

“Islamic State’s” Destruction: Thanks to Russia or the USA?

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Research Article

ABSTRACT

Terrorism is now the most widespread, but least understated phenomenon. The primary goal of any independent state is to ensure the safety. But in recent decades the problem of terrorism has worsened in many parts of the world. From 2013-2014 to the year 2017, the international terrorist organization "Islamic State" was a serious threat not only for any particular country, but for the whole world. Consequently, the world's most powerful super states, the USA and Russia started to fight against the "Islamic State", release the occupied territories and finally defeat the terrorist organization. As a result of a long and brutal struggle, the goal has been achieved, Daesh i.e., Islamic State was defeated in which Russia and the United States played a major role. Despite the fact that each country thinks that it is their own victory and success in such a difficult struggle, one thing is certain that only one country could not achieve success independently, this merit belongs to both of the super states - Russia and the USA.

Keywords: Terrorism, Safety, Terrorist organization, Islamic state, Russia, US

INTRODUCTION

Actuality of the Topic

Today, terrorism is a widespread phenomenon. During the last decades, the problem of terrorism has become acute in many parts of the world. It especially spread out in developing countries. The problem of terrorism in modern international relations is so newsworthy that it cannot be ignored. While speaking of terrorism, it is impossible not to mention the "Islamic state" that has caused a serious threat to the world. In October 2006, the "Islamic State of Iraq" was created, Al-Baghdad became one of the leaders, and since 2010 he was the only leader of the "state" ^[1]. The group then changed its name to the "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant". Since the establishment, the terrorist organisation has taken responsibility for a lot of terrorist attacks, torture of human beings and so on. The purpose of the organisation was to create an Orthodox-Sunni Islamic State, at least in Iraq and the Levant - Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt (at least in the Sinai Peninsula) and maximum on the whole territory of the Islamic world. In order to achieve their goals, the group was involved in active extremist activities. Consequently, the elaboration of the fighting strategy against the Islamic State and finally the defeat of this terrorist organisation have come on the agenda of the world.

The Aims and Objectives of the Research of the Article

The purpose of the research is to study comprehensively (according to the scientific, philosophical, social and historical literature) the forming ways and goals of the terrorist group "Islamic state" and the greatest global threat that the world is facing. Also consider methods, ways and consequences for combating the terrorist organisation. The objectives for achieving research aims of the article are: Analyse of international and internal methods of combating terrorism, the analyses of the formation and ambitions of the terrorist group "Islamic state" and the dangers that threaten the whole world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of origin and development of the Islamic State, its goals and ideology is presented in Sanikidze's publication "Islamic State" and the great game in the "Middle East", There are also described peculiarities of the political arrangement of the Islamic State, and the position of different countries in relation to the Islamic State ^[1].

One site describes the history of the Islamic State from its date of creation, transformation and statehood. Before the summer of 2014, the jihadist organisation "Islamic State" was called "Islamic State of Iraq and Levant", which was formed in Iraq in 2006 by radical Islamists. The website refers to the Caliphate ideology, "the financial-economic basis of the Islamic State and the international reaction on the reinforcement of Caliphate ^[2].

The information posted on the site indicates the Islamic State as a global scale radical extremism. There are described the objectives of terrorism, the administrative structure of the Islamic State, its ways and methods of financing, etc ^[3].

Another site describes rise and fall of the jihadist organisation "Islamic State". We can easily monitor all the main phases of the state's formation with a very detailed analysis and examples from witnesses. The article also provides very valuable and detailed information about the fall of the state, with a light analysis concerning the participation in this process of Russia, Iran, USA, Turkey and other important actors. The roles of the latter are well explained. The site contributes very crucial data for this research ^[4].

METHODOLOGY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

In this part we will review the methodology of terrorism and specifically the methodology of research conducted in the analysis of the activities of the Islamic State and its modern challenges, we will consider the method selected for the aims of our analysis, the collection and processing of data.

The methodological basis for the research of the article includes both general-scientific and private methods: historical, documentary and etc. In the article there are mainly used historical, comparative-historical and social research methods, and informative-cognitive aspects are represented. Also the analytical and comparative analytical approaches are used in the article. The research is also based on the textbooks, magazines and articles, online articles, summaries and books written by the leading authors and scientists in the field of terrorism.

"Islamic State", Its Origin and Destruction History

In April 2013, the statement was made about the unification of "Islamic State of Iraq" and the "Al-Nusra" Front which is active in Syria. This new unity was called "Islamic Caliphate of Iraq and Syria" (ICIS) or "Islamic Caliphate of Iraq and Levant" (ICIL). "Islamic Caliphate" started from the city of Iraq, Mosul. Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, leader of the "Islamic State" announced about this creation. Initially, in Iraq the group was called the "Islamic State of Iraq", later Levant joined it. In May 2014, ISIS fighters occupied important cities of Iraq - Mosul and Tikrit. That's where the control of territories by the "state" started. Soon many of Syria's regions came under the control of ISIS. The state border between Syria and Iraq has been disrupted. After seizing large territories, the group destroyed geographical links and called its group simply "Islamic State." On June 29, 2014, the group declared itself as a world Caliphate and the leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdad became the Caliph. From then an official name has become an "Islamic State" ^[1].

Since June 2014, Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL), the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), or "Islamic State" (from now Daesh) has officially been one of the most important complex threats to the modern world¹.

By March 2015 the group controlled the area with ten million inhabitants in Syria and Iraq. By June 2015, it had its official branches in Libya, Egypt (Sinai Peninsula), Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Algeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria and the North Caucasus. Step by step the group gained the name of one of the most brutal Islamic organisations. The ambitions of the Islamic State went far beyond Syria and Iraq's civil wars and aimed at creating a new political order in the Middle East. The main purpose of the Islamic State was to establish a state based on its version of Islamic law, which would control public and even private lives of people, as well as cleaning up the territories of Syria and Iraq "from unbelievers"(Or, in the extreme case, to turn them into second-rank human beings).

For this purpose, the group was engaged in active extremist activities and was and is responsible for the numerous terrorist attacks against the US and NATO forces stationed in the Iraqi area, as well as the terrorist attacks against civilians and public facilities in the world. Among the other purposes of the group there were identified: the destruction of Hamas and the State of Israel, destabilisation of Central Asian countries ^[3].

¹ Yasmine Hafiz, What Is A Caliphate? ISIS Declaration Raises Questions, Huffingtonpost. 30 June.2014 See more at :http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/30/what-is-a-caliphate-meaning_n_5543538.html

From the day of establishment, the "Islamic State" has been actively engaged in recruiting processes both in the Middle East and throughout the whole world. People joined it for a variety of reasons: some - by faith, some - with the desire to get the wages, while others just had no other chance. The "Islamic State" became known for mass murders, which were taken by terrorists and distributed through social networks. They wanted to demonstrate their strength and wanted to make the world well-read their message - how seriously they were trying to achieve the goal. ISIS is recognised as one of the most violent organisations. In 2015 its fighters took responsibility for 6141 murders in more than 250 cities around the world².

It should also be noted that the Islamic State faces a fierce resistance from the common front against it. This fight has even combined irreconcilable opponents before. Nevertheless, the opposing countries with "Islamic State" have different views of the region's future, and in many cases this vision is not clearly established. In early September 2014, the US was the initiator of creating a coalition of countries to fight against the "Islamic State". In addition to NATO, more than 40 countries joined the coalition, including Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco.

Since August 8, 2014, the US aviation regularly carried out air strikes on the Caliphate bases in the Iraqi area, and on September 10th, the current US President B. Obama has addressed the American people and in this appeal they were informed that air strikes would also be implemented on the "Islamic State" bases in the Syrian territory^[2]. In 2014 and in the first half of 2015, US air strikes were mainly directed against "Islamic State". Initially, Washington was quite strict against the Assad's attacks on civilian casualties and even the "red line" was put – in case of the usage of chemical weapons the US would be involved in the conflict. It seems that the use of chemical weapons has really happened, but it is still unclear if which part has used it^[1].

Abu Salabi, who was the "finance minister" of the terrorist group, was killed during aerial bombings in November 2015, Abu Miriam and Ramzandan Abu al-Tunisi also died. Both were considered quite influential members of the group. Security experts supposed that the Islamic state would be destructed by 2017.

As for Russia's position, it has responded unreservedly to the self-proclaimed Caliphate. "We see this as another bloody provocation, which aims at aggravating international relations, disintegrating the country and creating a bridge connecting international terrorism to its territory."³ Russia has supported the UN Security Council Resolution 2178 of September 24, 2014, which was directed to contradict the "Islamic State", Jabat al-Nusra and al-Qaeda organisations and foreign terrorist fighters.

On February 12, 2015, on the initiative of Russia the UN Security Council adopted a resolution 2199, which aimed to limit the financial revenue of terrorists in Syria and other countries in the Middle East. In this document one of the most important articles deals with illegal trade in Syria and Iraq⁴. On 29 December 2014, the Russian Supreme Court declared the Organisation "Islamic State of Iraq and Levant" as an international terrorist organisation and prohibited its activities on the territory of Russia. For Russia it is important to maintain the existing international legal system^[2]. At the same time, Russia expressed its readiness to coordinate US anti-terrorist activities, including fighting against an Islamic State, that was noted at the summit of fighting against extremism, where participants from more than 60 countries participated and which ended on February 20, 2015 in Washington DC.

In July 2017, with the support of the international coalition the Iraqi army released Mosul - the Iraqi city, on August 10 during the air bombing in Afghanistan one of the leaders of the terrorist organisation "Islamic State" - Abdul Rakhman was killed. Three more leaders of the terrorist group were also killed. On October 17 of the same year, the main buttress of "Islamic State" was destroyed in the Syrian city of Raqqa.

The Russian General Staff issued an announcement about the destruction of the "Islamic state", a little later on December 9, the Iraqi authorities released a similar announcement, On December 12, while signing of the country's military budget the US President Donald Trump announced about the defeat of the "Islamic State" in Syria and Iraq by the US. The "Islamic State", as the organisational structure is destroyed, and now he controls only 3% of the occupied territories. Information on the liquidation of the terrorist group leader was reported by the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, however, none of this information has been confirmed or denied, but there is nothing known about the location of IS's leader.

² Atasuntsev A. Terrorism steps to the West, gazeta.ru,20/11/2016

³ Comment of the Department of Information and Press of the Russian Foreign Ministry regarding the complication of the situation in the northern part of Syria. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia 23.07.2013. http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/newslines/848D78885B17F8EF44257BB100506022

⁴ Resolution 2199 (2015) adopted by the UN Security Council on February 12, 2015 at the 3779th meeting. United Nations Security Council Document S / RES / 2199 (2015)

Under US leadership, Syria, Iraq, Russia and international coalition, as well as local volunteers with Kurdish armed forces have contributed to the destruction of the "Islamic State". The defeat of this terrorist organisation is the merit of each of them because all the sides were operating in different areas, with different methods and systematically⁵.

An operation against the Islamic state began with the province of Anbar, where in 2015 and 2016 the government forces were able to release Ramadi. This was a long and painful operation with the support of the Air Force Coalition. 12 years later, the Iraqi government forces and their allies released the city with the help of American aviation. The moment has come when the Americans and their allies have worked out the strategy of weakening and final destruction of the Islamic State at the expense of tries and mistakes. In general, this strategy was described in February 2016 by General Lieutenant Sean McFarland, who then led the coalition forces. This operation has received a codename "congenital decision". This campaign had three goals - said McFarland – First: Destruction of the centers of the main tumor formation of "Islamic State" in Syria and Iraq, Mosul and Raqqa; Second: fight against metastasis of this tumor formation around the world; Third: Protection of our own countries from attacks [4]. " The struggle for the Fallujah continued for more than a month. The city was finally released after numerous air strikes and bombings. As always it was the most painful for the peaceful population. Despite the fact that after the release of Fallujah, all the attention was paid to the next main goal - Mosul. Moreover, US president Barack Obama's presidential term was almost expired and the Americans were losing patience. Before the war began, Mosul was 10 times larger than Fallujah and Raqqa - the capital of the "Islamic state". In 2014, militants seized it in a few hours. Before the government and coalition forces began to move forward, the fighters had two years for fighting and strengthening their positions. The liberated "Syrian army" became a reliable partner for USA in the fight against the "Islamic state". This epic battle lasted nine months. The government forces gradually occupied the nearby villages. Then they entered the western part of the city of Mosul, which was released in January 2017. Then it was time for the old town, with labyrinths of true narrow streets and crowded streets. In the end, the region of the cathedral mosque of Al-Noor, where three years ago Baghdad announced the creation of "Caliphate", finally fell. Taking Mosul was a great achievement and almost a deadly blow to the "Islamic State". According to one adviser in Iraq, the city Mosul was "the heartbeat of the Islamic state" more important than Raqqa - in Syria [4]. In the following weeks, the "Islamic state" was gradually losing its positions in Iraq. By the end of August 2017, the jihadists were driven out of the town of Tal Afar, an important strategic center with the main road connecting Mosul and Syria. One month later, another bastion of "Islamic State" – the city of Havidja (Mainly inhabited by Sunnites) fell down. Only one area in Iraq - around the city of El-Kaim near the Euphrates River, near the Syrian border - remained controlled by "Islamic State". The "Islamic State" in Iraq did not exist any longer, although this did not mean that it was terminated. Despite the difficult and often changing image in Syria, Iraq was a similar situation. In Syria, as well as in Iraq, jihadists were not only against one but against three coalitions. The Americans, since their hopes of the Syrian rebels were frustrated, bet on the experienced militants of the "People's Defence Forces" of Kurdish militia, who became their main allies on land. National, religious, Arab and other minority groups also joined them. They called "Syria's democratic forces", which became one of the major allies of the "Islamic State". They were called "Syria's democratic forces", which became one of the major allies of the USA against the "Islamic State".

Turkey, another ally of the USA, did not like it because for it all the Kurdish formations are considered as terrorism because of the connection with the Kurdistan Workers Party. There is an opinion that Turkey has created its own coalition with the Syrian opposition groups, which have been helping them for years to annoy Americans.

The third force against the "Islamic State" was issued: Russia, which supported Assad's governmental forces. On the one hand, Russia launched air strikes on "Islamic State". It was a revenge for the explosion of a Russian plane on the Sinai Peninsula in October 2015. But its real strategic goals were quite different. Both, Moscow and Tehran wanted to keep their investments of the period of Bashar Assad, and to help him to restore power. Although all three coalitions pursued their own goals, the results for the Islamic State were similar: It was countered from all sides. The Syrian democratic forces have achieved great success. According to the right strategy, they slowly but subsequently released the populated areas from the "Islamic state". At the same time, the Turkish and Syrian government forces did not lose their time.

In September 2014, US air strikes did not allow jihadists to enter the Kurdish city of Kobani at the border With Turkey. In October 2016, the Islamic State lost its way to the border, which turned out to be a very big blow. Because all foreign jihadists were traveling to Syria or Iraq through this road, not to mention the advantages that many illegal operations have taken place. Gradually the fighters harassed jihadists increasingly and it continued to the Euphrates Valley. With the help of the US Special Forces, artillery and aviation, the Syrian democratic forces have made a major pressure. In November 2016, they launched a long-running isolation campaign, and eventually released the capital of the "Islamic State". The attack on the city began at the beginning of June, 2017 [4]. While Syria's democratic forces fought against Raqqa, with the support of Russia and Iran, the Syrian government forces invaded in the Deir al-Zour military bases and airport, which was besieged by the militants of the "Islamic State" during three years. On the way they released the city of

⁵ Islamic state no longer exists. Terrorists are finally defeated. ImediNews. 14/12/2017.

Palmyra for the second time, the city of Sukhnu - in August, and in September they achieved the main goal. The US-led anti-terrorist organisation said that as a result of an air attack it destroyed three commanders of the terrorist organisation "Islamic State" during the last three weeks. The head of the Coalition said: "Destroying these terrorists has caused the destruction of the leadership of the group and the dissemination of information⁶." According to verified information, one of the commanders of the terrorist group Abu Qudamah al-Iraq was killed in the Euphrates Gorge. Mustafa al-Zayyi, who was considered a "high-ranking" terrorist, was killed in Iraq during the special operation on November 28. Thus, by the end of 2017, the "Islamic State" territories in both, Syria and Iraq were doomed to be defeated. The militants were locked up around the western town of Al-Qa'im in Iraq and Abu Kamal in Syria. Existence of the "Islamic State" in Iraq and Syria is vanishing. The Syrian and Iraqi government forces released the last cities controlled by jihadists Al Bukamal and Al-Qa'im. Their complete destruction probably will not be so simple, taking into consideration that the local population strives for a strict tribal structure and has always been distinguished by any government's disobedience. However, according to the "Islamic State" legend, the last battle will not be held between the Western world and the Muslims in the Syrian city of Dabiq. Daesh was defeated. The Syrian and Iraqi authorities declared the defeat of the terrorist group "Islamic State" on the territory of both countries.

The Russian governmental forces have also declared the victory over the Islamic State. President Vladimir Putin said that the war with "Islamic State" was over. "For two years, the Russian armed forces and the Syrian army have defeated the largest group of international terrorists," said the Russian president while visiting a Russian air base in Syria. He ordered a withdrawal of a significant portion of the Russian military contingent from Syria. With this statement he wanted to write victory on himself. But was this really true or not? On the same day, President Vladimir Putin declared victory; the militant group of so-called "Islamic State" made a surprise and began to attack the province of Deir ez-Zor. The danger of "Islamic State" was avoided really successfully. Only a small arrangement was needed in Syria's eastern areas. In general, Russia had the right to declare about the defeat of "an Islamic state" because it played a big role in this case.

US President Donald Trump made a statement similar to Vladimir Putin's statement on signing the National Defence Authorisation Act: "We won in Syria. But they [ISIS] are shifting their locations and we will quickly get rid of them until they continue to spread again⁷." But despite success, the US does not completely believe in victory over terrorists, and they will continue to fight against them. The self-proclaimed Caliphate was destroyed, but no one has the illusion of its complete disappearance. About the Russian military contingent withdrawal from Syria the US Department states that the International Coalition still continues its activities in Syria and Iraq, because the "Islamic state" fighters still exist and the situation still requires stabilisation. Thus Washington is trying to justify the presence of its troops in the Syrian territory.

Finally we can conclude that Syria, Iraq, Russia and international coalition led by the United States, as well as local volunteers and the Syrian army, contributed in the defeat of the International Terrorist Organisation "Islamic State". This victory over the terrorist group is the merit of each of them, and not of any specific country - Russia or even the US. The world's two largest powers, the United States and Russia, united their forces in the territory of Syria and Iraq and fought hard to defeat the common aim of "Islamic State." Russia was more active in Syria, where he joined the combat operations at the request of Bashar Assad in 2015, and before the defeat of "Islamic State", Russian troops, special forces and air aviation fought until the last days. As for the US, it headed the International Coalition in Syria and Iraq, which included up to 20 states, It comprised both European and Arab states, as well as Iraqi Kurdistan military units such as Peshmerga and military units composed of the Suite and Shiite nationalities. That is why, under the leadership of the United States, the International Coalition has made a great contribution to the liberation of cities that were conquered by the "Islamic state" and the defeat of Islamists. Combat operations were conducted simultaneously on different areas and with different methods. Therefore, in Iraq and Syria, all the large controlled points of "Islamic State" and the success of this great struggle are jointly shared by Russia and the United States. However, this victory does not mean that the threat is completely absorbed. Although the "Islamic state" as a terrorist organisation no longer has territories, but the danger has not completely disappeared. Some of his fighters remain on the Syrian territory and some try to return to their country. This means that there is still a threat that they continue their terrorist activities in the territory of different countries. The story of defeat of Daesh in Syria and Iraq is not fulfilled yet. The Falling of the "Jihadist's Caliphate" closes one chapter but opens another one.

CONCLUSION

Thus, from the material analysed in the paper and from above, it is possible to draw the following conclusion:

Terrorism is a global level offence and as a struggle against any crime requires systemicity and complexity, i.e., impact on all or any major causes and conditions which generate it. The whole international community needs a joint effort,

⁶ USA claims that they eliminated three leaders of the "Islamic state". Details at <https://regnum.ru/news/2359574.html>

⁷ Has ISIS really been defeated? - <https://psmag.com/news/has-the-demise-of-isis-been-exaggerated>

coordination of collective actions at global, regional and national levels for the effective struggle with terrorism and the "Islamic State".

The article described the history of the "Islamic State's" origin, transformation and formation to the Caliphate. For many years, dedicated battles were fought to release the territories and countries that have been occupied by the terrorist organisation. Eventually, this resulted the defeat of the Islamic State i.e. Daesh. Both Russia and the United States have played a major role in the defeat of it and both of them considered it as their own success. Not only Russia and America, but also Syria, Iraq, and the international coalition, which included up to 20 countries, as well as local volunteers and Syrian army, contributed to the defeat of "Islamic State". But the defeat of the Islamic state does not mean complete defeat, as its fighters and jihadist militants moved to different countries and territories, some of them even returned to their own countries. This means that there is still a danger that members of Islamic State in various cities or towns will carry out terrorist acts and continue their activities.

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