Iraqi Strategy in Confronting ISIS
"A study in Military Strategy and Doctrine"

الاستراتيجية العراقية في مواجهة داعش
"دراسة في الاستراتيجية والعقيدة العسكرية"

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Synopsis

Indeed, political diplomacy and strategy were not present on the ground, especially in the era of Al-Maliki, who had not the political cleverness and experience in administration of the Iraqi state, he used the policy of exclusion against his political rivals whether Shiites or Sunnis which generated to occurrence of more dilemmas in the Iraqi government. Hence, terrorist groups originally have been supported by some radical Sunni leaders, exploited the weakness of government to begin peaceful demonstrations outwardly and inwardly military to gain time (as step one) and re-arrange groups in order to face the government militarily (as step two). Therefore, changes led to an imbalance in the Iraqi government precisely on the military side because of the rampant corruption in the military system and the lack a real strategy and military doctrine in the Iraqi army. The end result was the fall important cities such as Mosul, Tikrit, and some areas of Anbar under the control ISIS. The final result, genuine convictions have crystalized in the Iraqi decision-maker and the religious authority in Najaf (Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani) that the military option is the only solution to remove ISIS from all parts of Iraq.

Introduction

Recently, many researches and studies have suggested that the elimination of terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq should be through diplomacy and dialogue between the conflicting parties as the first step and then through the use of military strategy in the second step. In fact political diplomacy was not present on the ground, especially in the era of Al-Maliki, who had not the political cleverness and experience in administration of the Iraqi state, he used the policy of exclusion against his political rivals whether Shiites or Sunnis which led to occurrence of more problems in the Iraqi government.

On this basis, terrorist groups originally have been supported by some radical Sunni leaders, exploited the weakness of government to begin peaceful demonstrations outwardly and inwardly military to gain time and re-arrange groups in order to face the government militarily. These changes led to an imbalance in the Iraqi government precisely on the military side because of the rampant corruption in the military system. The Russian arms deal is indicator to the lack a real strategy and military doctrine in the Iraqi army. The end result was the fall important cities such as Mosul, Tikrit, and some areas of Anbar under the control ISIS.

Hence, genuine convictions have crystalized in the Iraqi decision-maker and the religious authority in Najaf (Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani) that the military option is the only solution to remove ISIS from the land of Mesopotamia. Therefore, the military speech of the religious authority in Najaf was extremely clear, which declared jihad against ISIS as a

deterrent strategy because of the weakness of the Iraqi army. Therefore, this fatwa was continuing when Haider Al-Abadi has become prime minister to form the popular crowd forces that merged with the Iraqi army forces.

From the above, this paper tries to focus on the Iraqi military strategy including military doctrine, as the only solution to eliminate the terrorist the so-called Islamic state. This strategy, which had and still has suffered from many real dilemmas that should be overcome to achieve the desired goals. Therefore, this study shows the reasons of the absence of Iraqi strategy to fight ISIS in addition to trying to find appropriate solutions of the dilemmas faced by this strategic.

The research has essayed to prove hypothesis which is the absence of strict Iraqi strategy (which had and still has suffered from many genuine dilemmas) to the side to lack of a perpetual military doctrine as well as economic, military and political corruption in Iraqi state have been generated the controlling of the so-called the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIS) on significant Iraqi cities.

However, research problematic has tested to answer the following questions:
1. What is the concept of military strategy and doctrine? wtat are the military and security obstacles that had faced Iraqi government?
2. How is treating of the political and security dilemmas in Iraq?

Consequently, research has divided into main four sections, as follows:
1. The military strategy and doctrine.
2. The military and security obstacles.
3. The treatment of the political and security dilemmas in Iraq.
4. Re-evaluation of the Iraqi political map.

Section I: The military strategy and doctrine

Many of the political and military science experts have been talking about their terms and concepts. These concepts show the basic rules to build the strategic national strategy of state which includes several strategies such as military, political and economic strategies[1]. In order to give these concepts an accurate scientific interpretation we say, for instance, military strategy derives conceptually from military doctrine; that means that there is no military strategy without military doctrine. Military doctrine is the expression of the ways of the military strategy through the use of military force or the threat of they use, and others interpret it as a major general principle necessary for the military building of the state[2]. Military strategy is the expression of the actual use of the armed forces during clash with enemy forces.

It cares for military plans, preparing, and preparedness to how to use the armed forces in the war waged by the state . These definitions talk about the official viewpoints of the state which relate to matters and the basic rules of armed conflict to understand the nature of the war and the modalities of its management. Specialists focus on the concept of the state and its sovereignty without concentrating on government which is one of the important components in the building of the state[3].

After knowing these concepts, it has become necessary to highlight its applications on Iraq after the change that took place after 2003. This change accompanied rapid political transformations of the Iraqi state. The regime changed from a dictatorship to parliament which believes in pluralism democracy which was accompanied obvious by change in the

pillars of the infrastructure and superstructure of Iraqi society through the civil society organizations and political movements that have created new concepts such freedom, democracy and human rights, different from domination and acquisitions that prevailed in the past. Economically, there was a change in the Iraqi economic strategy, but it was slow through the transformation from the central system of intervention of the state in all aspects of life to the free system which is called the market economy.

On this basis, it is necessary to know the strategic and military doctrine adopted by the men of the Iraqi state after the political change of 2003. Are there clear positive results of these concepts on the Iraqi military situation or not? Based on the above, we can take what occurred in Syria as an example[2]. Initially Syria was exposed to the popular commotion continued for months in order to achieve a democratic transition and an establishment of new rules for the elections system in addition to the release of political prisoners[3]. After that, the situation aggravated into internal fighting that lead to the control of the terrorist groups of a large part of Syria. The most important thing is the survival of the Syrian Arab Army; so far it is coherent and resistant despite the defection of a few of Syrian officers.

It is important to analyze this military cohesion. In fact, this cohesion is due to preparation, training and the long planning, which continued for four decades since the beginning of President Hafez al-Assad rule until the coming of Bashar al-Assad. The other point is the international and regional continuing support for Syria in the military and the material fields by Iran and Russia. Here it is necessary to ask a fundamental question Is Iraq benefiting from the Syrian lesson?

The answer is that Iraq has not benefit from the Syrian lesson. What occurred in 6/10/2014 in the Mosul province is an indicator to the overall collapse of the Iraqi army which has led to the occupation of a number of cities by ISIS[4]. However, the roles of the General Command of the Armed Forces in the absorption of the catastrophic effects of the sudden blow should be pointed out[5]. Therefore, there was a re-arrangement of the field plans in battlefield in the field of defense to prevent a counterattack by use masterminded, which has resulted into positive results in the government of Al-Abadi, specifically in Tikrit and Taji. But the final say will be through adoption a military doctrine of the Iraqi army followed by the political leadership to build the army and the armed forces in terms of preparation and planning.

Indeed, there are fundamental problems inherent in the Iraqi army since 2003, and so far it is difficult to get rid of them in the foreseeable future. The first problem is the administrative and financial corruption within the security services, which is dramatically affecting the performance of the Iraqi governmental military and security departments and it is one of the fundamental reasons for the fall of Mosul. The Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi revealed in November 2014 the existence of 50 thousand imaginary soldiers or the so-called space creatures[6] (names only). He has announced the canceling of their designations. This was preceded by a scandal about arms deal with Russia worth $4.2 billion in 2012[7]. All of those resulted into a comprehensive weakness of the Iraqi military capabilities. The other point is that the Sunnis believe that the Iraqi army is an army without a national identity which represents the interests of the Shiites in Iraq exclusively and therefore lacks the Iraqi agreement on its identity[8].

This case is not realistic because many Sunnis have joined the Iraqi army, especially after access of Al-Obeidi to the Ministry of Defense. However, the Iraqi decision maker needs to find a radical solution to this dilemma as soon as possible in order not to lose the doctrine of the Iraqi army. The last important point is that Iraqi military leaders lack the

adequate military plans to defeat the terrorist groups in addition to the difficulty of maintaining the victory which has been achieved. This is what happened in Taji, Samarra, Anbar and spots of Tikrit.

Section II: The military and security obstacles

From the above, it is necessary to seriously deal with the obstacles and dilemmas relating to military and security axes that had and still face the different Iraqi forces ground-air forces and navy forces in order to avoid the mistakes and failures. Among the most prominent of these dilemmas are:

1. Imposing the overall control on the liberated areas to apply the rule of law in addition to protecting the vital goals in the liberated areas which are usually targeted by terrorist groups such as power plants, dams, pipelines of oil, roads and factories[ك]. This requires a reconsideration of the method of distribution and deployment of army troops in areas where ISIS exists.

2. Weapon control. In fact this dilemma itself needs a realistic solution, especially after many people of the Awakenings groups joined ISIS for materialistic reasons. Some Sunni tribes got heavy and medium weapons after the disintegration of the Awakening, which threatens the entity of the Iraqi army through supporting the terrorist groups. Furthermore, besides the Iraqi army there are many Shiite factions that have joined to fight ISIS after a fatwa Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani[ل] as the people crowd forces, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and the Mahdi Army. It is of importance to integrate of these factions into the interior and defense ministries to get rid of the suspicions that have emerged in recent times after the liberation of Tikrit that the elements of the Shia militias have stolen houses and shops.

   Also for the weapons to be in the hands of these organizations will have negative consequences for the Iraqi state on the grounds that its survival means reducing the prestige and magnificence of the state and its security, especially the military institutions (provided that building a strong army). Stripping the militias of arms gives the Sunnis a great confidence the Iraqi government, which will lead to a collaborative environment to fight terrorist groups[م]. The final cooperation requires a re-establishment of the Awakenings, but according to new plans and strategies fit to the next stage apart away the mistakes of the past.

3. Sleeping cells: The elimination of terrorist groups completely needs several years because ISIS has many terrorist groups and its elimination requires a careful and gradual strategy. This means that the removal of the roots of ISIS does not mean elimination it only in the battlefield, but it must follow the elements that leak from groups during their defeat because the elements of ISIS follow strategy the disappearances and hit-and-run to rearrange their personnels. Many ISIS fighters have taken to the Iraqi society as a safe haven for them after the defeat[ن]. This poses a serious threat to Iraqi national security, which requires activating intelligence to detect terrorist sleeping cells.

4. Securing borders with neighboring countries to prevent the infiltration of terrorists into Iraq. This problem requires coordination with the central government and the Kurdistan regional government on the one hand and bilateral reoperation between Iraq and the neighboring states on the other hand.

5. Iraqi arms dilemma. Delay of the United States to arm the Iraqi army in accordance with the agreements signed between the two countries within strategic framework

agreement in 2011 has caused a real dilemma affecting the performance and building the Iraqi armed forces, it is one of the main reasons to the collapse of security in Mosul. There is no doubt that the formulation of appropriate policies and plans to invest the resources of the state to arm the Iraqi army requires an objective understanding of the requirements of the state building and aspirations of its citizens in accordance with the conditions of the construction of logical and realistic stand in identifying the three basic pillars for the management of this effort (setting goals and interests, identifying challenges and constraints, identifying the main means to achieve them in accordance with the potential and the resources available) to ensure a retention of armed forces in the case of permanent combat readiness and efficiency of combat to defend the borders of the state as well as its internal regions^ﺱ.

6. Non-explosive improvised explosive devices. Reports indicate the presence of thousands of mines and non-explosive improvised explosive devices, which are spread over a vast   area of Iraqi territory from the north to the south and from the east to the west and covering a lot of agricultural, industrial and economic lands^ﻉ. This also caused serious damage to Iraqi citizens hindering the industry, agriculture and transportation operations. These problems are hindering movement of the Iraqi army progressing towards military targets. Therefore, the situation requires equipping the Iraqi army with sophisticated minesweepers to avoid losses in the military and the citizens.

7. Rebuilding of the Iraqi armed forces. The re-building of the Iraqi army is a fundamental pillar in the process of rebuilding Iraq as people and government in order to eliminate the terrorist ISIS. This step is pivotal important because it is embedded the future of Iraq and the nature of the strategic orientations aspirations of the Iraqi policy in the near future politically and militarily^ﻑ. In fact, there are important points that related to this matter, namely:

1. The significant shortage of weapons and equipment in quantitative and qualitative terms. The reason is due to the absence of a real and clear defense policy at the state level. This has resulted in the absence of a military strategy and the ambiguity in the military doctrine of the Iraqi armed forces. In addition to the lack of a national industry of the military arms and equipment to enhance the readiness of Iraqi armed forces in the long run.

2. The need to seriously reconsider the regulations that grant military ranks; what is happened now is a haphazard thing which is badly affecting the level and quality of the military discipline and the training of the armed forces in general.

3. There is real a dilemma that needs an immediate solution. This is upgrading the high military ranks and the system of the military training which are not subject to the military control. They are not subject to transparency and integrity. The social relations and bribes play a major role in upgrading an officer to higher rank. It leads to a case of imbalance and weakness in the ranks of the Iraqi army, which creates a fragile army; it is unable to manage crisis^ﺽ.

Section III: The treatment of the political and security dilemmas in Iraq

Indeed, most political professionals believe that treatment of the political and security dilemmas in Iraq should not be limited to plans, movements and battles waged by the Iraqi armed forces only, but also it should be based on the results and outcomes of these events, movements and battles.

The contemporary military strategy, in essence, is the relationship between methods, objectives and findings because the military strategy is the process of using the available means and resources (human, material and moral potentials) to achieve the goals and objectives. Therefore, it became necessary to establish a suitable military plan that applies the relationship between methods and findings in order to get to purpose, especially when dealing with the dilemmas of the military and security axis in Iraq to face ISIS. Building and organizing the Iraqi armed forces should be subject to approaches and instruments construction (building plans) in the light of a philosophical view of the evolution of and vision for the future of the goal and purpose of the building and use of the Iraqi armed forces in all its various forms[ق].

This is what lacking in building the Iraqi armed forces over the past years since disbanding the Iraqi army by US administrator Paul Bremer in May 23, 2003, according to Order No.(2) of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq. This shows the security vacuum as a result of with bad consequences and negative effects on the overall internal security situation[ر]. Accordingly, the stages of determining priorities of the means and ways to address the dilemmas of military and security axises to face ISIS is directly connected with a scientific analysis and realistic study of environment of threats surrounding Iraq and the supreme interests that determine the general goals of the national security of Iraq.

Then, the formulation of the theoretical and scientific framework for the adoption of the ways and means of treatment of the military and security dilemmas, will emerge from it the sub-strategies related to branches and forms of the Iraqi armed forces (ground force, air force, navy and air defense ... etc.). These sub-strategies will create goals strategy that seeks to achieve the overall policies and strategies. Also it is necessary to take into consideration the relationship between the military means and the available human resources in addition to the material and moral potentials, which will use by the Iraqi armed forces in order to achieve its political and military aims. The strategy that follows by the popular crowd forces and other factions (sub-strategic) must unite with the Iraqi army strategies (overall strategy and policies) to get to the consolidated goal.

Arguably, the methods or mechanisms that will govern the formulation of ways and means to address the military and security dilemmas to face ISIS should focus on:

1. The comprehensive integration and interaction of all branches and forms of the Iraqi armed forces with the high command to develop the military operation - security - seriously.
2. It should have a degree of flexibility to respond to any type of challenges that may rise in the future in addition to the speed of response to reactions that will rise as a result of the increasing potential threats of the terrorist environment; for example, avoiding cases like the relative decline that has occurred in Mosul and Tikrit of the lack of a real reaction against enemy.
3. Taking into consideration cost factor and influence in order not to effect security costs on the state budget. It is worth mentioning that 10 percent of the national budget is allotted to the purposes of security and defense which seems to make sense in the current conditions of Iraq. Also increasing or decreasing this percentage depends on the emergency circumstances.
4. It is necessary to rehabilitate and prepare the current Iraqi military institution gradually in order to fit the strategic plans that are developed for this purpose.

Indeed, it is not surprising to see of the poor performance of Iraq's armed forces, which was reflected clearly during the events of the tenth of June 2014. Planning military action should be carried out under the supervision and follow-up of the national political command to ensure effectiveness of the strategic plans to achieve the goals. This is done without participation directly in the formulation of military strategies and without interference and direct involvement in the formulation of military strategies because the formulation of strategies is the responsibility of the command of the armed forces and the General Staff. The other point is that the Iraqi forces are formed at a time when there was no structure and shape of the state and the political class was a non-homogeneous mixture which was rapidly forming. Hence, the political situation fulfilled by most political actors in the political process was characterized by a weak center and strong parties. This was reflected on the nature of the political configuration and functions of political parties and actors in the political process in the absence of military doctrine agreed upon between the political parties which are one of the basic features of the state.

Section IV: Re-evaluation of the Iraqi political map

The most important task that should be addressed is a re-evaluation of the Iraqi political map that has emerged since the spring of 2003. Politically, Iraq consists of Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds who control the political process (including the executive and legislative) as well as some of the forces that revolve in the orbit of the three above-mentioned forces. There is a clear understanding and harmony on the intellectual and spiritual side between of the Kurds and Shiites and their political and religious leaders; Sunnis are suffering from a large gap in this relationshipﺵ.

Sunni Arabs are in dire need for a real Sunni leadership that expresses the aspirations of its supporters and control the people in their respective provinces, especially the theater of operations in the confrontation with ISIS in the regions and provinces inhabited by the Sunni majority. For example, the Shiite authority managed through one fatwa to recruiting hundreds of thousands of citizens to support the Iraqi security forces in their war against ISIS. On the other hand, the success was clear when of the Kurdish leaderships to rally the Kurdish public opinion in order to support of the Kurdistan Regional Guard forces (Peshmerga) when ISIS approached the borders of the Kurdistan territory. This situation should be exploited by the political decision-maker in the Iraqi government via searching for the real leaders who are able to win the Sunni public opinion and bridge the gap represented by phantom leaders engaged with the Iraqi government as representative of Sunnisﺕ. Thus, direct cooperation should be done with the acting Sunnis leaders on ground. How is this accomplished?

Over the past years, political personalities representing Sunni in the parliament and the government such as Tareq al-Hashemi, Osama Nujifi, Rafi al-Issawi, Saleh al-Mutlaq, Ethel Nujaifi, Saleem al-Jubouri and Mishan al-Jubouri. The majority of these personalities have lost their popularity and confidence of their citizens, especially after failure in the defense of their supporters at the time of the Maliki government policies that have applied the law (de-Baathification) and then accountability act and justice. According to the realist theory any of the occupied land cannot be recapture it without coordination and cooperation with its people to facilitate the penetration and liberalization process.

The conclusive evidence to this is what was achieved by the tribes Awakening in 2006 when it has removed Al-Qaeda from Anbar, Tikrit and parts of the north of Babylon, in spite of human and material potentials which was owned by Al-Qaeda at that time. Therefore, the real forces that have possibility to represent the Sunni component and the leadership of battles

on ground against ISIS are the tribal forces (tribal chiefs), who are still present in their areas. Unfortunately, the Maliki government did not find a genuine strategy to maintain the work of the Awakening the longest possible period of time. Hence, Abadi's government should go beyond the past mistakes in order to apply the previous strategy to fight ISIS in their areas before extending their influence to Baghdad and the rest of Iraqi provinces.

Conclusion

fighting against ISIS in Iraq requires mainly a re-consideration the Iraqi military strategy (building military doctrine) in a more objective with way through correcting the mistakes and failures that have occurred in the past through benefit benefiting from the previous lessons and experiences of Iraq (al-Qaeda in 2006) in its war against terrorism. This requires rebuilding the institutional framework of the Iraqi army and police based on the pillars of national or national Iraqi security (security and defense), and rebuilding the executive structures of the current armed security forces (army and police). Furthermore, overseeing the armament deals and training in accordance with the plans and strategies that have been developed to achieve the goals and objectives. It is also necessary to strengthen the national concepts and avoiding all forms of sectarianism to build a strong army capable facing crises. Also the confrontation of ISIS requires relying on efficient and professional standards taking advantage of the experiences of the former Iraqi army (non-Baathists). Finally, state control over heavy and medium weapons, along with integrating of the armed organizations under the banner of the Iraqi army will be a strategic step to ensure the loyalty of the Sunnis Arab to the government; thus this will have a major role in fighting ISIS in the near future.

Footnotes

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ملخص البحث

ادى غياب استراتيجية عراقية سياسية-عسكرية واضحة الى جانب اضمحلال العقيدة العسكرية لدى الجيش العراقي، التي تُعد الاساس لمجابهة اي خطر خارجي او داخلي، مضافاً الى الفساد المستشري في بنية الدولة العراقية، الى اختلال التوازن في الحكومة العراقية تحديداً في الجوانب العسكرية منها التي كلفت الدولة الكثير والكثير من الخسائر المادية والمعنوية ولعل ابرزها سيطرة ما يسمى بالدولة الاسلامية في العراق والشام على اجزاء مهمة من الدولة كالموصل وتكريت والانبار، حتى ان صانع القرار العراقي عجز بالمطلق على مواجهة هذا الخطر بما يملكه من معطيات وامكانيات هشه ربما تقود الى نتائج وخيمة واسعة النطاق الا وهي سيطرة الجماعات الارهابية على كل اجزاء العراق. ومن هنا، فإن القناعات الحقيقية قد تبلورت لدى صانع القرار العراقي والسلطة الدينية في النجف (آية الله العظمى السيستاني) بأن الخيار العسكري هو الحل الوحيد لإزالة تلك الجماعات من ارض العراق. لذلك، فإن الخطاب العسكري للسلطة الدينية في النجف واضح جدا، حيث أعلن الجهاد الكفائي ضد داعش

كاستراتيجية رادعة بسبب ضعف الجيش العراقي وغياب عقيدته العسكرية. لذا، كانت تلك الفتوى متواصلة حتى مع وصول حيدر العبادي الى رئاسة الوزراء، التي اصبحت السبب الرئيس لظهور قوات الحشد الشعبي التي قاتلت جنباً الى جنب مع قوات الجيش العراقي.هذا البحث يحاول التركيز على الاستراتيجية العسكرية العراقية بما في ذلك العقيدة العسكرية، باعتبارها الحل الوحيد للقضاء على كل التنظيمات الإرهابية في المناطق المتواجدة فيها. وهذه الاستراتيجية التي عانت ولا تزال تعاني من العديد من المعضلات الحقيقية داخلياً وخارجياً التي ينبغي التغلب عليها لتحقيق الأهداف المنشودة. هذه الدراسة ايضاً بينت أسباب غياب الاستراتيجية العراقية لمحاربة داعش بالإضافة إلى محاولة إيجاد الحلول المناسبة للمعضلات التي تواجهها هذه الاستراتيجية.