

Obama's Strategy in Counter-terrorism in the Arab Countries "with a Special Reference to Iraq"

استراتيجية اوباما في مكافحة الارهاب

في الدول العربية "مع اشارة خاصة للعراق"

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Synopsis

The US strategy toward the Middle East to counter-terrorism is determined by two methods. The initial method is making the right decision after exhausting all options and alternatives (diplomatic and then military instruments). Second, the US depends on the role of the security institutions and intelligence. Usually, it is not a direct military role, but the US has previously deployed American troops to Libya. These institutions are closely linked with the decision-makers who aim to enhance the US interests regardless of the interests of countries of the region. Regarding Iraq,

Washington will have to rearrange the security situation. It has used ISIS as a pretext to push the Iraqi government to redeploy the US troops on Iraqi territory, especially after Obama's claim to Congress to authorize a war against the terrorist organization for a period of 3 years. Indeed, the United States sent three thousand of its military troops to Iraq as military advisors. In addition to the fragility of the situation in Iraq the US government aims to pressure some of the Gulf Cooperation Council states especially after the increasing the US - Iranian coordination.

ملخص البحث

تناول البحث موضوع الاستراتيجية الأمريكية لمكافحة الإرهاب في الدول العربية على وجه الخصوص مواجهة ما يسمى بتنظيم الدولة الاسلامية في العراق وما لهذه المواضيع من ارتباطات مع الرئاسات الاميركية التي تختلف كل ادارة عن سابقتها في كيفية التعامل مع القضايا الدولية. وتعتبر فترة الرئاسة الأمريكية جورج دبليو بوش (٢٠٠١ - ٢٠٠٩) نقطة تحول هامة في التاريخ الأمريكي والعالمي على حد سواء، وخاصة في الفترة الأخيرة التي تلت أحداث ١١ سبتمبر حيث كانت هذه الفترة بداية حقيقية للحرب على الإرهاب بدءاً من أفغانستان ضد تنظيم القاعدة وتحرير العراق من نظام صدام حسين. وعلى هذا الأساس، تركت إدارة جورج دبليو بوش تركة ثقيلة من الحروب كان لها تأثيراً بالغاً على إدارة أوباما في وقت لاحق. لهذا واجهت ادارة اوباما العديد من القضايا أو كما وصفه المحللون بأنه "الإرث الثقيل" خاصة في المنطقة العربية على وجه التحديد العراق بالإضافة الى التركيز الدقيق من الآراء على سياسة أوباما تجاه تعامله مع القضايا العربية ، لذلك البعض من الآراء تصف اوباما بأنه رجل القوة الناعمة أو الذكية، بينما يصفه البعض الآخر بأنه رجل من الكلمات لا الأفعال. ومع ذلك، فإن الآراء السائدة تركز على حقيقة أن إدارة أوباما حولت الولايات المتحدة إلى دولة ليس لديها استراتيجية حقيقية التي يمكن أن تتلاعب بالقضايا الدولية، وخاصة القضايا الهامة في الشرق الأوسط مثل التغييرات في سوريا، العراق، وليبيا. ومن هنا، تهتم هذه الورقة بمعالجة استراتيجية أوباما التي تعنى بالإرهاب في المنطقة العربية لاسيما العراق كمتغير مهم في المنطقة العربية والشرق الأوسط. ومن ثم، فإن البحث يحاول اختبار الفرضية التي ترى ان استخدام الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية لما يسمى القوة الذكية (الذي تجمع الصلابة والناعمة معاً) قد خلقت قاعدة متينة وقوية لدى صناعات القرار الاميركان بصورة عامة والاستراتيجية الأميركية خاصة، بحيث اوجدت الحكومة الاميركية عن طريق تطبيق القوة الذكية كيفية التعامل مع أحداث الربيع العربي والعراق تحديداً سياسياً- دبلوماسياً وعسكرياً- امنياً.

Introduction

Recently, many researches and reports have been addressed the US strategy to counter-terrorism in the Arab countries, especially ISIS in Iraq and the Levant. The American presidential term of George W. Bush (2001–2009) is considered an important turning point in American and world history alike, especially the recent period that followed the events of September 11. This period was the real beginning of the war on terrorism starting from Afghanistan against Al-Qaeda to the liberation of Iraq from Saddam Hussein's regime. On this basis, the administration of George W. Bush left a heavy legacy of wars and that confrontations have been of impact on Obama's administration subsequently¹.

Obama, who is in a new term as president is under scrutiny of world attention, especially with regard to many issues or as described by analysts as the "heavy legacy" especially in the Arab region more specifically Iraq. For this, numerous opinions focus on Obama's policy toward his dealing with the Arab issues; some of arguments describe him as a man of soft power or smart power and others describe as a man of words not deeds².

However, the views prevailing nowadays concentrate on the fact that the Obama administration transformed the United States to a state that does not have a real strategy and that can manipulate international issues, especially the important issues of the Middle East such as the changes in Syria, Iraq, and Libya. Hence, this paper is interested in addressing the Obama strategy that counters terrorism in the Arab region focusing on Iraq as an important variable in the Arab region and the Middle East.

The research has essayed to prove hypothesis which is the following and using of USA for the so-called the smart power (which combines with solid and soft power) has created a sturdy base in the American strategy. That has

made the American decision-maker knows how dealing with the events of the Arab Spring, as well as offering logistics and military upholding of Iraqi government in order to confront ISIS.

However, research problematic has tested to answer the following questions:

1. What has ever the strategy utilized by the United States in the events of the Arab Spring? Has smart power or military instrument used?
2. What are the genuine reasons of the upgrowth of the so-called Islamic state in Iraq and Levant? How did the US strategy deal with it? What are the significant findings of the US strategy in Iraq?

Consequently, research has divided into main four sections, as follows:

1. Obama's strategy toward the Arab Spring events.
2. The reasons of the terrorist group's emergence in Iraq.
3. The US strategy to counter-terrorism in Iraq.
4. The results of the US war on ISIS in Iraq.

Section I: Obama's strategy toward the Arab Spring events

The Obama strategy and its application (hard and soft) began in Tunisia and Egypt; in these two countries it started with mobilizing masses before and after the uprising. It is an effective strategy that changed the shape of the ruling regime. These surprises changes are due to the technological means and international information network used, for they played a main role in mobilizing and rallying the masses against regimes as a Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Social networking sites and etc³. Those sites are closely related to the US administration whether directly or

indirectly especially through collecting information on people who suffer from dictatorship and tyranny⁴.

Using the technological tool to change regimes in the Arab countries such as Tunisia and Egypt was consistent with the proposals of Joseph Nye, who said that it is necessary and indispensable to use diplomatic and smart means instead of the military force in the new US strategy, especially in the Middle East⁵. On other hand, Joseph Nye mentioned that the Smart Power is in essence the ability of a particular nation to influence other nations, in the sense, states that suffer injustice and tyranny should follow the example of countries that have freedom and democracy and human rights. On this basis, the United States applied the thesis of Joseph Nye quite accurately in Egypt and Tunisia.

Recently, what happened in the Arab region, including the so-called Arab Spring has led to many international changes that had a huge echo at all levels. These transformations have confounded the major powers as the United States on the one hand and the regimes in the Arab region in its various forms on the other hand⁶. Indeed, the United States has adopted a new strategy that is different from the previous strategies applied in the past. This strategy, the Smart Power, merges between hard power and soft power because the American decision-maker concluded that the use of the military tools will cost the United States more politically, economically and perhaps the loss of public opinion after the recent failures in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Since 2001 the US government considered Libya a "rogue state" despite recognition that has stopped sponsoring terrorism⁷. Indeed, the application of the smart power began in Libya, where the United States was able to manage the uprising, quite accurately, because it had the tools of the revolution as the media and the international information networks and all the associated means of social

communication. Changes in Libya could be read through the tools of the Smart Power and its effective role in determining the path of change, the United States has used all the tools of the power soft such as Internet and the Arab media as well logistic support for the anti-troops and battalions Muammar Gaddafi⁸.

The United States and its allies stopped import the Libyan oil and froze the assets of the royal family. Besides, it started supporting financially the armed groups that opposed the regime. The military intervention was the decision of the Security Council to impose a no-fly zone in Libya to protect civilians from the Gaddafi regime brigades. Consequently, the indirect US intervention in Libya proved the success of the results and outputs of the strategic Smart Power, where it ended the rule that lasted for more than 44 years, starting a new transitional stage away from tyranny⁹.

In Syria, the United States is still extremely perplexed by the issue of counter-terrorism; who to support the Assad regime which is considered a dictator system or the opposition which if seizes the rule, will be a real threat to the United States for it is adapting the radical Islam based on beheading, kidnaping and booby-trapping¹⁰. As a result of this American neutrality, Syria has become a battleground between fundamentalist groups as the Islamic State, al-Nusra front and the free Syrian Army on one side and the Syrian army and Hezbollah on the other side.

Based on this, the United States is working to uproot its opponents in a smart way. It worked and is still working to push Iran and Hezbollah in the Syrian arena to fight for a long battle-term in order to undermine and weaken their political and military roles resulting into the destruction of the Iranian and Hezbollah roles in Syria and in the Middle East, because they are the main forces there. In addition, the United States has used the same method to eliminate the militant terrorist groups without military intervention.

For this, the direct Iranian intervention in the Syrian crisis has had a negative impact on the Iranian economy, which lost more than ten billion dollars since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis. Iran also lost nearly 75% of the value of its currency, as it has been suffering the international economic blockade¹¹.

This battle also introduced Hezbollah to gigantic dilemma, which is the toughest, from its war with Israel in particular. Hezbollah lost and is still losing more of the fighters and material resources; this might affect its role in the near future in Middle East.

The big gain from the Syrian crisis is won by Israel. New enemies have appeared. Israel will gain its relative security in connection with the Palestinian cause.

Section II: The reasons of the terrorist groups emergence in Iraq

The US government is really interested in Iraq, especially after growing risks of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) on Mesopotamia and the Middle East as a whole. If we look at the American strategy in Iraq, particularly with regard to the tactic of the war on terrorism, we find that the American strategy is following Joseph Nye and Richard Armitage proposals of the Smart Power and it is applying them virtually via Democrats in the Obama administration.

Before dealing with the American Strategy to counter terrorism, genuine reasons behind the aggravation of terrorism in Iraq must be highlighted the. Indeed, one of the main problems that led to the worsening security situation in Iraq which may have led to this anarchy the disbandment the pervious Iraqi army and the security forces after the liberation of Iraq in 2003. The majority of these forces were unemployed this resulted into the fact that they were ready to join the armed groups consisting at various factions. Also

most of these organizations are run by the Baath Party leaders.

The arrests by the security services, in accordance with Article (4) terrorism, were also one of the most important reasons for the expansion of thoughts of the Islamic state. Most of the arrests were initiated due to the confident informant, a case which caused problems for Sunni tribes specifically. Subsequently people who are detained for many years will be ready to accept any thoughts that support and defend them whatsoever those ideas are. It could be argued that the prisons and centers of detention were as the first seeds of the emergence of some groups of the Islamic State¹².

In addition, it should be mentioned here that a lot of inhumane and sectarian practices of the employees in these prisons led to the enhancement and expansion of these terrorist thought.

The decision to disband the Awakening in the Sunni regions resulted into the support of some these personnel of the Islamic State. This rendered the Iraqi army weak in the face of the terrorist groups especially in the western regions because of the important plans and strategies of the Iraqi army leak by dissidents from the Awakening¹³.

Among the issues that caused failure and weakness in the Iraqi security forces facing the security challenges is the fact that the Ministries of Interior and Defense, National Security, and Intelligence were run by proxy. The other point is that the security file and many of the other security affairs such as Swat and counter-terrorism forces are directly related to one person who is the former Prime Minister Al-Maliki who was the main leader of these establishments¹⁴.

The Maliki war in Fallujah was a kind of political and military suicide because we are in today's world cannot solve all the problems by force and violence, it is well-known that violence produces violence. On the other hand, in June

2014 the US government warned the Iraqi central government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan government that more than two hundred vehicles were coming from Syria to Iraq specifically to Mosul, but the central government did not respond with the deployment of troops on the border with Syria¹⁵.

The Maliki wrong policies and the impacts of the Syrian crisis led to the collapse of the Iraqi state-level map, the Islamic state seized the Mosul city, Salahuddin, Diyala, Anbar and areas north of Babylon.

After the domination of the Islamic state in the Sunni-majority areas it began to show violence against other sects and creeds such as Shiites, Christians, Yazidis and Sabean. For this reason and for reasons related to the risks of access of the Islamic state to Baghdad and the rest of provinces Ayatollah Sistani issued the jihad fatwa (holy war decree) against ISIS¹⁶. That fatwa, which was a Knockout to the Islamic State of Iraq according to ISIS leaders.

The United States did not see the backlash to its role in Iraq but until the ISIS fighters threatened the provinces of Kurdistan. It decreased the military airstrikes against Islamic state fighters who tried to take over the borders of Arbil city¹⁷.

The central government faced many security crises as a result of the defeat of the Iraqi army in Mosul, as well as Al-Maliki usurping of power and his insistence on the unconstitutionality of Haider Al-Abadi nomination to become prime minister, In addition, the failure of the Peshmerga forces to repel the attacks of the Islamic State on Kurdistan province through its control of the military equipment and ammunitions that belong to three fighting armies. These vicissitudes render the Islamic state a great threat to regional and international security¹⁸.

Section III: The US strategy to counter-terrorism in Iraq

Accordingly, the United States began to feel the real danger of ISIS, which began threatening its interests not only in Iraq but in Middle East as whole especially when it has two embassies in Iraq, one of them is in Baghdad and the other is in Arbil. The American actions in Iraq can be summed as follows:

1. President Obama has announced that the intervention in Kurdistan will be limited via airstrikes to protect American citizens. After reassurance from the moderate Al-Abadi policy that won the international and regional support the operations have expanded to include Mosul, Tikrit and Anbar¹⁹.
2. President Obama has confirmed that the US airstrikes will not exceed Kurdistan's border and here he indicated that the airstrikes will include all the Sunni areas controlled by ISIS when especially the Sunni component has a genuine representation in the formation of the Iraqi central government; this has been done already in the Al-Abadi government who gave the Sunni component all the political and economic entitlements²⁰.
3. Through conversation Obama urged Al-Abadi that the American government will support the Iraqi army in case the formation of new government according to Kurdish model which succeeded in dealing with minorities²¹.
4. In fact, President Obama sent a kind of the political warning to Iraqi politicians that they must unite because the wolf's at the door, he means ISIS. This step encouraged all politicians to accept the formation of the new government²².

Arguably, based on the point above, President Obama's strategy can be analyzed. The wolf is the stick that Obama used to warn everyone who will lead the new government in Iraq that he is committed to line up with the aspirations of the United States to achieve stability and satisfaction for all the components of the Iraqi people.

The carrot is the second part of the Obama strategy. It can be seen in the logistics and military support for the Iraqi army and government through airstrikes which may stop the advance of the Islamic state. Obama also has pledged that his country is able to develop a long-term plan to combat terrorism starting from Syria and Iraq.

Any political analyst has the right to explain what it means by the wolf's at the door. There are two views in this respect; the first opinion explains that the United States controls ISIS and it uses it whenever it wants. This point of view is unrealistic because the Islamic state in Iraq and Levant is targeting everyone without exception based on who is not with me is against me. The recent targeting was killing the American journalist at the end August 2014, and threatening to kill another, if the US government did not stop to support of Shiite and Kurds politically and militarily.

The second view is the most realistic one. President Obama from of the first day his term, pledged to withdraw the US troops from Iraq and Afghanistan because of the military failures which had a great impact on the American hegemony on the global levels. As a result of those failures the US administration pledged the military non-intervention in

any tension or conflict, particularly in the Middle East²³.

The Obama administration has found another method to deal with the international issues by using the Smart Power through of the international and regional allies in the region and this was evident in the US strategic performance especially in Obama's era since 2008.

The Obama's new strategy to fight terrorism is characterized by using a new method in the new international issues that cause less the human and material losses by harnessing its allies in region. Basically, the war in Iraq costed the United States more than five thousand Americans, unlike the war on terror in both Iraq and Syria which is not costing Washington much²⁴.

Hence, this strategic performance permitted the international and regional opponents, such as Russia, China and Iran to play a real strategic role in the region, and at the same time it is enhancing of the strength of the Islamic state to re-mobilize its fighters then expand in Syria and Iraq.

After a review of the important American aspirations to fight terrorism, it is clear that the Iraqi government, if it does not respond to the recommendations of the United States to counter terrorism, it will face difficulty defeating ISIS shortly taking into consideration that the doctrine of ISIS depends on martyrdom or victory. Besides, ISIS has the human, financial and military resources, that have helped it controlling on the Sunni regions and break into prisons to enlist large numbers to the Islamic State whose number is estimated at more than 3,000 detainees and prisoners hence enhancing their military strength.

Also the withdrawal of the Iraqi forces from border with Syria and Jordan facilitated the entry foreign fighters into Iraq. The military capabilities were enhanced through the control of ISIS on military equipment that belongs to three military divisions which were represented by the advanced American weapons estimated at a value of more than billion dollars. The financial abilities were also enforced through grip of all banks in areas that fell in their hands, as well as oil export, which was estimated at 3 million dollars per day.

Section IV: The results of the US war on ISIS in Iraq

The United States and its international coalition in its war against ISIS in Iraq revealed an important fact that is the statements and actions of the American officials are based on one basis, for they show just numbers only. The following supports the pervious argument:

1. The number of air operations against ISIS, according to the Pentagon reports estimated at 819. These were from September 7th 2014 until February, 2015²⁵.
2. The US government was inaccurate with regard to the period to eliminate entity of ISIS. The US American has given various estimates; sometimes, it is one year, and at other times it is five years, twenty years²⁶.
3. The US statistics regarding the number of the ISIS fighters are also indefinite. The US government has estimated the number of fighters to range from 30,000 to 70,000 fighters and they are distributed between Iraq and Syria²⁷.

Suggestions and Conclusion

The US strategy including its decision-makerstoward the Middle East to counter-terrorism is determined by two methods. The initial method is making the right decision after exhausting all options and alternatives (diplomatic and then military instruments). Second, the US depends on the role of the security institutions and intelligence in order to Counter-terrorism in the Arab Countries. Indeed, the US smart power in countering terrorism in the region, particularly in Iraq and Syria proposes a set of solutions in the future as follows:

1. Re-forming the army and security services under the US supervision through the establishment of a national defense body including all Iraqis from different sects, and the abolition of militias in addition to the withdrawal of weapons from any front whether Shiite or Sunni; the Iraqi government should be the only guarantor for all the Iraqi people.
2. The formation of local guards in Sunni areas as the Peshmergato take the lead to guarantee security in their areas besides the US air cover and logistic and military support.
3. The political operation in Iraq must be consistent with the US aspirations, especially regarding the internal and foreign policy, otherwise the situation will remain as it is or itworsen.
4. The Iraqi government must issue amnesty for those who are not convicted of killing the Iraqi people on sectarian basis or other reasons. Also it must differentiate between the(frame-up) and the guilty person because this may lead to reprisal with the exception of the Islamic State fighters who had and still are the only enemy for Iraqis.
5. the Iraqi government should find a real method to persuade the Sunni Arabs that they are embedded in

the new government as well as giving them their constitutional rights in the ministries and institutions of state because the elimination of the Islamic state depends on participation of the Sunni component in the political process. For instance the establishment of the Awakening in Al-Maliki's era was the best proof of this, where it has had a clear role to fight Al-Qaeda.

6. Re-rehabilitating the Iraqi army through training it by American experts. In addition, Washington should supply the government Al-Abadi with F16 and Apache aircrafts to counter terrorism.
7. Resolving of disputes with Kurdistan Regional Government, especially regarding the problem of Kirkuk and the export of oil.

Footnotes

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