

ISIS Can Be Stopped without War-making

[In response to "Can ISIS Be Defeated Without the Use of Violence?" - by Michael Ferber, New Hampshire Peace Action News]

Many thanks to Michael Ferber for starting a very necessary discussion. Recognizing that US aggression towards Iraq was the biggest factor in the rise of ISIS, that the behavior of many ISIS militants is truly despicable, and that unified global action is hard to agree on and implement, he wonders if some sort of military response is necessary. He also rightly confronts a challenging question for the peace movement and beyond: how can we speak and act constructively together to reverse this disaster?

Our country has a particular responsibility to address the problems we have done the most to create, yet the bull in the china shop may not be qualified to pick up the pieces. Perhaps the root of the problem is arrogance, which America has in great supply and reinforces in numerous regimes abroad. A great start for reversing arrogance is to ask others about their successes in addressing similar problems. Foreign Policy Magazine [How to Beat the Islamic State Through Non-Violence - <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/14/how-to-beat-the-islamic-state-through-non-violence/>] and a TED talk [How Can We Solve Democracy's Problems - https://www.youtube.com/watch%3Fv%3Ds6JPnLCEK5o&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&sa=U&ved=0ahUKEwiZnofIpojRAhVoZoMKHd3EDYsQtwIITAC&usg=AFQjCNFiAtRmElhLft7AwhC8l0D_gT0l1Q] have already profoundly addressed this question. Foreign policy Mag brings up examples from history where authoritarian regimes were effectively resisted when those they rule refused to cooperate. In the TED talk, a journalist shares what he learned about how the most populous muslim nation weakened the power of Islamic Militancy through inclusion, addressing inequality, and police action strictly rooted in due process.

I also question the demonization of all ISIS fighters. ISIS is a source of some degree of self-determination, security and rule-of-law in a region that has had little to none of that for many years. Like all military organizations engaged in war, some factions engage in horrendous excesses, while others refrain from doing so when they could have. As we've seen, some men have defected from ISIS after seeing the brutality and hypocrisy that does exist in the organization.

The US should now follow the Hippocratic Oath and discontinue all overt or covert violent action within ISIS territory. We should help deliver food, medical care, and evacuation (if possible to provide without confrontation). We should support defensive police protection at the border of ISIS territory, to prevent ISIS from expanding its influence or smuggling oil. Any bordering nation that refuses to take concrete action to stop the smuggling of oil should itself be blocked from trading oil, and from accessing international banking. The vast majority of the UN General Assembly must agree on this to proceed. Diplomacy is hard, but avoids the harms inherent in making war.

Containment doesn't solve every problem. It won't be instantly successful. It is not entirely pacifist, at least not according to the strictest definitions of that word. But it is constructive, may realistically protect ourselves while working to undo our nation's previous mistakes, and is a plan around which unity can be built.

The US does not have jurisdiction or right to police the world unilaterally. Perhaps many ISIS fighters deserve to be locked up forever, but that is not our decision. The way out of this mess must include respecting and supporting the self-determination and responsibility of all the people in the region to

address this issue as they see fit. US meddling to select who will lead these countries, and the provision of weapons to corrupt and abusive regimes will not be useful ways to proceed.

In short, I want us to reverse arrogance with respect. Diplomacy is hard, but easier and more effective than war. Our diplomacy will be taken seriously when our government stops being a big part of the problem. War criminals and islamic extremism are hardly novel concerns. At the very least, the US government should stop committing war crimes, such as bombing civilians, and stop arming islamic extremists. We should support the efforts already begun by Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard to stop our government from arming islamic extremists.

In conclusion, I see increasingly less-violent strategies to move us towards a meaningful end to the conflict.

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