الاميركية للتحالف الدولي المزمع انشاؤه بمشاركة دول غربية وعربية واقليمية، تُوجّج بارسال وزير الخارجية جون كيري الى الرياض لجمع شمل الحلفاء المقربين؛ وسارعت كل من المانيا وتركيا في الاعلان عن عدم مشاركتهما جهود الرئيس اوباما، ونفي بريطانيا لتصريح وزير خارجيتها بعد اعلانه عدم مشاركة بلاده؛ بل اوضحت المانيا في خطوة غير مسبوقة انه لم يتم استشارتها بهذا الخصوص. وقال وزير الخارجية الالمانى، فرانك-ولتر شتاينماير، "دعوني اقول بكل وضوح، انه لم يطلب استشارتنا" في المساهمة بالغارات الجوية ضد مواقع داعش "ولن نقوم بذلك ايضا".

"استراتيجية حلف اوباما" اوضحها الرئيس في خطابه بالقول بانها "استراتيجية شاملة ومستمرة لمكافحة الارهاب .. تنطوي اولا على شن حملة ممنهجة من الضربات الجوية .. وسنوسع نطاق جهودنا الى ابعد ما تقتضيه حماية مواطنينا (هناك) المنخرطين في عمليات الاغاثة الانسانية .." في ذات السياق، كرس الرئيس اوباما خطة تقسيم المنطقة في خطابه الاعلامي عبر تكرار مصطلحاته ان المجتمعات العربية ما هي الا ثمة تجمعات "طائفية تشمل السنة والشيعية من المسلمين، والمسيحيين واقلية دينية اخرى .." وتعتمد تغييب الهوية الوطنية والقومية اتساقا مع الاستراتيجية الاميركية بعيدة المدى.

آفاق نجاح "استراتيجية اوباما"

ردود فعل حلفاء اميركا في حلف الناتو اهم مؤشر على حقيقة ما يمور خلف الكواليس وظهر الى العلن، وما اعلان اهم اقطاب حلف الناتو، المانيا وبريطانيا وتركيا، عن عدم مشاركتهم في حملة الغارات الجوية على الاراضي السورية الا دليل على هشاشة "استراتيجية" اوباما في اطلاق "حرب جديدة على الارهاب". استثناء اوباما لروسيا وايران من هذه التشكيلة تدل على حقيقة اهداف اميركا والقلق من نواياها المبيتة بانها تسعى لاسقاط الدولة السورية بتوظيفها داعش اداة وذريعة لتنفيذ غارات جوية على اراضيها. وما تعيين اوباما لجنرال الحرب في افغانستان، جون آلان، للتنسيق بين القوات الخاصة والارهابيين والغارات الجوية الا دليل آخر على ان الاستراتيجية تقتضي استهداف سورية، تحت ذريعة ملاحقة داعش، ولبنان ربما الذي يروج لعمليات اغتيالات ستجري على اراضيه.

في هذا الصدد، يشير بعض المراقبين في العاصمة الأميركية الى توقيت اعلان الاستراتيجية، 11 أيلول/سبتمبر، سيما وان "الصدف" التاريخية نادرا ما اثبتت انها حقيقة صدفة. اوجه التشابه ليست من باب الترف الفكري، سيما وان 11 ايلول 2001 لا تزال تحوم حوله الشبهات بأنه منصة انطلاق اسفرت عن تكريس استفراد اميركا بالعالم ودمرت واحتلت دولا عربية عدة، من العراق الى ليبيا واليمن والصومال، الى الحروب الاخرى المناطة بالكيان الصهيوني، الى الاغتيالات بطائرات الدرونز .. الخ. الحادي عشر من ايلول اضحى اعلانا بالعدوان المفتوح غير مقيد بفترة زمنية.

شبكة فوكس نيوز اليمينية اظهرت ارتياحا مشروطا باستراتيجية اوباما استخدام سلاح الجو الاميركي بكثافة "مدعوم بقوات برية موالية"، بيد انها حذرته من نتائج استطلاعاتها للرأي التي تشير الى اعتقاد الغالبية من الشعب الاميركي، نحو الثلثين، بان نجاح الاستراتيجية ينطوي على نشر قوات اميركية برية لتحقيق هدف الحاق الهزيمة بداعش مع استمرار القصف الجوي المكثف.

تتبعي الإشارة في هذا السياق الى ما اضحى ممارسة ثابتة في الاغتيالات وثقتها وسائل الاعلام الاميركية، اذ يصغي الرئيس اوباما صباح كل يوم ثلاثاء الى تقارير رؤساء اجهزة الاستخبارات يستعرضون معه لائحة "الاغتيالات" المرشحة للمصادقة عليها وتنفيذها على الفور. من غير المستبعد ان تشمل تلك الاجراءات سورية في ظل "الاستراتيجية الجديدة".

يحضرنا في هذه المناسبة ما سبق الإشارة اليه فيما يخص الاسلحة الليبية المتجهة الى سورية. اذ اكدت شبكة (سي ان ان) للتلفزة العام الماضي، نقلا على لسان ممثلين في الكونغرس، ان حادثة البعثة الدبلوماسية الاميركية في بنغازي، 11 ايلول / سبتمبر 2012، التي اسفرت من مصرع السفير الاميركي كريستوفر ستيفنز وعدد من ضباط الاستخبارات الاميركية، كانت "عملية اعداد سرية لنقل صواريخ مضادة للطائرات متطورة من ليبيا، عبر تركيا، وتسليمها للمجموعات السورية المسلحة." وازافت الشبكة ان موظفي السفارة الاميركية، في طرابلس وبنغازي، تعرضوا لسلسلة اختبارات لاجهزة كشف الكذب وتلقوا تعليمات صارمة بعدم البوح بأي من تلك المعلومات.

اوباما يراهن على استغلال الحملة الجديدة لمكافحة ارهاب داعش ليشيع الانطباع باعادة استلام زمام المبادرة السياسية خارجيا وداخليا بعد اتهامات قاسية له بغياب القدرة القيادية الضرورية لحماية المصالح الكونية الاميركية، ويدرك ان الاسابيع القليلة القادمة قد تكون الاكثر حرجة قبل الانتخابات النصفية لانقاذ ما يمكن انقاذه من تركة للتاريخ ومن وزن مهدد لحزبه الديمقراطي.

SUMMARY, ANALYSIS, PUBLICATIONS, AND ARTICLES

Executive Summary

ISIS was clearly the issue of the week at the Washington think tank community looked forward to Obama's Wednesday evening address to the nation on ISIS. Needless to say, much of the commentary was on this subject and what each think tank thought was the most important strategy to pursue.

The Monitor Analysis looks at the speech and notes that it was more political than a cohesive plan to destroy ISIS. Not only did the White House not consult many key allies before the speech, it was vague in specifics. And, the specifics mentioned are unlikely to defeat ISIS by themselves. Consequently, the speech must be seen as an attempt to fight the falling approval numbers of the president in the run up to the mid-term elections in 7 weeks.

Think Tanks Activity Summary

American Enterprise Institute scholars react to Obama's speech – mostly negatively. One scholar, Michael Rubin noted, “Nor does Obama realize that pinprick strikes are never enough. My colleague Katie Zimmerman has talked about the fallacy of the Yemen model. Somalia, too, is no example. That country is stabilizing not because of limited airstrikes, but rather because the African Union occupied the country to fight Al-Shabaab where they ate and slept. It's good to have a strategy. But national security should never be sacrificed upon the altar of diplomatic whimsy, political correctness, or twisted history.”

The Carnegie Endowment notes that defeating ISIS will require cooperation between Saudi Arabia. In noting the difficulties, they say, “However, despite sharing animosity toward the Islamic State with Iran, Saudi Arabia is still concerned about what would happen if the group were eradicated as the situation in Iraq and Syria currently stands. In Syria, the Assad regime is stronger than the moderate opposition, while Iraq still has not formed a national unity government. The eradication of the Islamic State without alternatives to the Assad regime and to a Shia-dominated government in Baghdad would mean the survival of Iran’s two allies in those countries. The continuation of the political status quo in Syria and Iraq would consolidate Iran’s influence in the region.”

The Brookings Institution looks at the inconsistencies of Obama’s policy towards ISIS over the last year. They suggest that Obama be clear on the threat posed by ISIS and realistic about the difficulty of destroying them, and explain how to prevent similar groups from emerging in the aftermath of their defeat.

The CSIS looks at the factors that govern and limit Obama’s actions against ISIS. “They note, “Limited U.S. airpower may be able to contain the Islamic State, but it will take a far larger air campaign to defeat it in Iraq and a campaign that strikes targets in Syria to have any chance of reducing the Islamic State back to a small extremist faction with only limited support. In practice, air power must be extended well beyond targeting forward IS combat elements and strike at the entire leadership, military forces, key cadres, and key strategic political and economic centers of IS operations. This will, however, take time if the United States is to minimize civilian casualties and collateral damage. It will require creating an extremely sophisticated intelligence, targeting, and damage assessment capability. And, it can only succeed even in Iraq if the Iraqi government and Iraqi forces make the previous kinds of reform.”

The Center for American Progress looks at strategies for defeating ISIS. Amongst their many suggestions, they mention, “A successful U.S. strategy will require reinvigorated support for Syrian opposition forces to establish a third way that is opposed to President Bashar al-Assad’s regime on one side and ISIS on the other. This reinvigorated support should include the \$500 million of additional assistance that President Obama proposed in June. With 10 nations agreeing to work together against ISIS during the NATO summit in Wales and the Arab

League announcing a joint commitment to fight ISIS, the foundation for such international cooperation is taking shape. These countries—including the United Kingdom, Germany, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—should match their commitment on paper with financial and material resources to complement the resources committed by the United States in the fight against ISIS.”

The Cato Institute argues for a limited strategy to defeat ISIS. They conclude, “Simply put, a full-scale ground war with U.S. troops doing most of the fighting isn’t necessary. ISIS currently presents, at worst, a minor and manageable threat to U.S. security. The group has many enemies, and they are growing more determined to resist it by the day. If ISIS expands the territory under its control, it will acquire even more enemies. If it attempts to consolidate control in the territory it already has, it will engender resistance and opposition, as al Qaeda did in western Iraq in 2006. There is a military mission available—targeted air strikes against ISIS extremists, and military assistance to Kurdish and Iraqi forces taking the fight to them on the ground—that can degrade ISIS’s capabilities, and complicate its now very limited ability to attack the United States. The president should focus upon that narrow mission, and resist the calls to launch the U.S. military on yet another quixotic nation-building crusade in the Middle East.”

The Foreign Policy Research Institute looks at ISIS’s sophisticated electronic media outreach. They note, “gruesome videos are interspersed with those explaining that IS is governing for the benefit of Muslims in the areas that it controls. Scenes of food distribution, medical care, giving of alms, and devout mass prayer are common, and produced in a style reminiscent of USAID and Peace Corps documentaries extolling the virtues of United States foreign aid programs. These videos, narrated and subtitled in English, are aimed at Western professionals, and explain that it is now a duty of Muslims to emigrate to the IS to care for its people and to help build and expand the new Caliphate, which the leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, proclaimed on June 29, 2014. A sister publication, “IS Report” features English language articles about how the IS has established an office of Consumer Protection, and how it operates seminars to train imams in the Wahabi doctrines of Shaikh Ali Al-Khudair, a Saudi cleric famous for his fatwa in 2001 calling on his followers to rejoice in the 9/11 attacks. IS Report also features

photos of executions for violation of Islamic law, battlefield victories, and of new recruits from around the world.”

The German Marshall Fund talks about the anti-immigrant attitude in Turkey. As immigrants in Turkey became more visible, so did a previously hidden problem: the intolerance of Turkish citizens toward immigrants. Several surveys reveal that Turkish citizens have a less than welcoming attitude regarding immigrants, and this attitude is often fanned by politicians and the media. This policy brief explains the reasons for this and recommends actions to reverse this trend.

ANALYSIS

Obama Attempts to Manage ISIS Crisis

Obama’s speech addressing ISIS on Wednesday wasn’t an attempt to defeat ISIS and its threat to the Middle East as much as it was political and an attempt to manage domestic political considerations. In fact, one column on the speech was titled, “Obama Declares War on His Bad Poll Numbers.”

After first calling ISIS a junior varsity team and then blithely telling reporters that he had no strategy to handle ISIS, Obama has seen his ratings plummet. A Fox News poll released the day after the speech showed that voters don’t think Obama can handle foreign policy. Only 34 percent of those surveyed approve of Obama’s handling of foreign policy and 59 percent think the U.S. is less respected today than when Obama took office. Among independents, key voting groups that will swing this year’s midterm election, a full 67 percent feel the U.S. is less respected. Even 35 percent of Democrats now agree the U.S. has lost respect, compared with just 20 percent who think the U.S. is more respected.

Even worse for Obama, an increasing number of voters no longer take him seriously on foreign policy. An astonishing 55 percent of voters say they feel embarrassed that Obama hasn’t articulated a strategy to combat ISIS until now. A Gallup poll also released on Thursday showed that only 32 percent of Americans

think that Obama and the Democrats can protect America from terrorist and military threats. 55 percent think the Republicans can do a better job.

These aren't numbers that Obama wants to see just weeks before the mid term elections that could give control of the Senate to the Republicans.

It was this political reality that forced Obama to address ISIS rather than his desire to truly defeat it. In fact, the need for political damage control was most obvious as Obama repeatedly used the word, "strategy" in his speech in order to follow up his statement two weeks ago that, "We don't have a strategy yet" to confront ISIS in Syria.

The domestic aspect of the speech was quickly highlighted in the hours following the speech, when Britain, Germany, and Turkey indicated that they wouldn't participate. In fact, Germany indicated it wasn't even consulted. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier told a news conference in Berlin Thursday that Germany has not been asked to take part in the air strikes and would not be participating. "To be quite clear, we have not been asked to do so and neither will we do so," Steinmeier said.

If the speech had been a well thought out attempt to rally international support to stop ISIS, these allies would have been consulted beforehand and been "onboard" before the speech was made. By not consulting them, the White House clearly showed that the speech was mainly for domestic political consumption.

The speech itself was broad in tone and lacking in details. Obama said ISIS poses a threat to Iraq, Syria and the broader Middle East – including American citizens, personnel and facilities. "If left unchecked, these terrorists could pose a growing threat beyond that region, including to the United States," he said. "While we have not yet detected specific plotting against our homeland, ISIL leaders have threatened America and our allies. Our intelligence community believes that thousands of foreigners – including Europeans and some Americans – have joined them in Syria and Iraq. Trained and battle-hardened, these fighters could try to return to their home countries and carry out deadly attacks.

“I know many Americans are concerned about these threats. Tonight, I want you to know that the United States of America is meeting them with strength and resolve.”

The president announced “a comprehensive and sustained counter-terrorism strategy” to “degrade, and ultimately destroy,” ISIS. “First, we will conduct a systematic campaign of airstrikes against these terrorists,” he said. “Working with the Iraqi government, we will expand our efforts beyond protecting our own people and humanitarian missions, so that we’re hitting ISIL targets as Iraqi forces go on offense... Second, we will increase our support to forces fighting these terrorists on the ground.”

Obama also pledged the U.S. would continue to draw on counterterrorism capabilities to prevent ISIS attacks by cutting off its funding, improving intelligence, strengthening U.S. defenses and stemming the flow of foreign fighters into and out of the Middle East. “And in two weeks, I will chair a meeting of the U.N. Security Council to further mobilize the international community around this effort,” he added.

Lastly, Obama said the U.S. would provide humanitarian aid to civilians, including Sunni and Shiite Muslims, Christians and other religious minorities who have been driven from their homes.

Will the Obama Strategy Work?

One way to judge the potential for success is to look at the reaction by America’s NATO allies. That alone should cause worry as Britain, Germany, and Turkey have already said they will not participate in the bombing of Syria. This indicates that contrary to the implications in the speech about a broad coalition, many nations are leery about the Obama strategy.

One problem was the lack of details on defeating ISIS and the limited effort being made by the US. Obama did not announce any new actions, beyond sending fewer than 500 military members to Iraq, and repeated request for Congress to fund training of Syrian opposition forces. He said “I will not hesitate to take action against ISIL in Syria,” but cautioned that “it will take time to eradicate a cancer like ISIL.”

Obama insisted that this limited involvement in the region would work and gave the examples of Somalia and Yemen as proof that this strategy would bear fruit. The problem is that these two countries are not the best examples of America's victory over terrorism.

Admittedly, the US has had some successes in Yemen and Somalia while limiting the monetary cost and not exposing Americans to combat situations. However, these are not overwhelming successes that imply a future victory against ISIS.

America has successfully used drones to kill many terrorists in Yemen and Somalia, but hasn't destroyed or even significantly degraded terrorist capabilities of the key groups in either country. In addition, both countries are almost as unstable as they were five years ago. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) remains a terrorist threat. Its leader, Nasser al Wahayshi, became al Qaeda's general manager in August 2013, in fact. Its threats caused the closure of over 20 U.S. diplomatic posts across the Middle East and North Africa at that time. Its bomb maker, Ibrahim al Asiri, was behind a threat to U.S. airlines just over six months ago. AQAP is still trying to kill Americans and continues to probe U.S. security for a chance to do so.

It's hard to call that success.

In the meantime, American drone attacks that have killed civilians have cost the US dearly in the region.

Another problem with the Obama strategy is the overreliance on air power and the unwillingness to commit forces to the ground war.

It has been a military axiom since World War Two that despite modern technology like missiles, aircraft, and precision targeting, it is still the soldier who must occupy and hold the ground. By relying on surgical air strikes, Obama is forced to rely upon frequently untrained and potentially unreliable forces to occupy the ground in Iraq and Syria. Admittedly, nearly 500 American Special forces soldiers will go into the area to train Kurds and other militia members, but those trainees will not be ready for combat operations for many months.

The other problem with the military aspect of the new Obama strategy is that he insists on treating ISIS like a terrorist cell instead of a quasi-nation. ISIS controls

and governs enormous territory in Iraq and Syria. It has a conventional army that though lightly armed compared to traditional Western armies, is supported by armored vehicles and has the potential to field tanks and even some military aircraft. It has combat experience – ranging from guerrilla warfare to conventional set piece tactics. It has also fought and defeated several regular military units from Iraq, Syria, and Kurdistan.

Not only is ISIS not a terrorist organization, its goals are more akin to those of a nation state than a group of terrorists. ISIS has stated that it wants to conquer the territory of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian Territories. This means it needs to be attacked like a country rather than a terrorist cell.

This is something that the American people understand. According to the Fox News poll, Obama's strategy to treat ISIS like a large terrorist organization and to combat the group using air power and surrogate forces on the ground generates some skepticism. "By nearly two-to-one, voters think it will take boots on the ground to defeat ISIS (51 percent) rather than airstrikes alone," reports Fox News pollster Dana Blanton.

This brings us back to the original purpose of the speech – to stop Obama's plummeting popularity.

In order for the speech to reverse Obama's foreign policy weaknesses, he must be perceived as being serious and taking a course that will solve the problem. However, American voters clearly think that defeating ISIS will require more action by the US than Obama is willing to take. By that standard alone, the speech will be considered a failure.

Obama is clearly out of his depth when dealing with ISIS. Although warned about its threat over a year ago, he ignored the problem and downplayed it when questioned about it. He has consistently refused to take the advice of experts on dealing with the radical Islamic threat posed by the unrest in Syria and Iraq. His actions up to this point have been purely for domestic political consumption rather than national or international security concerns.

This speech is merely the latest attempt to politically neutralize an international threat that threatens to shift the US Senate into Republican hands.

Unless ISIS starts to collapse from internal forces, the course set out by Obama this week will not guarantee their defeat. In the end, Obama's war on ISIS and his bad poll numbers will both be failures.

PUBLICATIONS

Nation Building Isn't Needed to Fight ISIS

By Christopher A. Preble

Cato Institute

September 10, 2014

In his speech to the American people tonight, President Obama aims to build support for a protracted military campaign against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). It doesn't have to be a hard sell. A majority of Americans support a military response—though not U.S. troops on the ground. Very few are content with allowing ISIS to spread its influence with impunity, especially after the brutal killing of the American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff. The group has effectively declared itself an enemy of the United States, and there is growing support for action against the group before it even attempts an attack on the U.S. homeland (something that it appears only to be aspiring to, as opposed to actively planning for).

[Read more](#)

Key Factors Shaping the President's Islamic State Speech

By Anthony H. Cordesman

Center for Strategic and International Studies

September 9, 2014

Commentary

There are several critical aspects of the U.S. strategy in Iraq that the President may not be able to address in full. They will, however, be critical to what the United States can and cannot do in the future. The United States Already Has a Strategy.

The real world context is important. The President is now trapped to some extent by his previous misstatement about the United States not having a strategy. Anyone who looks seriously at the timeline of U.S. action will see he is now formally announcing a strategy that the United States not only had already developed in July, but partly begun to implement after the Islamic State (ISIS/ISIL) first made major gains back in December 2013. At the same time, there are many good reasons the President needs to be cautious about what he says and not speak too openly about the details.

[Read more](#)

Obama's ISIS speech: AEI scholars react

American Enterprise Institute

September 11, 2014

Let's get one thing clear: it's not the job of the president of the United States to determine what Islam is or is not, what Christianity is or is not, and what Judaism is or is not. Religion is what its practitioners believe it to be. That President Obama begins with a politically correct paean and only addresses the Islamic State's ideology as a passing thought later on undercuts the seriousness of a very good speech, one that calls for the Islamic State's defeat without any artificial timeline and recognizes that a return to Bashar Assad's rule is no option. The problem lies with Obama's inability to separate theory from reality. Alliances may sound good on paper, but they can also be an Achilles' heel: Turkey has become Pakistan on the Med, saying one thing to our diplomats while coddling the adversaries we fight behind our backs. Most jihadis transit Turkey and cross the Turkish border for the cost of a \$40 bribe. Trust Saudi Arabia with running counter radicalization programs? That's like having Bernie Madoff teach accounting.

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Defeating the Islamic State Requires a Saudi-Iranian Compromise

By Lina Khatib

Carnegie Endowment

September 3, 2014

Airstrikes are intensifying on areas of Iraq held by the militant Islamic State, and the group has beheaded a second American hostage. But clear indications of a strategy to tackle the escalating Islamic State problem are hard to find. Indeed, in a statement in late August, U.S. President Barack Obama affirmed that the United States did not yet have a strategy to combat this militant threat. The president did, however, single out further cooperation with “Sunni partners” against the Islamic State. Such regional partnerships are necessary, but putting such an emphasis on Sunni players misses a crucial component without which no strategy against the Islamic State will succeed: finding a way to appease the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

[Read more](#)

The Islamic State’s Electronic Outreach

By Lawrence Husick

Foreign Policy Research Institute

September 2014

Over the past several months the world has witnessed a new media creation of jihadis - al Hayat (“life”) Media Center (not to be confused with the liberal pan-Arab newspaper of the same name) - and has seen a new level of sophistication in messaging and brutality in content, and of effectiveness in communication. In print through the glossy online magazine “Dabiq” and on the Internet in video bearing the al Hayat brand, the victories of the new mujahideen (holy fighters) of the “Islamic State” and their efforts to “purify” dar al Islam (the lands of Islam) are glorified and chronicled. These media efforts have effectively silenced most other jihadi channels, and have drowned out all efforts of the West to counter this Internet onslaught.

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Unwanted, Unwelcome: Anti-Immigration Attitudes in Turkey

By Emre Erdogan

German Marshall Fund

September 10, 2014

Until the spread of the Arab Spring and the conflict in Syria, Turkey was known as a “sending” country in terms of international migration. When it was founded in 1924, around 60 percent of the citizens of the young Turkish republic were either first or second-generation immigrants from the former Ottoman realms. More recently, according to available statistics, only 2 percent of Turkey’s population immediately before the Arab Spring consisted of immigrants and the majority of those were from ex-Ottoman territories, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and Bulgaria. Immigrants became visible in Turkey when the direction of migration flow changed.

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Obama Changed His Mind about Syria, Now He Needs to Explain Why

By William McCants

Brookings Institution

September 10, 2014

A year ago today, President Obama addressed the American public. In his speech, the president explained why the United States should attack Syria to punish its ruler for ignoring Obama’s warning not to use chemical weapons. But a war-weary American public balked and the president ultimately decided against military action. Today, the president is again going to argue for military action inside Syria and this time the American public supports him. But instead of initiating attacks on a sovereign state, we contemplate extending a weeks-old war against an insurgent pretender to statehood. The Islamic State has been around for a while and, despite sharing the global jihadi ideology that calls for the destruction of the United States, the president and the American public were not too worried about it previously. What changed the president’s calculations and those of the public are the Islamic State’s actions this summer. The group took over large swathes of territory in Iraq, prompting the president to launch airstrikes to halt their advance on the capital of

our allies in Baghdad. When the group responded by beheading American journalists, American support for military action against them soared.

[Read more](#)

Defeating ISIS: An Integrated Strategy to Advance Middle East Stability

By Brian Katulis, Hardin Lang, and Vikram Singh

Center for American Progress

September 10, 2014

U.S. airstrikes in Iraq against the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, or ISIS, have been an important step to contain the rise of the extremist group, respond to immediate threats to U.S. citizens in Iraq, and prevent possible acts of genocide. These airstrikes enabled Iraqis to resist ISIS and bought time for the Iraqi government to begin building a more inclusive administration under a new prime minister, Haider al-Abadi.* But as the Center for American Progress noted in a June report, U.S. military action needs to be just one part of a long-term multinational political and security strategy in the region. The new strategy should aim to contain and degrade ISIS and enable regional partners to continue to build the tools needed to defeat ISIS's movement with international support. This report outlines actions to advance three core strategic goals:

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