WHAT WOULD KENNAN DO?
GEORGE KENNAN, THE CONTAINMENT DOCTRINE, AND ISIS

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Executive Summary

It may have been William F. Buckley, Jr., who observed that Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* is as oft cited as it is infrequently read. Something similar might be observed about *Containment*, the doctrine articulated by George F. Kennan in his famous 1947 essay. It is paradoxical that containment, an indisputable cornerstone of American Cold War statecraft, is so widely (and seemingly at times, willingly) misunderstood. Today, there is much consternation over suggestions that ISIS be contained within the fluid battlespace of western Iraq and eastern Syria. In some instances it is either implied or inferred that containing ISIS means something qualitatively different than defeating ISIS (whatever that itself means).

The question of containing ISIS begins with distinguishing its two key embodiments within the battlespace, *Territorial ISIS* and *Political ISIS*. The former refers to the de facto territorial state that ISIS has established in the otherwise ungoverned space of western Iraq and eastern Syria. The latter refers to ISIS as the vanguard of a metastatic revolutionary movement. It is "Islamic" only in the restricted sense of using Islam to establish a group identity and a political power base. ISIS' governance, terrorism, and ideology constructs give it several dimensions, each of which must be understood before any effective containment strategy can be devised. The role of local forces and a Syrian ground partner — the proverbial "Arab boots on the ground" — are also assessed as elements of containing ISIS.

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There is much consternation over the matter of containing ISIS[1] within the fluid battlespace of eastern Iraq and western Syria. The words "contain" and "defeat" are used as if the two were diametric opposites: for example, former Secretary of State

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[1] "ISIS" is the acronym of the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham. It in turn is the English translation of the group's Arabic name, *al-dowla al-islaamiyya fii-il-i'raaq wa-ash-shaam*. There is an ongoing dispute about what to call ISIS, with current favorite being "Da'ish" (alt. sp.: "Daesh"), which is its transliterated Arabic acronym. A common objection to "ISIS" is that the word "State" is a misnomer, the use of which is said to elevate the group inappropriately. That argument fails, however, since "State" is also part of Da'ish/Daesh (though not visibly to non-Arabic speakers, it is admitted). Other arguments are offered as well, for example, that an Arabic homonym for Da'ish/Daesh is degrading. This, too, seems sophistic and pointless, along the lines of President George H.W. Bush's intentional mispronunciation of "Saddam". The author has therefore elected to stay with "ISIS".

Hillary Clinton's declaration, "Our goal is not to deter or contain ISIS, but to defeat and destroy ISIS."[2] It begs the question whether, in what Kennan called "a terrifying smugness and lack of historical perspective,"[3] we have forgotten the lessons of the Cold War. Among these is the necessity of distinguishing in practice between vital and peripheral areas. Another is that the United States has often overestimated the amount of political change that can be induced and maintained by superior force of arms or by economic sanctions.[4] A third is exigent:

> "The conclusions to be drawn from a continuation of the doctrine of containment as practiced since 1947 are inescapable. As long as military considerations remain paramount in the execution of American policy, then military considerations will dominate the formulation of that policy. What may have begun as a political objective tends, by this process, to become a military objective."[5]

While bellicose declarations about defeating ISIS may be emotionally satisfying, they betray a fundamental misunderstanding of the choices before us. More to the main point of this essay, they betray lamentable ignorance within much of the political establishment about a concept — *containment* — that has been fundamental to American foreign policy and diplomacy for nigh on seven decades. This essay seeks to illuminate and expand the concept of containment in the context of United States military and diplomatic operations against ISIS. It also suggests another deficiency of the *defeat-not-contain* constituency. It is its disconcerting failure to understand behavioral and cultural dimensions of the conflict, and the necessity of integrating these dimensions into the formulation of a grand containment strategy.

The authors of a recent commentary wrote that ISIS has four principal manifestations — respectively, a guerrilla army, a Sunni political movement, a millenarian cult, and a territorial administrator — to which they suggest "aggressive containment" as a strategic response.[6] They rationalize the adjective *aggressive*:

> "As was the case during the Cold War, containment is more than mere passivity: complementary international missions to degrade ISIS from the air, and train and equip the group's local adversaries, are key to this aggressive form of containment. Containment of this kind is a policy geared to ISIS as it exists in reality, rather than how the group would like to appear in our collective imagination."[7]

Given ISIS's rapid expansion across the Middle East and North Africa, this essay asks whether it is susceptible to containment in the four dimensions, at least so far as *containment* is conventionally understood. It is a composition fallacy to assert that encircling ISIS territory in western Iraq and eastern Syria (assuming such a condition could be sustained amidst ambiguous regional state-actors) implies a politically metastatic ISIS can be likewise "contained".[8] Instead, the author argues for a multifaceted containment strategy.

What Is Containment?

"A doctrine is something that pins you down to a given mode of conduct and dozens of situations which you cannot foresee, which is a great mistake in principle. When the word 'containment' was used in my 'X' article, it was used with relation to a certain situation then prevailing, and as a response to it."
-George Kennan (2002)

"The Cold War is over. The world is a more dangerous place. We need to be able not to contain and react to an event; we need to be able to detect and prevent it."
-Congressman Chris Shays (2005)

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[2] "Hillary Clinton Goes Beyond President Obama in Plan to Defeat ISIS." *The New York Times* [published online 19 November 2015]. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/20/us/politics/hillary-clinton-syria-islamic-state.html?_r=0. Last accessed 21 December 2015.
[3] Quoted in Walter L. Hixson (1988). "Containment on the Perimeter: George F. Kennan and Vietnam." *Diplomatic History*. 12:2, 152.
[4] Richard J. Powers (1969). "Containment: From Greece to Vietnam, and Back?" *The Western Political Quarterly*. 22:4, 856.
[5] *Ibid.*, 859.
[6] James Fromson & Steven Simon (2015). "ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now." *Survival*. 57:3 (June–July 2015), 7-56. http://www.iiss.org/-/media//silos/survival/2015/survival-57-3/57-3-02-fromson-and-simon/57-3-02-fromson-and-simon.pdf. Last accessed 4 December 2015.
[7] *Ibid.,* 9.
[8] Indeed, as Angel Rabasa argued in the context of East Africa, counterterrorism alone, although of much value, is unlikely to provide an effective long-term solution to terrorism's challenges. "[A]n effective long term solution would require attacking the conditions that make the region hospitable to extremist and terrorist elements." See: Rabasa, A. (2009). *Radical Islam in East Africa*. (Santa Monica: RAND), 74-75. http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG782.pdf. Last accessed 15 December 2015.

There have been two distinct iterations of containment. The first was famously articulated in 1947 by George Kennan vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.[9] The second is a c.1994 adaptation by Anthony Lake directed at containing "the band of outlaws we refer to as 'the backlash states'."[10] Ian Shapiro suggests a third, this one specific to terrorism. It is predicated on his eschewal of the so-called "Bush Doctrine," which he characterized as a preemptive strategy rather than (like containment) a reactive one.[11] A key tenet, Shapiro writes, is that that while the United States may be powerless to influence ideologies, collective-action sanctions can nevertheless influence the behavior of terrorist groups, since all depend on some degree of local support and sanctuary. The United States can contain terrorism by making it less likely that terrorists will find indigenous support.[12]

Shapiro expounds his view of the "rootedness of containment in the idea of non-domination" within the realm of national security.[13] This departs from the Kennan-esque view of containment given a sharp edge in NSC-68.[14] That document defined containment as "a policy of calculated and gradual coercion," one that "without superior aggregate military strength" was "no more than a policy of bluff."[15] Shapiro conceptualizes containment as "more behavioral than ideological in the sense that its focus is on what potential adversaries do internationally rather than on their internal political arrangements or the beliefs of their leaders."[16] It "occupies a midpoint on a continuum between isolationism and proselytizing regime-change."[17]

If Shapiro is correct, ISIS must be understood behaviorally if it is to be contained. Doing so requires the identification of characterizing patterns — how ISIS self-organizes, its past actions, how it communicates internally and externally, and so on. Pattern recognition is a basis upon which to identify apt historical analogues, from which to deduce a set of possible actions in which ISIS might engage in future (some which may be susceptible to containment or blocking strategies).

In mathematics, pattern recognition treats geometric objects as physical ones. Polygons, for example, might be regarded as mere sequences of vertices with fixed coordinates in a given system of reference. Alternately, they might be regarded as coordinate-free objects. Calculating the relationships between polygons with fixed coordinates is simple. Without fixed coordinates, however, a mobile object has to be matched against a static one.[18]

Something similar occurs in geopolitical pattern recognition. Fixed coordinates do sometimes exist, as in the well-defined set of political relationships that exist within the European Union constellation of nation-states. This is akin to the simple case of two polygons, where in order to understand the relationship between them one has merely to compute their intersection or test for the inclusion of one within the other. In a volatile geopolitical environment, fixed coordinates may be unknown, or more likely, do not exist. Here one may try to map a dynamic entity — say a sophisticated terrorist organization like ISIS — onto a set of behavior-governing rules. If the fit is good, it may yield patterns that, if not predictive, nonetheless provide useful guideposts.

[9] "X" [George F. Kennan, pseud.] (1947). "The Sources of Soviet Conduct." *Foreign Affairs*. 25:4 (July 1947). https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/1947-07-01/sources-soviet-conduct. Last accessed 9 December 2015.

[10] Lake identified Cuba, North Korea, Iran, Iraq and Libya as "backlash states". He wrote, "These backlash states have some common characteristics. Ruled by cliques that control power through coercion, they suppress basic human rights and promote radical ideologies. While their political systems vary, their leaders share a common antipathy toward popular participation that might undermine the existing regimes. These nations exhibit a chronic inability to engage constructively with the outside world, and they do not function effectively in alliances, even with those like-minded. They are often on the defensive, increasingly criticized and targeted with sanctions in international forums. Finally, they share a siege mentality." See: Anthony Lake (1994). "Confronting Backlash States." *Foreign Affairs*. 73:2 (March/April 1994). https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/1994-03-01/confronting-backlash-states. Last accessed 4 December 2015.

[11] See: Ian Shapiro (2007). *Containment: Rebuilding a Strategy Against Global Terror*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

[12] These observations are adapted from Susan Keppelman (2008). "'Containing' the Bush Doctrine: Ian Shapiro's Critique of the Post- 9/11 American Security Strategy." *SAIS Review*. 28:2, 203-205. http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/sais_review/v028/28.2.keppelman.pdf. Last accessed 7 December 2015.

[13] Ian Shapiro (2007). "Containment and democratic cosmopolitanism." Working paper dated 5 September 2007. http://opus.macmillan.yale.edu/workpaper/pdfs/Containment_cosmopolitanism.pdf. Last accessed 7 December 2015. A later version of this essay appeared as a chapter in Shapiro (2011). *The Real World of Democratic Theory*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press). In the essay Shapiro goes so far as to claim [pp. 17-18] "containment is not only compatible with a cosmopolitan commitment to democracy; containment is the best available national security policy for cosmopolitan democrats to embrace," and provocatively, "that containment beats a policy of toppling authoritarian regimes in order to replace them with democracies."

[14] A foundational policy statement of the Cold War era, "United States Objectives and Programs for National Security" also known as NSC-68 was a report completed by the United States State Department's Policy Planning Staff on 7 April 1950. The 58-page memorandum remained classified until 1975. It should be said that Kennan among others disagreed with the assertion in NSC-68 that the Soviet Union was bent on achieving domination through force of arms. He argued that the United States could contain the Soviet Union through political and economic measures, rather than purely military ones. See: https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/NSC68. Last accessed 7 December 2015.

[15] See: NSC-68, VI. *U.S. Intentions and Capabilities— Actual and Potential*. A. *Political and Psychological*. https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/nsc-68/nsc68-2.htm. Last accessed 7 December 2015.

[16] *Ibid.,* 14.

[17] *Ibid.,* 16.

[18] The author borrowed this summation from Bernard Chazelle (1983). "The Polygon Containment Problem." *Advances in Computing Research*. 1: 1-33. https://www.cs.princeton.edu/~chazelle/pubs/PolygContainProb.pdf. Last accessed 6 December 2015.

Geopolitics is not mathematics, however. It lacks geometry's *characteristica universalis* to paraphrase Leibnitz.[19] Since mapping an organization onto a borrowed rule-set is by necessity reductive, the fit is often inapt.[20] What is deduced in this circumstance may be of dubious predictive value.[21]

The case in which coordinates are unknown or non-existent reveals a paradox. *Terrorism*, in Jean-François Lyotard's construct, consists of playing by rules that make others' rules impossible.[22] Put another way, the internal logic of terrorism means the terrorist is undeterred by the rules of civil society. We err analytically when we fail to understand the internal logic of terrorism, or when we apply one terrorist rule-set to another governed by a wholly disparate rule-set. Take the example of North Korea, the actions of which regularly befuddle many Western analysts even though it conforms to an (albeit eccentric) rule-set. This observation undercuts a critical claim regarding *containment* à la Kennan, Lake or Shapiro, *viz.*:

> "If in fact we find this 'war' [the one on terrorism] is a policy of containment, then we have a concept of what works and what does not."[23]

Not necessarily. Without first understanding terrorist behavior and rule-sets, we have little idea how to ascertain what actions will and will not contain terrorism in a given circumstance.

Internal logic is used here in a way intentionally akin to ideology.[24] Zbigniew Brzezinski called ideology an effective "link between theory and action" and an "action program derived from certain doctrinal assumptions about the nature of reality.[25] Doctrine, he wrote, "ceases to be an intellectual abstraction and becomes an active social agent, or an *ideology*, when it is applied to concrete situations and becomes a guide to action" (emphasis added).[26] Thus Stephen Biddle's assertion the "war on terrorism" did not entail merely containing al-Qa'ida or defeating it militarily, but rather, defeating "our enemy's ideology."[27]

Ayman al-Zawahiri elaborated al-Qa'ida's ideology in a set of doctrinal tenets. One is the "revolutionary fundamentalist movement" must attain ideological clarity and coherence.[28] That movement constitutes a revolutionary war in which the ideological component of the struggle is paramount.[29] The clearest articulation of a distinctly ISIS doctrine comes from Abu

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[19] Bertrand Russell wrote that Leibniz "cherished through out his life the hope of discovering a king of generalized mathematics, which he called *Characteristica Universalis*, by means of which thinking could be replaced by calculation. [Russell (1946; 2009). *History of Western Philosophy*. (Oxford: Routledge), 476.] The full quote reads in English: "If we had it [a *characteristica universalis*], we should be able to reason in metaphysics and morals in much the same way as in geometry and analysis. ... If controversies were to arise, there would be no more need of disputation between two philosophers than between two accountants. For it would suffice to take their pencils in their hands, to sit down to their slates, and to say to each other . . . : Let us calculate." In: Russell (1900). *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 169-170.
[20] Not that this stops some from asserting its utility: "The parallels between the Cold War and the War on Terror are striking, but they are by no means perfect. [. . .] The Cold War is at best an incomplete roadmap for waging and winning the War on Terror. Even so, it provides better directions than anything else history has to offer." Alan W. Dowd (2002). "A Colder War: Taking the Long View of the War on Terror." Sagamore Institute [published online 1 July 2002]. http://www.sagamoreinstitute.org/library-article/a-colder-war-taking-the-long-view-of-the-war-on-terror/. Last accessed 9 December 2015.
[21] Other methods are similarly flawed. Take for example the Fund for Peace's widely cited Failed State Index, which Claire Leigh of the UK think tank the Overseas Development Institute criticizes because "It gives us no clue why certain countries have the dubious distinction of topping the chart. It offers no policy prognoses or prescriptions." See: Leigh (2012). "Failed States Index belongs in the policy dustbin." *The Guardian* [published online 2 July 2012]. http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2012/jul/02/failed-states-index-policy-dustbin. Last accessed 9 December 2015.
[22] What Lyotard attempted to capture is the absolute hegemony of one form of speech — what he call the terror of the "one" — which attempts "to exclude, to rule out, to invalidate, to deny, displace, or to negate" all other forms of language except its own. He labels this denial and negation *barbarism*, which he calls "terror in its purist form."
[23] MAJ Matthew G. Elledge, USA (2003). *The Global War on Terrorism: A Policy of Containment*. (Fort Leavenworth, KA: United States Army Command and General Staff College), 1.
[24] One definition of *ideology* is "a framework of ideas that describes a view of reality and a set of social and political actions that should be undertaken to change and improve the situation of a particular group. [. . .] It is not always clear how and when a framework of ideas will change and develop, as well as which ideologies will be most prevalent and decisive over a given time. Still, ideology appears to be a central component of the long war. In fact, it may define the long war on some level by making it long; whereas a physical target can be destroyed, a way of conceiving of the world is much harder to eradicate or disprove. In addition, the ideologies in question can include very strong motivators for action...". See: Christopher G. Pernin, Brian Nichiporuk, Dale Stahl, Justin Beck, & Ricky Radaelli-Sanchez (2008). *Unfolding the Future of the Long War: Motivations, Prospects, and Implications for the U.S. Army*. (Santa Monica: RAND), 99. http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG738.pdf. Last accessed 9 December 2015.
[25] Zbigniew Brzezinski (1960). "Communist Ideology and International Affairs." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*. IV:4 (September 1960), 266. 7%253A4cab02fe-708f-4f96-9e50-15490353511f%3A0%3A0%3A0%3AG8P4uDKd5jiBF9D55wG89w%3D%3D. Last accessed 7 December 2015. In the case of the Soviet Union, he wrote, ideology was based on "historical, social, and personal background of the Soviet leaders."
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] Stephen Biddle (2002). "War Aims and War Termination." In Defeating Terrorism: Strategic Issue Analyses, COL John R. Martin, USA, ed. (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute), 7. Biddle uses *containment* in several contexts, including "the political containment of al-Qaeda's ideology"; "containing the response to the call for jihad" and "the spread of the call to jihad"; and "containing the appearance that the United States is waging a war against Islam."
[28] From the author's translation of the 2010 second edition of al-Zawahiri book. See: Ayman al-Zawahiri (2001; 2010). *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*. Available in Arabic at https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/ayman-al-zawahiri-knights-under-the-prophets-banner-second-edition.pdf. An English translation of the substantially shorter 2001 first edition was published by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service [FBIS-NES-2001-1202].
[29] Henzel (2005). "The Origins of al Qaeda's Ideology: Implications for US Strategy." *Parameters*. 35 (Spring 2005), 76. http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/05spring/henzel.pdf. Last accessed 8 December 2015. Once the revolutionary fundamentalist movement achieves ideological clarity and coherence, it is to confront existing Muslim regimes toward the end of establishing a genuine Islamic state "at the heart of Arab world." He wrote that the revolutionary fundamentalist movement cannot attain "victory for the Islamic movements," he writes, unless it possesses "an Islamic base in the heart of the Arab region."

Mohammad al-Adnani's exchanges with al-Zawahiri.[30] While an assessment of the rupture between al-Qa'ida and ISIS is outside the scope of this essay, it is worth noting it resulted from disagreements over questions of organization and control, not ideology. It centered on ISIS's declaration of a caliphate, and disregard of Zawahiri's demands that it dismantle its "state" and disengage from Jabhat al-Nusra.[31] Prima facie, the ideological issues surrounding ISIS's "deviation," if Abu Qatada al-Filistini is correct, concern questions of organization and control.[32] He accused ISIS of turning a political dispute into an all-out conflict by declaring itself a caliphate over an imaginary group of Muslims rather than a real one.[33] All this leads to what Tareq Osman calls "the Daesh Paradox": while ISIS considers the modern nation-state its enemy, its organizational architecture nonetheless largely resembles Hannah Arendt's model totalitarian state.[34]

In one sense, the current debate over containing ISIS (and the question of its ultimate contain-ability) mimics an earlier one between Kennan and the influential columnist Walter Lippman.[35] The latter argued Kennan's containment policy would "draw the United States into defending any number of far-flung areas of the world."

> "Military entanglements in such remote places might bankrupt the treasury and would in any event do little to enhance American security at home. American society would become militarized in order to fight a 'Cold War' [. . .] For Lippmann, the Kennan article missed the fundamental point that American power, no matter how great in relative terms, was ultimately limited. Containment, in other words, failed the test of realism."[36]

Lippman believed Kennan's strategy "compels the United States to meet the Soviet pressure at these shifting geographical and political points by using satellite states, puppet governments and agents which have been subsidized and supported, though their effectiveness is meager and their reliability uncertain." *Mutatis mutandis*, Lippman's summation of its effect could well have been written today regarding ISIS:

> "By forcing us to expend our energies and our substance upon these dubious and unnatural allies on the perimeter of the Soviet Union, the effect of the policy is to neglect our natural allies in the Atlantic community, and to alienate them."[37]

The Doctrine of *Contain & React*

A contemporary restatement of Kennan's containment thesis might read as follows:

> "The main element of any United States policy toward ISIS must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of ISIS's expansive tendencies. To that end, the United States must counter ISIS's pressure against the free institutions of the western world, which it will achieve through the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of ISIS's policy. Such a United States policy would promote tendencies which

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[30] Shayk Abū Muḥammad al 'Adnānī, born Taha Sobhi Falaha in Syria, is an ISIS senior leader and the group's official spokesperson.
[31] ISIS emir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi stated in a seven-minute June 2013 audio message (one attributed to him appeared on social media unofficially on 14 June, and official version of which was released the following day), "The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant remains as long as we have a vein that pulses or an eye that blinks." In a follow up audio message, al-Adnani used even more forceful language to denounce Zawahiri's edict. For a detailed discussion of the rupture and links to the referenced audio messages, see: http://www.jihadica.com/the-islamic-state-of-disobedience-al-baghdadis-defiance/. Last accessed 9 December 2015.
[32] Abu Qatada al-Filistini (born Omar Mahmoud Othman) is a Jordanian national of Palestinian origin (thus *al-Filistini* or "the Palestinian"). See [in Arabic]: http://www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/2014/11/12/ زائـل-الـدولـة-وَد نظ يمـ ي صد فقة-أخرج-ل مـقـ تادة-أبـ و. Last accessed 9 December 2015.
[33] Motaz al-Khateeb (2015). "Daesh's Intellectual Origins: From Jurisprudence to Reality." Al Jazeera Center for Studies [published online 18 January 2015]. http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/dossiers/decipheringdaeshoriginsimpactandfuture/2014/12/2014123981882756.htm. Lasty accessed 9 December 2015.
[34] Tareq Osman (2014). "The Daesh Paradox and Political Disillusionment." Al Jazeera Center for Studies [published online 4 December 2014]. http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/dossiers/decipheringdaeshoriginsimpactandfuture/2014/12/2014123105425647136.html. Last accessed 9 December 2015. He writes: "In her analysis of the phenomenon of totalitarianism, Hannah Arendt asserts that the architecture of the totalitarian system consists of the following: charisma, historical ideology, a suppression machine and a propaganda system [. . .] Even a limited study of Daesh and its practices reveals that it has all the components of this architecture: It adopts an ideology that encapsulates a vision for the course of history. It works to achieve this vision (the ideology of the Caliphate), and sees the Islamic Caliphate as its destiny for history's course and will take all necessary measures to rapidly achieve this end in this world. [. . .] Daesh, as strange as it may be, possesses a level of charisma represented in the caliph, as an heir to the prophet who has the responsibility of directing both religious and secular policy. In terms of the system of repression, IS has turned everyone who belongs to it into a killing machine, claiming that this is the concept of jihad. As for the propaganda, there is no doubt that Daesh has a strong propaganda system through which it promotes itself, a system that has actively exploited all products of modernity (which IS claims to be against), such as social media and cinematography."
[35] Lippman rebutted Kennan's famous "X" article with a series of fourteen columns published serially in the *New York Herald Tribune* from 2 September through 2 October 1947. The collected columns were republished that year as a book [Lippmann (1947). *The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy.* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers)].
[36] Fredrik Logevall (2004). "A Critique of Containment." *Diplomatic History.* 28:4, 478. http://dh.oxfordjournals.org/content/28/4/473.full.pdf+html?hwshib2=authn%3A1449512164%3A20151206%253Af3083948-f9a8-45b0-9a4f-49efd5328477%3A0%3A0%3A0%3Ai4jo6a5eyD5eD8Yh4Td2gw%3D%3D. Last accessed 6 December 2015.
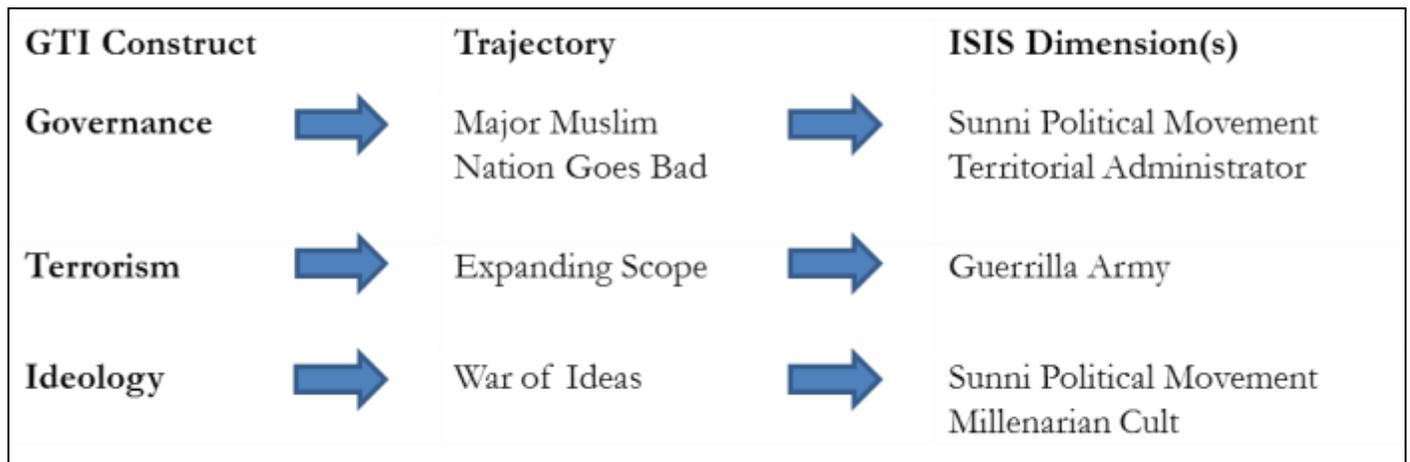[37] Lippmann (1947), *op cit.,* 47.

must eventually find their outlet in either the break-up or the gradual mellowing of ISIS's power."[38]

This leave unanswered whether the United States (or anyone else) can contain ISIS in all four dimensions, the associated complexity of which is suggested by a 2008 RAND study. Its authors caution "the confluence of governance, terrorism, and ideology (GTI) makes this long war complex and difficult, and is what differentiates it from other struggles the United States might be involved in." They suggest "Contain & React" as a viable Long War counterterrorism strategy. "Fundamentally defensive," its objective is "to hold the current 'perimeter' in the Muslim world and only act strongly if that perimeter is breached (i.e., a major U.S. ally is threatened with collapse or overthrow)," in the event of which, "the United States would intervene massively with general purpose forces."[39]

> "This strategy has applications for several trajectories. For example, in 'Major Muslim Nation Goes Bad,' Contain and React would seek to position U.S. military forces in neighboring states to deter the newly radicalized state from threatening its neighbors. In 'Expanding Scope,' this strategy could be used to try to fence off groups like Hezbollah in finite swaths of territory with stepped-up border enforcement as well as periodic strikes and raids. Contain and React would be the preferred choice for the 'War of Ideas' because the ideational campaign would be an ideal, low-cost, low-visibility tool for containing al-Qaeda and Salafi-jihadist ideologues."[40]

Each GTI[41] trajectory under *Contain & React* — an enemy-centric approach to counterinsurgency[42] — aligns with one or more ISIS dimension:

GTI Construct	Trajectory	ISIS Dimension(s)
Governance	Major Muslim Nation Goes Bad	Sunni Political Movement Territorial Administrator
Terrorism	Expanding Scope	Guerrilla Army
Ideology	War of Ideas	Sunni Political Movement Millenarian Cult

The 2008 RAND study continues:

> "Contain and React would give equal roles to all three parts of our GTI framework. Each would have to be conducted at a moderate level of intensity in order for the U.S. defensive perimeter to hold. Counter-terrorist efforts would be necessary to prevent SJ [Salafi-Jihadist] groups from seeping out of ungoverned zones and into the territory of U.S. allies and partners. Ideological campaigns would likewise be required to reduce the appeal of SJ in Muslim states that face problems with youth bulges, poor delivery of basic services, and high unemployment. Finally, limited programs aimed at improving governance in the most strategically important U.S. allies in the Muslim world (for example, Egypt and Pakistan) would be useful as reinforcement for the IO efforts."

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[38] The author's restatement uses text extracted from Kennan's original statement, and substitutes "ISIS" for Kennan's references to the Soviet Union. For his original text, see: Kennan (1947), *op cit.*

[39] Pernin, et al (2008), *op cit.*. 99.

[40] *Ibid.,* xix. The authors describe the contingency *Major Muslim Nation Goes Bad* as a "Radical shift in a regime brought on when a critical state in the Muslim world is taken over by radical extremists. Two of the most plausible and most threatening scenarios to American interests would be a military coup in Pakistan or a successful fundamentalist insurgency in Saudi Arabia." *Expanding Scope* means "beyond a major terrorist attack against U.S. interests, to include radical Shiism, the Iranian state, regional terrorists, and/or some non-Islamic terror groups. In this formulation, the long war would become a true global war on terror." *War of Ideas* means a "[s]hift to information-based campaign with the goal of isolating jihadists and their infrastructure from the broader global Muslim population." The WOI might include "significant IO operations in neighboring states to help contain the fallout and reduce the influence of Salafi-jihadist propaganda."

[41] GTI is an acronym for the construct "Governance, Terrorism & Ideology."

[42] The classical approach to counterinsurgency (COIN) is either enemy- or population-centric. Enemy-centric COIN is a variant of conventional warfare, while the population-centric approach understands COIN as an armed variant of government administration.

We will consider separately (and briefly) the Governance, Terrorism, and Ideology constructs.

Governance:

"The assault on free institutions is world-wide now, and in the context of the present polarization of power a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere."
-NSC-68 (1950)

The *Governance* construct encompasses two dimensions, ISIS as a Sunni political movement and ISIS as a territorial administrator, respectively.[43] This dynamic is rooted in al-Qa'ida's earlier pivot from the more defensive *jihad* variant espoused c.1980s by Abdullah Azzam[44] to al-Zawahiri's[45] 1991 call for offensive *jihad* against corrupt regimes in the Muslim world.

The instrumental use of political polarization is a central element to the dimension *ISIS as a Sunni political movement*. It seeks to undercut and destabilize the region's brittle regimes, and give rise to "failed states or ungoverned spaces in which terrorist extremists can more easily operate or take shelter."[46] Polarization entails "dragging the masses into the battle" as the late al-Qa'ida leader Abu Bakr Naji wrote, the means of which are "actions which will inflame opposition and which will make the people enter into the battle, willing or unwilling, such that each individual will go to the side which he supports..." He wrote, "The first step of polarization in the stage of 'the management of savagery' is mastering the administration of the regions which are under our control."[47]

The meaning of *management of savagery* may be counter-intuitive, so an explanation is in order. *Savagery* — a condition Naji calls "more nebulous than chaos" — ensues in the aftermath of a state's collapse. That event leaves a *region of savagery[48]* in its wake:

> "[T]he management of peoples' needs with regard to the provision of food and medical treatment, preservation of security and justice among the people who live in the regions of savagery, securing the boarders by means of groups that deter anyone who tries to assault the regions of savagery, as well as setting up defensive fortifications."[49]

He elaborates elsewhere in the manifesto that a state's collapse (i.e., "the stage of the administration of savagery") is usually preceded by the "stage of the power of vexation and exhaustion." It entails weakening the state in the furtherance of one of several endpoints.[50] Naji again highlights polarization's instrumental role in "vexation and exhaustion:"

> "By polarization here, I mean dragging the masses into the battle such that polarization is created between all of the people. Thus, one group of them will go to the side of the people of truth, another group will go to the side of falsehood, and a third group will remain neutral, awaiting the outcome of the battle in order to join the victor. We must attract the sympathy of this group and make it hope for the victory of the people of faith, especially since this group has a decisive role in the later stages of the present battle. [. . .] We must make this battle very violent, such that death is a heartbeat away, so that the two groups will realize that

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[43] Put another way, the ISIS governing construct is embodied as *ISIS, the Sunni political movement* and *ISIS, the territorial administrator*, respectively.

[44] Abdullah Yusuf Azzam (d.1989) was a founding member of al-Qa'ida. His 1979 pamphlet was later expanded to a short (133 pages) book published in 1985 (with a 1987 second edition) under the title *Defending Muslim Lands is Among the Most Important Collective Obligations* (*Al-Defaa aan Ardhee al-Muslimeen aham furood al-ayaan*). Most of it [79 of 133 pages] consisted of Azzam's *fatwa* ordaining jihad, which he argued was a religious duty for individual Muslims (*fard ayn*) as well as the Muslim community as a whole (*fard kifaya*). Azzam's call sometimes is characterized as *defensive jihad*, since he relies extensively on the authority of scholars such as the 13thCE Islamic theologian Ibn Taymiyyah, who wrote: "If the enemy enters Islamic lands, the entire Islamic empire and nation are one in repelling the invader, they need no permission to travel to the fringe of the Islamic lands to conduct jihad." Thus Azzam's call at the time that "We must focus our efforts on Palestine and Afghanistan, because these are central issues in the Muslim world." The cited text is from the book's second edition [Azzam (1987). *Al-Defaa aan Ardhee al-Muslimeen aham furood al-ayaan*. (Amman: Maktaba Risala al-Haditha Publishers)].

[45] Ayman al-Zawahiri declared in his c.1990s book, *Bitter Harvest*, "The Islamic movements must answer the questions: are the governments in the Muslim countries true Muslims or are they *kuffar* [infidels]? These rulers are obviously *kuffar* and *murtaddeen* [apostates] because they rule with a law other than that of Allah. Therefore it is a *fard ayn* [individual duty] to wage *jihad* against them and remove them from their positions." He writes, "Hence, democracy is *shirk* (idolatry) because it usurps the right to legislate and puts it in the hands of the people." See: Al-Zawahiri (n.d. [1991-1992]). *Al-Hasad al-Murr, al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun Fi Sittin 'Aman* [*The Bitter Harvest: the Muslim Brotherhood in Sixty Years*], trans. Nadia Masid. (n.p.: Jihad Group Publication), 5.

[46] United States Defense Department (2006). *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), 12.

[47] Authorship of the 2004 al-Qa'ida online manifesto, *Management of Savagery*, is attributed to Abu Bakr Naji, a *nom de guerre* of the late (d.2008) Mohammad Hasan Khalil al-Hakaymah. Its full Arabic title [*Idārat at-Tawaḥḥuś: Akhṭar marḥalah satamurru bihā l 'ummah*] means "Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Islamic Nation Will Pass." An English translation is available here: https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/abu-bakr-naji-the-management-of-savagery-the-most-critical-stage-through-which-the-umma-will-pass.pdf. Last accessed 10 December 2015. The quoted text appears in the Third Topic, Section Seven.

[48] He illustrates this term as "a situation resembling the situation of Afghanistan before the control of the Taliban, a region submitting to the law of the jungle in its primitive form, whose good people and even the wise among the evildoers yearn for someone to manage this savagery." See: Naji (2004), *op cit.*, First Topic, Section Eleven.

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] *Ibid* First Topic, Section Fourteen. For example, to prepare to seize power afterwards, or to weaken the state so than another "state or power" can take control "without passing through the administration of savagery."

entering this battle will frequently lead to death. That will be a powerful motive for the individual to choose to fight in the ranks of the people of truth in order to die well, which is better than dying for falsehood and losing both this world and the next."[51]

Polarization is further instrumentalized during the *management of savagery*:

"The people, seeking security, rally around the great personages of the country or a party organization or a jihadi organization or a military organization composed of the remainders of the army or the police of the regimes of apostasy."[52]

There is a coincident inflow of foreign fighters to join the jihadists' ranks, in Naji's words, "a continuous emigration of the youth of other regions to our regions."[53]

The foregoing is intended to illuminate how al-Qa'ida intended to direct its *Governance* trajectory using political polarization and state-collapse to transition from a Sunni political movement to a territorial administrator. ISIS implicitly adopts and elaborates it in two key respects. "The preservation of security and securing the borders may advance to working to expand of the region of savagery," Naji speculated.[54] This creates two "options" as ISIS sees it to exploit its "rapid consolidation and shrewd governance of its territories:"

"The first option is that they continue to expand the borders of the Caliphate throughout the region until economic or military limitations stop them and they afterwards consolidate their positions. Too bad for the West, it doesn't look like such limitations exist for the Caliphate. The second option is that they goad the West into launching an all-out ground attack, thereby setting the scene for the final battle between Muslims and the crusaders prophesized to be held at Dābiq in Syria, by conducting an operation overseas that is so destructive that America and its allies will have no alternative but to send in an army."[55]

A related ISIS strategy is "The Extinction of the Grayzone."[56] It intends to force off the fence Naji's "third group," the one he wrote intends to "remain neutral, awaiting the outcome of the battle in order to join the victor."[57] ISIS's position is unambiguous:

"[A]s Shaykh Usāmah Ibn Lādin (rahimahullāh) said, 'The world today is divided into two camps.' Bush spoke the truth when he said, 'Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.' Meaning, either you are with the crusade or you are with Islam."[58]

ISIS in eastern Syria and western Iraq is not a nation-state,[59] but it certainly is a territorial one. The concept of the *territorial state* derives from Leibniz's model of the post-Westphalian princely states.[60] Within a territorial state — here, *Territorial ISIS* — a

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[51] *Ibid.,* Third Topic, Section Seven.
[52] *Ibid.*
[53] ISIS says much the same: "The majority of the first muhajireen came from the Gulf states and the Arabic Maghreb...After them was *hijra* [migration] from the states of the world after the announcement of the caliphate, as no disbelieving state has remained which hasn't also suffered from the *hijra* of its youth to support the Islamic State which the soldiers of Joulani and the apostate Sahwa forces from the Free [Syrian] Army and others besides them rejected." See: Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, trans. (2014). *Principles in the Administration of the Islamic State*, Chapter 2. "Organization of the individual and group." http://www.aymennjawad.org/18215/principles-in-the-administration-of-the-islamic. Last accessed 10 December 2015. Also published at http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/07/islamic-state-document-masterplan-for-power.
[54] *Ibid.,* First Topic.
[55] John Cantlie [pseud.] (2015). "Paradigm Shift, Part II." *Dabiq* [published online in English]. 12, 50. http://www.clarionproject.org/docs/islamic-state-isis-isil-dabiq-magazine-issue-12-just-terror.pdf. Last accessed 10 December 2015.
[56] "The Extinction of the Grayzone." *Dabiq* [published online in English]. 7: 54-67. http://media.clarionproject.org/files/islamic-state/islamic-state-dabiq-magazine-issue-7-from-hypocrisy-to-apostasy.pdf. Last accessed 10 December 2015. *Dabiq* is ISIS's online magazine published monthly since July 2014.
[57] See fn(51).
[58] "The Extinction of the Grayzone," *op cit.* ISIS expands the point: "After September 11th, the two opposing camps were the divided Ummah versus the crusaders. Now – according to the crusaders themselves – it is the Islamic State versus the crusaders. Accordingly, the grayzone has different implications for both times. In the past, it consisted of the hypocrites, deviant innovators, and abandoners of jihād. After the Khilāfah and the subsequent crusade, the grayzone also encompasses "independent" and "neutral" Islamic parties that refuse to join the Khilāfah, as these parties claim to be independent of both opposing camps."
[59] The author references Wilets' definition of a nation-state as "a state that functions as the juridical embodiment of the dominant national group." [James D. Wilets (1999). "The Demise of the Nation-State: Towards a New Theory of the State Under International Law." *Berkeley Journal of International Law.* 17:2, 193. http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1179&context=bjil. Last accessed 11 December 2015.
[60] ISIS is a territorial state in Syria and Iraq, and an aspiring one elsewhere, e.g., Libya. Leibniz used his essay *Entretiens de Philaréte et d'Eugène sur le droit d'Ambassade* to discuss problems of territoriality in the aftermath of the Peace of Westphalia (1648). The abundant minuscule principalities — upon which the Westphalian Peace for all practical purposes conferred sovereignty — could not claim to be on a par with larger principalities that recognized each other as equally sovereign. Not possessing sufficient territory, the former could at best maintain internal order. Leibniz argued that sovereignty meant the exercise of military power within the territory to the exclusion of any other power within and without. The territory is, in other words, impermeable, except by means of war. The author uses this concept of the territorial state — an impermeable territory in which military power excludes any other power within and without — to distinguish it from the nation-state. The territorial state de facto sovereign while the nation-state is

hegemon exercises what Leibniz called *sovereignty*. The hegemon is "sovereign" when it is sufficiently powerful to exclude internal and external "others" from exercising political authority within its domain. Its territory is impermeable to everything but external military force, contributing to why these territories are sometimes called *terrorist black holes*.[61]

Terrorism:

"You can discover what your enemy fears most by observing the means he uses to frighten you."
-Eric Hoffer

A prerequisite to proper use of the term *terrorism* is to demystify and define it. "Terrorism," wrote the sociologist Omar Lizardo, "is what people, authorities and ideologues decide to label as terrorism, without a theoretical defining feature of its own."[62] More often than not, conversations about terrorism focus on the actor and not the act. In Lizardo's formulation, it is "the difference between ritualized, legitimated and symmetric forms of organized collective violence such as interstate war" — he considers it the exclusive realm of nation-states, as territorial, violence-monopolizing actors — and "illegitimate, asymmetric interactions such as those that are usually classified as terrorist attacks"[63] directed against actors linked to territorial states:

> "Given two equivalent actions (such as a surprise attack against a state), one performed by a recognized actor in the international system (such as Japan in during World War II), and another by a loosely defined network of infra-national actors (informal groups, non-state- affiliated organizations), the first would be characterized as an act of war while the second would most likely be referred to as a terrorist attack."[64]

Designating ISIS a terrorist organization does not, as we have witnessed in the Syria-Iraq battlespace, imply its military actions are qualitatively different from a state-combatant. This is especially true as terrorist actions directed against the representatives (human, material or symbolic) of formally recognized state actors become more targeted and less asymmetric. "Most episodes of terrorism-counter-terrorism cycles are indistinguishable at a behavioral level from what has been referred to as *total war* when this occurs between two formally recognized state-actors," Lizardo writes.[65]

So it is argued that terrorism consists of serial acts of war perpetrated by a violent non-state actor against a state-actor (whose reciprocal war-like acts comprise *counterterrorism*). Moisés Naim claimed a decade ago that the struggle between state and non-state organizations like al-Qa'ida and ISIS had become much less symmetrical, as the latter benefit from the globalization of resources, techniques and organizational forms.[66] This increases the likelihood territorial states will emerge inside geographical havens within the boundaries of weak or partially degenerate nation-state — witness ISIS's caliphate in western Iraq and eastern Syria — and that an actual state apparatus might fall at the hands of one of these organizations. This in turn, Lizardo observed, "increases the chances of state terrorism directed at civilians and other non-combatants" and "civilian proto-military organization against abusive state entities."[67] The final domino is often spillover into neighboring territories and the trans-nationalization of terrorism.

This perspective is wholly consistent with the dimension of ISIS as a guerrilla army, one susceptible to physical containment by such conventional counterterrorism strategies as *Contain & Hold* and *Ink Blot*. These strategies would likely be applied coterminously though they differ in the scope and tenor of their respective operations. The objective of *Ink Blot* is to seize, clear and hold strategically important areas working actively with local security forces. While special operations forces are its preponderant force element, it is likely some general-purpose forces would become involved as well. *Ink Blot* operations tend to be smaller scale based on "a proactive and forward-leaning policy of working with local forces before escalation to full-

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so de jure.

[61] For a discussion of this subject, see David H. Gray & Kristina LaTour (2010). "Terrorist Black Holes: Global Regions Shrouded in Lawlessness. *Global Security Studies*. 1:3.
[62] Omar Lizardo (2008). "Defining and Theorizing Terrorism: A Global Actor-Centered Approach." *Journal of World-Systems Research*. 14:2, 96. https://www3.nd.edu/~olizardo/papers/jwsr-defining.pdf. Last accessed 11 December 2015.
[63] *Ibid.*, 94.
[64] *Ibid.*, 96-7. There is understandable resistance to acknowledging any degree of equivalency between the actions of such groups as al-Qa'ida and ISIS, and territorial nation-states, with the exception of so-called "rogue" states, e.g., Assad's Syria. As Stephen Graham and others have pointed out, however, "killings of civilians, the targeting of non-strategic symbolic targets (such as famous landmarks), or sustained bombings of cities for demoralization purposes, are all strategies that have been put to use during interstate war, but are not usually branded as terrorist." [Lizardo (2008), 96] See: Stephen Graham (2004). *Cities, War, and Terrorism: Towards an Urban Geopolitics*. (Malden: Blackwell).
[65] *Ibid.*, 102.
[66] Moisés Naim (2003). "The Five Wars of Globalization." *Foreign Policy*. 29: 134, 29-36. http://users.clas.ufl.edu/zselden/Course%20Readings/Naim.pdf. Last accessed 11 December 2015.
[67] Lizardo (2008), *op cit.*, 111.

blown destabilization."[68] In contrast, the objective of *Contain & React* is to hold a geographic perimeter, acting strongly only if that perimeter is breached, in the event of which the United States would intervene massively with general-purpose forces.

Ideology:

"Pretending that [Islamic State] isn't actually a religious, millenarian group, with theology that must be understood to be combatted, has already led the United States to underestimate it and back foolish schemes to counter it. We'll need to get acquainted with the Islamic State's intellectual genealogy if we are to react in a way that will not strengthen it, but instead help it self-immolate in its own excessive zeal."[69]
-Graeme Wood (2015)

There is no doubt the Syrian and Iraqi government's failure to ensure security and stability within territorial borders — exacerbated by external interventions — eroded state sovereignty and legitimacy. ISIS opportunistically breached and infringed sovereignty in a direct challenge to their legitimacy. The ISIS caliphate is transnational in nature but rests within a controlled territory.

The Territorial ISIS narrative reinforces "a grossly idealistic portrait of the Caliphate as a form of governance":

> "This romantic portrayal extends not only to the Caliphate as a governing institution, but its ability to function as uniting force for the whole of the *ummah*, overcoming 'false' differences in identity based on nationality or ethnicity. [. . .] [T]hey romanticize the Caliphate in an attempt to shift the loyalties and sense of community the audience feels at a nationalistic level to that of the Caliphate."[70]

Furlow, et al., develop the concept of "the imagined community of the Ummah," a reference to the traditional conception of the *ummat al-mu'minin* ("Community of Believers") and the *ummat al-Islamiyah* ("Islamic community of believers").[71] "The primary loyalty of Muslim citizens is to the *ummah*, rather than the state, and to the *Shariah* rather than the ruler," writes Mir Zohair Husain.[72] ISIS (and al-Qa'ida) craftily exploit it to create "an imagined community of Muslims."

> "[T]hey actively reject the landscape of modern nation-states, viewing them as imposed by Western forces to the detriment of the *ummah*. They must construct an imagined community of a singular Islamic *ummah* without relying on the usual tools employed by, for example, nationalist oriented groups. [. . .] So they rely on the vision of the Caliphate to accomplish this. In other words, the Caliphate effectively bypasses the usual state-based features that would construct an imagined community."[73]

This suggests two avenues to contain ideological extremism: first, to strengthen national identity; and second, to address whatever theological factors underpin Islamic extremism. Both are complex subjects meriting more than superficial consideration. The first — national identity — is undoubtedly exacerbated by the simple fact that the United States is the lead actor in the anti-ISIS military coalition. It is well established that the primary basis of self-identification regionally is Muslim and Arab, not national, especially in Arab-to-American encounters.[74] That Iraqi — and now Syrian — national identity must be reconstructed is obvious. Both nations face on a much larger scale the same challenge such nations as Singapore have faced: the construction of a national identity through what Hobsbawm called "invented tradition."[75] It refers to the way in which an ideological agenda is artificially linked to the past, and to the uses of "tradition" within contemporary political discourse. Identity-forming myths that justify political authority are a fundament of ISIS's *modus operandi,* which seemingly internalized Ernest Renan's aphorism that "Getting its history wrong is part of being a nation."[76] Such communal identity also

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[68] Pernin, et al., *op cit.,* 99.

[69] Wood (2015). "What ISIS Really Wants." *The Atlantic.* (March 2015). http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/. Last accessed 13 December 2015.

[70] R. Bennett Furlow, Kristin Fleischer & Steven R. Corman (2014). "De-Romanticizing the Islamic State's Vision of the Caliphate." Report No. 1402/October 27, 2014. Arizona State University Center for Strategic Communication, 4, 10. http://csc.asu.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf/csc1402-deromanticizing-islamic-state-caliphate.pdf. Last accessed 14 December 2015.

[71] This builds on Benedict Anderson's concept of *imagined communities.*

[72] Mir Zohar Husain (1995). *Global Islamic Politics.* (New York: HarperCollins), 31.

[73] Furlow, et al. (2014), *op cit.,* 9.

[74] D. Jason Berggren (2007). "More Than the Ummah: Religious and National Identity in the Muslim World." *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences.* 24:2, 81.

[75] Hobsbawm wrote that "*invented tradition* is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past." See: Eric Hobsbawm (1983). "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." In *The Invention of Tradition*, Hobsbawm & Terrence Ranger, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1-14.

[76] Renan's aphorism reads in the original French: "L'oubli, et je dirai même l'erreur historique, sont un facteur essentiel de la création d'une nation, et c'est ainsi que le progrès des études historiques est souvent pour la nationalité un danger." ("Forgetting, I would go so far as to say as historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, such that historians' advancements often endanger nationalism.") From Renan (1882). *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (Paris: Calmann Lévy). http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/renan_ernest/qu_est_ce_une_nation/renan_quest_ce_une_nation.pdf. Last accessed 15 December 2015.

holds the basis for a nation-state's claim to sovereignty through the instrumental manipulation of political myths and ideals.

The experience of post-war Japan is instructive. Maruyama Masao wrote that it faced the urgent task of attaining modernity, and overcoming the political and social institutions that had curtailed its fulfillment. Takeuchi Yoshimi challenged this critique. He wrote that Japan's wartime fascism (like Iraq and Syria) "was not a hangover of pre-modern consciousness but a manifestation of political and social institutions born in modernity." While disavowing Eurocentric conceptions of modernity:

> "[I]t was not a matter of becoming modern so much as confronting the character of Japan's existing modernity. For Takeuchi, the task facing Japan was *to take control of modernity and find an indigenous basis from which to determine its parameters*."[77] [Emphasis added]

The Sunni Arab world must formulate its own modernizing political narrative to contain and extinguish ISIS-style nihilism.[78] Yoshimi foresaw that a Japan unable to locate itself in the modern world would descend into meaninglessness:

> "The absence of resistance [to external pressures] means that Japan is not Asian. At the same time the absence of a desire for self-preservation means that Japan is not European. That is to say that Japan is nothing."[79]

Only a communal Pan-Arab strategy can counter ISIS ideologically as well as militarily. The recent announcement by Saudi Arabia of the formation of a 34-nation Islamic military coalition may represent a tentative first step. It remains to be seen whether any such coalition can balance the dual imperatives to preserve territorial integrity and ensure that fellow Arabs' basic security and human needs are met.[80]

Outside the geographic arc of Territorial ISIS — and as far afield as Sri Lanka and Libya — its political dimension is dynamic. *Political ISIS* is a revolutionary movement that seeks "comprehensive and drastic change in the political system, social structure, economic property, and the existing social situation." So wrote Abu `Ubayd al-Qurashi, an al-Qa'ida ideologist.[81] The point of the revolution's social and economic dimensions is to "activate...the atmosphere of collapse,"[82] language redolent of Italy's *Brigate Rosse* of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

While Political ISIS is Sunni in composition, it is not deeply grounded in the denomination nor for that matter especially sectarian:[83] It has a deeply syncretic worldview:

> "They have constructed a tradition using quotations from the textual sources, but removed from their linguistic context as well as that of their historical reception, combined with borrowings from a past which isn't even their own, plus elements which are completely and utterly contemporary."[84]

These "borrowings" are exemplified by ISIS' obsession with the Shiite cult of martyrdom, which "does relate back to certain forms of Islamic religious tradition, these forms belong not to their own Sunni tradition but to the Shiite beliefs which they

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[77] Peter Geral Kelman (2001). *Protesting the National Identity: The Cultures of Protest in 1960s Japan*. A dissertation presented to the Faculty of Arts of the University of Sydney (January 2001), 47-48.

[78] ISIS "is, a millenarian death cult that kills mainly (Shiite) Muslims and discredits rather than defends Islam." So declares Alex Schmidt of the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism at the Hague, who wrote that its "claim...to stand for 'pure and unadulterated Islam' therefore is just that — a claim among other claims, with no better proof of correctness. See: Schmidt (2015). "Challenging the Narrative of the 'Islamic State'." ICCT Research Paper (June 2015). International Centre for Counter-Terrorism — The Hague, 3-4. http://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/ICCT-Schmid-Challenging-the-Narrative-of-the-Islamic-State-June2015.pdf. Last accessed 13 December 2015.

[79] Quoted in Kelman (2001), 50.

[80] Simon Mabon & Lucia Ardovini (2015). "FPC Briefing: Daesh, Geopolitics and the Resurgence of Pan Arabism." The Foreignh Policy Centre (March 2015). http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/1691.pdf. Last accessed 15 December 2015. It is worth highlighting that this (like the self-identification phenomenon) will require Arab states to rethink their singular commitment to preserving territoriality as a source of sovereignty, and to face honestly their manifold political pathologies.

[81] Abu-'Ubayd al-Qurashi (2002) "Revolutionary War." *Majallah Al-Ansar* [published online in English]. 1 (15 January 2002), 10–15. According to the Militant Ideology Atlas published by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point (CTC), Abu-'Ubayd al-Qurashi is the pseudonym of an "al-Qa'ida leader and strategist, a close aide to bin Ladin. He was a frequent contributor to the jihad journal (print and online) *al-Ansar*." Michael Ryan writes of him," al- Qurashi attempted to describe a new kind of guerrilla war with ancient roots in Islamic jihad and Chinese strategy as well as modern models in communist insurgencies and what American military strategists some- times call 'fourth-generation warfare'." [Michael W.S. Ryan (2013). Decoding Al-Qaeda's Strategy: The Deep Battle Against America. (New York: Columbia University Press) 84]

[82] Al-Qurashi attributed the phrase *atmosphere of collapse* to the Brazilian communist Carlos Marighella, who believed violence is the basis of revolution, and that violence created an environment in which revolution could flourish.

[83] Alizera Doostdar made much the same argument regarding efforts to explain its behavior in terms of Salafism. See: Doostdar (2014). "How Not to Understand ISIS." *Sightings* [published online 2 October 2014]. https://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/how-not-understand-isis-alireza-doostdar. Last accessed 12 December 2015.

[84] He was speaking of al-Qa'ida, but his language is descriptive of ISIS as well. See: Navid Kermani (2002). "A dynamite of the spirit." *The Times Literary Supplement* (29 March 2002). http://www.navidkermani.de/media/raw/DynamiteTLS.pdf. Last accessed 12 December 2015. Kermani goes on to suggest that the most apt ideological analogue to ISIS is Nietzschean nihilism.

regard as heretic."[85]

Hussein Ibish evokes an entirely different historical analogue:

> "In some crucial ways their strategic modus operandi looks strikingly similar to that of the Communist Party of China (CPC) led by Mao Zedong, in the late 1930s through to the late 1940s...[T]he clearly recognizable ways in which ISIL is indeed replicating key elements of Mao's revolutionary methodology are unmistakable precisely because any such comparison is so incongruous. The analogy at first seems far-fetched, but proves actually compelling and alarming."[86]

That revolutionary methodology has distinctly ISIS-like overtones:

> "Revolutionary warfare is never confined within the bounds of military action. Because its purpose is to destroy an existing society and its institutions and to replace them with a completely new structure, any revolutionary war is a unity of which the constituent parts, in varying importance, are military, political, economic, social and psychological."[87]

ISIS sees itself at the vanguard of a revolutionary movement. It aims to displace what it sees as an illegitimate and oppressive world order, the raison d'être of which is to maintain Western, in particular, United States, hegemony. There are significant parallels to post-revolution Iranian political culture, ironic given ISIS's palpably anti-Shi'a rhetoric. Like the post-revolutionary Iran before it, ISIS, seeks "to overturn U.S. influence in the Islamic world, to remove U.S.-supported Arab authoritarian regimes, and to spread Islamic rule," writes Robert Reardon.[88]

Devising a framework to contain Political ISIS is challenging, perhaps more so than its territorial embodiment. No practicable strategy can fully neuter it politically. It begins by disambiguating ISIS, and shedding misapprehensions about its political and religious underpinnings. The author points to earlier revolutionary groups that bear further consideration as models: the Maoist Katībat al-Ḡarmaq (*aka* "the Jarmaq Squad"), which fought as a part of Al-`Asifah against the South Lebanon Army; the Marxist Fedayeen Khalq ("FKO" *aka* "the People's Feyadeen"); the Islamo-Marxist Mujahedin-e Khalq ("MEK" *aka* "the People's Mojahedin"); and the Harakat al-Tawhid al-Islami ("Harakah") *aka* "the Sunni Islamic Unification Movement," in which a number of Maoists played a formative role.

ISIS is "Islamic" only in the context of using Islam to establish a group identity — much in the manner of the secular Malay-Muslim insurgency in southern Thailand — and using its interpretation of Islamic teachings (mostly coopted from al-Qa'ida) as a political power base.[89] At the same time it solidifies its political base within Territorial ISIS, it is transitioning from *foco*-like[90] hit-and-run guerilla actions and terrorism — tactics similar to those employed by the Southeast Asian Islamist group Jemaah Islamiah[91] — to a Maoist gradualist strategy of the sort attempted by the Jemaah Islamiah offshoot, Tanzim Qaedat al-Jihad (*aka* "Al-Qa'ida in the Malay Archipelago"). Like ISIS today, Jemaah Islamiah employed the classic Maoist strategy of forming a military force (*strategic stalemate*) and then launching military operations to establish a caliphate (*strategic offensive*).[92] This recitation is intended to drive home the point that many ISIS-like insurgencies have been successfully checked by counterterrorism *cum* containment strategies.

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[85] *Ibid.*

[86] Hussein Ibish (2014). "Implausible as it sounds, ISIL has plundered Mao's playbook." *The National* [published online in English 21 September 2014]. http://www.thenational.ae/opinion/implausible-as-it-sounds-isil-has-plundered-maos-playbook. Last accessed 12 December 2015.

[87] Mao Tse-tung (1962). *Mao Tse-tung on Guerrilla Warfare.* BGEN Samuel B. Griffith, USMC (Ret.), trans. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger), 7.

[88] Robert J. Reardon (2012). *Containing Iran: Strategies for Addressing the Iranian Nuclear Challenge.* (Santa Monica: RAND), 77-78.

[89] This argument is adapted from one by Muhammad Tito Karnavian, whom the author wishes to credit. See: Karnavian (2014). *Explaining Islamist Insurgencies : The Case of al-Jamaah al-Islamiyyah and the Radicalisation of the Poso Conflict, 2000-2007.* (London: Imperial College Press).

[90] *Foco* is short for *foquismo* ("focalism"), a theory embraced by Che Guevara and later formalized by the French intellectual Régis Debray [Debray (1967). *Revolution in the Revolution?* (New York: Monthly Review Press)].

[91] Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) was created by Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, two Indonesian extremists who fled to Malaysia in 1985. It grew out of Darul Islam (DI), a West Javanese insurgent movement that sought to impose Islamic law as Indonesia transitioned from Dutch rule. While dispatching fighters to Afghanistan, the Sungkar-Ba'asyir's network established close ties with individuals who would later become associated with al-Qa'ida core and affiliated groups. Sungkar and Ba'asyir formalized their group as JI in the early 1990s and relocated to Indonesia in 1998 following the collapse of President Suharto's regime. David Gordon & Samuel Lindo (2011). "Jemaah Islamiyah." Center for Strategic & International Studies, Case Study Number 6 (November 2011). http://csis.org/files/publication/111101_Gordon_JemaahIslamiyah_WEB.pdf. Last accessed 13 December 2015.

[92] Orthodox Maoism theorizes three phases of protracted of "long" war: the strategic defensive, the strategic stalemate (sometimes called *strategic equilibrium*) and the strategic offensive. While the revolutionary force has not yet achieved equality with the enemy, *Strategic Stalemate* is when the base areas are stabilized to the point where a revolutionary government can form. The war begins to take on a conventional nature in the *Strategic Offensive*, when the qualitative and quantitative difference between the two forces lessens

Returning to Kennan-esque Containment

"[M]uch of what I had said has a chance of being re-discovered after my death, thus to acquire a certain measure of classic quality, and to evoke understanding by that perverse quality of human nature that makes men more inclined to respond to the works of someone long dead than to those of any contemporary." [93]
-George F. Kennan (1987)

The term *negative containment* denotes a policy under which an adversary is encircled geographically — by, for example, an alliance or a network of military bases — but where there is no active effort to destroy the adversary by means of counterforce. Negative containment seeks stalemate. As Charles O. Lerche, Jr. explained, "the theorists of containment had anticipated stalemate as the most probable outcome of the first phase of American action [against Soviet expansionism] and devised a strategy to follow up any success the United States might enjoy..."[94] This phase anticipated a second one that "called for the United States to exploit its own advantages." It would ultimately "confront the Kremlin with such an unfavorable situation that peaceful accommodation with the free world would be the only convenient way for the leadership to escape with the regime intact."[95] Then, as perhaps now, a significant portion of the American public rejected the objective of the second phase — peaceful accommodation — as effectively acquiescing in the Soviet subjugation of the "captive nations" of eastern and central Europe. The Eisenhower Administration appeared to reject it when Secretary of State John Foster Dulles proposed his declaration on captive peoples in February 1953.[96]

Dulles' testimony later that month before the House Foreign Affairs Committee nevertheless echoed Kennan's original exposition. He referred to "peacefully frustrat[ing] the oppressive design of Soviet despotism and disintigrat[ing] the over-extended despotism." He declared "as one of" the United States' "peaceful goals, that these enslaved national groups...shall recover genuine independence."[97] That the Eisenhower Administration was unwilling to go further was quickly evident. Responding to the eruption of workers' riots in East Berlin in late June 1953, Secretary Dulles remarked:

> "In my book *War or Peace*...I said: the Communist structure...could be shaken if the difficulties that were latent were activated. *I went on to point out that this does not mean an armed revolt which would precipitate a massacre*, but short of this the people could demonstrate an independence such that the Soviet communist leaders would come to recognize the futility of trying to hold captive so many people."[98] [Emphasis added]

In other words, the United States would not actively intervene to support the East Berlin workers. Nor did it do so in response to the Poznań Riots in June 1956 or the Hungarian Uprising in October later that year. Containment would be limited to corralling Soviet expansionism, and for the time being at least would not extend to liberating captive nations.

This raises the question of deterrence. If an adversary is not to be deterred by the threat of direct United States intervention to liberate a captive nation, what is its basis? Kennan's original thesis allowed for the application of counterforce in varying degrees at points other than those affected directly by Soviet expansionism. Secretary Dulles went a step further. The United States would deter Soviet expansionism, not by threatening active intervention to liberate captive nations, but by promising military retaliation in the event the Soviet Union breached the figurative containment "wall". Acceding to static containment acknowledged the gap between American aspiration — to liberate captive nations — and capability. Dulles later fitted the idea of a graduated response to the original concept of containment. The United States would retaliate at whatever level was required — conventional or nuclear — to contain the Soviet Union and restore the status quo ante bellum. Its willingness to use nuclear force to restrain aggression that would otherwise require large conventional forces — something which led ultimately to Dulles' doctrine of "massive retaliation" announced in January 1954 — conceded a point made by Walter Lippman in 1947: responding in-kind with a conventional force was not practicable because it required a large standing army for an indefinite period of time.[99]

Today's debate about containing ISIS substitutes tactical air and special operations ground forces for the nuclear force of the 1950s. The objective is the same, however: to avoid committing a large conventional ground force.

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[93] Diary entry dated 22 May 2007. From George Kennan (2014). *The Kennan Diaries*, Frank Costigiola, ed. (New York: W.W. Norton), 580.
[94] Charles O. Lerche, Jr. (1961). *Foreign Policy of the American People*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall), 271.
[95] *Ibid.*
[96] United States State Department (1953). *Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 28 (January-March 1953), 354.
[97] *Ibid.,* 372.
[98] United States State Department (1953). *Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 29 (October-December 1953), 40. Dulles' 1950 book *War or Peace* was an extended critique of static containment.
[99] Lippman (1947), *op cit.*, 19

> "At most, containment can be a temporary expedient, a transition. As the transition is completed, containment must move toward one or the other of two major poles, toward appeasement or liberation."[100]

Though penned by James Burnham in 1953, the paragraph's unmistakable *containment versus liberation* refrain might well come from the contemporary debate over escalating the United States' intervention in Syria and Iraq.

It is indisputable the United States can execute the physical encirclement and containment of ISIS in eastern Syria and western Iraq. Whether an asymmetrical or symmetrical approach is better suited to the facts on the ground is less certain. *Symmetrical containment* is "the ability to respond wherever and in whatever manner aggression took place but to do so without either backing down or dangerously escalating the conflict."[101] The word "symmetrical" means the military response is commensurate to the provocation.

The classic public statement of symmetrical containment is President Kennedy's commitment to "pay any price, bear any burden." That rhetorical flourish exposes a handicap: symmetrical containment relinquishes the initiative to the adversary. This underlies the perversity of the Obama Administration's rump symmetrical containment policy toward Territorial ISIS: by resisting either escalation or withdrawal, it cedes control of the nature and extent of the competition at every stage to ISIS.[102] [103]

Negative Containment *Redux*: The Long War to Contain ISIS

> *"Judging by the deep contradictions between the two incompatible systems, it is clear that the upcoming clash, once it begins, will be decisive. Combat will continue to death, until one side emerges victorious."*[104]
> -Mikhail Frunze (1929)

Insurgencies historically on average last nine to twelve years. Thus counterinsurgency, wrote Soviet military theorist Georgii Isserson, does not consist of "a one-act operational effort in a single locale." It is not "a broken chain of interrupted battles." Instead, it is "a continuous chain of merged combat efforts throughout the entire depths," one that "requires a series of uninterrupted operational efforts that merge into a single whole."[105]

The campaign against ISIS must be conceptualized as a "long war" to systematically degrade the strengths and exploit the vulnerabilities of its military and political apparatuses.

> "[C]ounterinsurgency strategy must accommodate the fact that insurgent warfare involves prolonged conflict, requiring both patience and adaptation. Popular doctrinal concepts, such as 'rapid decisive operations' that emphasize the merits of winning quick victories or achieving strategic-level shock and paralytic effects against conventional military opponents are intrinsically inconsistent with this reality, and seeking to apply them in counterinsurgency will often be counterproductive."[106]

If the United States intends to contain Territorial ISIS, it must commit to a strategy of force escalation or rethink its (conscious or not) adherence to symmetrical containment. The stark escalation calculus of earlier decades no longer applies. Dulles-era deterrence meant an unquestioned commitment to escalate rapidly from conventional to nuclear force. Today's

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[100] James Burnham (1953). *Containment or Liberation?* (New York: John Day Co.), 217-218.

[101] Its counterpart, *asymmetrical containment*, entails "confronting an adversary at times and in places of one's own choosing (to paraphrase John Foster Dulles). The idea was to retain the initiative: in the terrain upon which the contest was to take place, the means by which it was to be conducted, and the balance between the costs encountered and the benefits derived." See: John Lewis Gaddis (2001). "Strategies of Containment, Past and Future." *Hoover Digest.* 2001:2 [published online 30 April 2001]. http://www.hoover.org/research/strategies-containment-past-and-future. Last accessed 16 December 2015. Kennan on the other hand favored an asymmetrical response, e.g., a military response targeting the enemy's weakest point, in lieu of a symmetrical response.

[102] Gaddis writes that President Johnson's symmetrical containment policy in Vietnam — predicated on his belief that "the means available to the United States could be expanded as needed and that the means of what appeared to be an insignificant adversary could not" — meant "the home court advantage was Hanoi's, all the way through." This is not to suggest that asymmetrical containment does not have its own characteristic shortcomings: "[I]ts neglect of apparently peripheral areas that could, under unexpected circumstances, become vital, as had happened in 1950 with South Korea, and the apparent narrowness of the choice, in Korea and similar situations, between escalation, on the one hand, and doing nothing at all, on the other."

[103] It is a truism that containment puts primary security needs ahead of secondary interests. For those who are discontent merely to contain Territorial ISIS, liberating its occupied space begs a further series of questions — *Liberate whom? Liberate them from what? What comes afterwards?* — to include the paramount one whether the United States has sufficient political will to undertake (yet another round of) nation-building?

[104] Quoted in Georgii Samoilovich Isserson (1937; 2013). *The Evolution of Operational Art*, Bruce W. Menning, trans. (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press), 41.

[105] *Ibid.,* 47-48.

[106] Alan J. Vick, Adam Grissom, William Rosenau, Beth Grill, & Karl P. Mueller (2006). *Air Power in the New Counterinsurgency Era. The Strategic Importance of USAF Advisory and Assistance Missions.* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND), 63-64.

policymakers have the luxury to escalate violence by regulating the targeting and frequency of high-discrimination tactical airstrikes and SOF ground operations. However, a perceptible willingness of the United States to do nothing because it fears doing anything eviscerates deterrence altogether.

It may be asymmetrical containment is better suited to Territorial ISIS. For Kennan, a deep understanding of "the political personality of Soviet power" in terms of ideology and circumstance were necessary precursors to any successful application of his containment doctrine. He understood containment meant "the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points." Perhaps his most important guidance for today's policymakers is a little-quoted passage from "The Sources of Soviet Conduct:"

> "Let us bring this apocalyptic vision down to earth, and suppose that the Western world finds the strength and resourcefulness to contain Soviet power over a period of ten to fifteen years. What does that spell for Russia itself?"

It is certainly time to do the same regarding ISIS, given intemperate rhetoric about the menace posed by its relatively small force, one that has been substantially depleted of experienced fighters.

Many proponents of "containing" ISIS focus on the territorial dimension to the exclusion of the political. Emerson warned this is a grave error:

> "It is not so easy a task as is ordinarily thought to sketch...a nation. [. . .] From our inability to grasp the whole truth it thus happens that we select some one accidental feature & by dwelling exclusively on this our imaginations magnify it till we come actually to mistake the part for the whole."[107]

The consequence of mistaking ISIS' territorial dimension for its entirety is to leave unanswered ISIS' reconceptualization of modernity and the state. It also fails to take notice that national identities are inherently unstable; that they are prone to the whims of disparate groups and ideas; and that the histories of the region's nation-states are in fact as contingent as the nations themselves.[108]

The observation that containment must extend to the territorial and the political dimensions alike is (or ought to be) self-evident, so there is no suggestion by the author that its restatement here is novel or especially insightful. What may be less self-evident is that ISIS's various dimensions give it a sort of tactical defensive depth.[109] ISIS cannot be attacked piecemeal. One must be prepared to overcome its *entire* defensive depth if it is to be contained and countered.[110]

The author claims the United States has strayed in the campaign against Territorial ISIS from a decade-old adherence to the doctrine of population-centric counterinsurgency[111] By default or design, the United States has lapsed into a enemy-centric approach, which with no small irony closely resembles Russian counterinsurgency strategy.[112] The latter understands counterinsurgency as a variant of conventional warfare, the spirit of which is well captured as, "The enemy must not only be beaten. He must be beaten thoroughly."[113]

The author maintains this is a fundamentally flawed approach to containing ISIS.

> "Counterinsurgency strategy is grand strategy in miniature, and to consider its military component in isolation is as artificial as examining the air component of a conventional joint military campaign without regard to the effects of surface forces."[114]

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[107] Ralph Waldo Emerson (1961). *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Volume II: 1822-1826.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 250.

[108] The author credits this observation to Kelman (2001), *op cit.,* 77.

[109] Isserson [(1937; 2013), *op cit.,* 54] attributes this to the fact that "the belligerents' are ideologically opposed and because no reconciliation is possible."

[110] *Ibid.,* 53.

[111] Gian Gentile wrote, "The principles and ideas [of population-centric counterinsurgency] that emerged out of the Army's counterinsurgency field manual, FM 3-24, published in late 2006, have become transcendent." See: Gentile (2009). "A Strategy of Tactics: Population-Centric COIN and the Army." *Parameters.* 39:3 (August 2009), 5.

[112] It is not exclusively a Russian approach, however. One of its earliest and more forceful expositions is Colonel Charles Edward Caldwell's 1896 classic of counterinsurgency theory, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practices.*

[113] Caldwell (1896), *op cit.,*

[114] Vick, *et al.* (2006), 62. Of course, no counterinsurgency campaign can be categorized as strictly enemy- or population-centric, and nearly all incorporate varying approaches into the campaign.

Enemy-centric counterinsurgency prioritizes finding and annihilating the enemy over protecting the population.[115] The difference between enemy- and population-centric approaches turns on the relative ratio of offense-to-defense, with the former favoring offensive action against insurgents while the latter favors defensive capabilities to protect civilians. The United States' enemy-centrism is evident even in how it pursues counterinsurgency in the political dimension, emphasizing such operational approaches as *Disaggregation* to contain, isolate and disrupt an insurgency.[116]

The United States' use of air power in the counterinsurgency campaign is the object of criticism, much of it misdirected and grounded in a fundamental ignorance of modern air-delivered weapons systems.

> "The precision of modern airpower enables the delivery of timely and accurate overwhelming firepower in support of light, agile forces which, though highly skilled, lack significant organic firepower. Second, precision enables effective and efficient engagement of targets in close proximity to friendly forces and non-combatants while minimizing the risks of fratricide and collateral damage."[117]

That being said, it remains that "fighting a non-state enemy who uses guerrilla tactics in populated environments demands a clear military imperative for more than an overwhelming air campaign."

> "[Modern air power] cannot bring security to the population, prevent acts of personal coercion and intimidation, or arrest the spread of fear. [. . .] Air policing had demonstrable merit in the imperial period for suppressing recalcitrant natives, but against modern, fanatical non-state actors who operate within the civilian population...the imperial experience is of dubious value."[118]

Another lesson is that the United States, too, has a vulnerable center of gravity: it is America's ability to maintain domestic support for the campaign. Policymakers and the public alike want short conflicts with clear success criteria, definitive exit strategies, and decisive victories.[119] This is largely incompatible with counterinsurgency fundamentals, given that its campaigns tend to be of long duration; decisive victories are elusive; progress is difficult to measure and quantify; and there often is no definitive "victory".[120]

Wilfried Loth and Wolfram Hanrieder coined the phrase "double containment."[121] It describes a response to the threats to the post-war security order in Europe coming from, respectively, German nationalism and Soviet expansionism. One of these — re-ascendant German nationalism — was considered soluble in the near term while Soviet expansionism was not. Thus, *containment* meant something different in each case. Containing German nationalism meant binding Germany to a European order from which it could not break free, and that did not depend upon Germany's voluntary subordination. Only the European community of nations acting as a whole — the Soviet Union included — would allow German re-ascendance (and ultimately, German reunification).

While Germany's reemergence as a nation depended upon European consent, the existence of the Soviet Union did not. The security dilemma posed by Soviet territorial expansionism — a phenomenon many believed rooted in the Soviet Union's very existence — was thus seen as near-term insoluble, at least short of using nuclear weapons (over which the United States had a brief post-war monopoly until 1949). Kennan controversially argued to contain Soviet expansionism until such time as contradictions inherent to the Soviet system caused its collapse. The many who were not persuaded by Kennan remained skeptical that a totalitarian world power could be contained.

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[115] It is worth noting that ISIS has been influenced by the Chechen conflict idiom, especially the Second Chechen War (1999-2004).

[116] See: United States Defense Department (2013). *Counterinsurgency*. Joint Publication 3-24 (22 November 2013), III-25 - III-26. It is the author's judgment that so far, ISIS has achieved greater in disaggregating al-Qa'ida-affiiated and anti-government insurgent groups than the United States has had in disaggregating ISIS.

[117] John James Patterson, VI (2010). A Long-Term Counterinsurgency Strategy. *Parameters*. 40:3 (Autumn 2010), 7-8. For example, the weapon-delivery accuracy and warhead discrimination of modern Precision Guided Munitions (along with target location, marking and confirmation technology) (PGM) both facilitate efficient target destruction and mitigate the risk of collateral damage.

[118] Paul Smyth (2011). "Airpower and Counterinsurgency: Building on a Proper Foundation." *Air & Space Journal*. 25:2 (Summer 2011), 117.

[119] Michael Clarke (2000). "Airpower and Military Intervention: The Political Limitations." In PeterW.Gray, ed. *Air Power 21: Challenges for the New Century*. (London: The Stationery Office), 19.

[120] Wing Commander Glen Beck (2008). "Offensive Air Power in Counter-Insurgency Operations: Putting Theory into Practice." Royal Australian Air Force Air Power Development Center Working Paper 26, 6-7.

[121] Wilfreid Loth (1984). "Die doppelte Eindämmung: Überlegungen zur Genesis des Kalten Krieges 1945-1947." *Historische Zeitschrift*. 238, 611-631. Wolfram F. Hanrieder (1992). Wolfram F. Hanrieder (1992). "The FRG and NATO: Between Security Dependence and Security Partnership." In *The Federal Republic of Germany and NATO, 40 Years After*, Emil Kirchner & James Sperling, eds. (New York: MacMillan), 194-220. See also Manfred Görtemake (1993). "John Foster Dulles und die Westintegration der Bundesrepublik Deutschland." In *Die doppelte Eindämmung. Europäische Sicherheit und deutsche Frage in den Fünfzigern*, Rolf Steininger et al., eds. (Munich: Hase und Koehler), 9-38.

Wolfgang Krieger argues appeasement was critical to containing Soviet territorial expansionism. He uses that politically incendiary term to describe the condition under which the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to a mutually tolerable European solution — the status quo of a divided Europe and Germany — to the detriment of European interests.[122] Thus, his argument goes, Soviet post-war expansionism in Europe was "contained," all or in part because the United States "appeased" fundamental Soviet geopolitical interests there.

The author speculates whether the United States is attempting a variation on dual containment in Iraq and Syria. One could argue that American actions vis-à-vis Iran satisfy the earlier standard of Soviet appeasement — for example, conceding the legitimacy of Iranian geopolitical interests in Iraq; breaking the stalemate over Iran's nuclear program; studied passivity in the face of abject Iranian non-compliance with United Nations Security Council-imposed restrictions on Iran's missile program restrictions. The list goes on. If the suggestion is correct, the proponents of appeasement have the burden to prove how it will contain Iran from acting on aspirations of regional hegemony (or for that matter, territorial ambitions in Iraq and elsewhere).

Syria likewise is no Germany. The geopolitical conditions there differ sharply from post-war Europe. The United States is in no position to impose a resolution on the region, especially in the face of implacable Sunni resistance to Shi'a expansionism. Nor is it clearly foreseeable how an eastern Syrian rump state would contribute to stability, either in Territorial ISIS or in other jihadi-controlled enclaves within the ungoverned space of western Iraq and eastern Syria. A United States-led force of sufficient size and duration might well succeed in containing and attritting Territorial ISIS. It would, however, demand a significant force escalation, one for which there is a discernable lack of supporters among Sunni nations on the battlespace's periphery. Nor as argued earlier would containing Territorial ISIS perforce contain its metastatic political variant, any more so than containing Soviet territorial ambitions in Europe likewise contained Soviet adventurism elsewhere.

So, What Would Kennan Do?

A final word on this essay's title. It begs the question of the United States' geopolitical interest. After all, the "Long War" is the containment of Political ISIS, not the simpler task of containing its territorial embodiment in western Iraq and eastern Syria. The United States, along with its NATO allies and Russia, are fully capable of executing that mission in short order. It is also so that with sufficient will and application, that alliance could degrade and attrit a now-contained Territorial ISIS to a point where it becomes largely irrelevant as a military force within the battlespace. The relevant question is whether the post-containment fight rightly belongs to the United States, or alternately, to what Lippman called its "dubious and unnatural allies on the perimeter" — the regional Sunni states.

It is claimed the United States' immediate geopolitical objectives can be satisfied by containing Territorial ISIS. The author concedes that another jihadist configuration would likely arise to replace a now-attritted ISIS — a virtual certainty so long as the battlespace remains ungoverned territory — requiring that it, too, be contained within the selfsame geography. Whether the United States' interest extends to conducting large-scale ground operations within that contained battlespace remains an open question. Its burden is foursquare on its advocates to answer that question.[123]

The "indispensable role of local forces,"[124] to borrow John Nagl's phrase, remains just that, indispensable, and so far, incomplete. Also indispensable — and absent — is what Richard Haass called "a Syrian ground partner," the colloquial "Arab boots on the ground." The degradation and attrition of a contained Territorial ISIS is a greater geopolitical priority for Sunni states on the conflict's geographic periphery than for the United States. After all, ISIS's transnational caliphate directly challenges how territoriality is inherently linked to sovereignty. Territorial ISIS will disrupt the region's geopolitical equilibrium until and unless a Syrian ground partner takes hold.

So the question recurs, what would Kennan do? Amidst an earlier debate about escalating the presence of American ground forces, George Kennan offered the following before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February 1966. He spoke in response to a question by Senator Stuart Symington, who advocated escalating the American military presence in Vietnam. Kennan's remarks resonate today:

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[122] See: Krieger (2004). "Security Through Deterrence?" *The United States and German in the Era of the Cold War, 1945-1990: A Handbook*, Detlef Junker, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press), 181-196.

[123] There is no shortage of unpersuasive arguments. Case in point, see: David French (2015). "Defeating the Islamist militia is a must, but there are no shortcuts or easy solutions." *National Review* [published online 21 December 2015]. http://www.nationalreview.com/article/428852/defeat-isis-bad-ideas. Last accessed 23 December 2015.

[124] John A. Nagl (2002; 2005). *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife. Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya to Vietnam.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

"Senator, if their [South Vietnam's] morale is so shaky that without an offensive strategy on our part they are simply going to give up the fight, I do not think they are worth helping anyway. And, as for the question of our having a moral duty to help them, they have had enormous help from us to date. I mean, goodness, they have had help in billions and billions of dollars. How many countries are you going to give such a claim on out resources and our help? If they cannot really do the trick with this, I feel strongly that the trouble lies elsewhere and not with us."[125]

[125] United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee (1966). "Kennan testimony, U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, To amend Further the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.: Hearings on S.2793, 2 pts. 89th Cong., 2nd sess., 10 February 1966.