Islamic State - Myth or Reality?

The so-called ‘Islamic State’ (ISIS), which has been so much spoken and written about by international experts and information agencies recently and in reality is just a movement of jihadists, now allegedly controls the major part of the north-east of Syria and the north-east of Iraq. A lot of false evidence of the ‘victories’ of this Islamic group are published in the mass media which mistake the wish for the reality. Peter Harling, one of the famous specialists on Arab East and Director of Expert Centre of International Crisis Group on Egypt, Syria and Libya, assumed in one of his recent publications that the newly emerged ISIS leaders make loud spoken announcements regarding the situation in the Middle East and their legitimate existence. According to Harling’s definition, ISIS is “an aggressive movement consisting mainly of volunteers from different countries, not only Arab ones…”

Apart from the very title, this amorphous formation cannot be called ‘a state’ by any means, all the more so that these jihadists, according to their own statements, do not admit the concept of state boundaries and in general prefer to do without any institutions inherent to even the smallest states.

As is known, this movement started since the invasion of American troops in Iraq in 2003. The core of the group was the former ‘belief fighters’ - Mudjahidin group, actively participating in the Afghan War in early 1980s.

The experts on ‘Islamic realia’ believe that these groups were formed by the al-Qaeda local militants. However, the new jihadists abandoned their central al-Qaeda ideology and concentrated on the tasks of fighting against the USA and Israel. ISIS started a religious war between Sunni and Shiah since that time, “adding fuel to the flames” of the contradictions between these two trends of Islam.

A number of regional experts noted that they became involved in this conflict so much that started ethnic cleansing of their Sunni ranks very severely, destroying the ‘traitors and enemies’. It’s curious to note that similar actions led to the ‘self-destroying’ of ISIS jihadists, especially in the period of 2007-2008, making their numbers decrease to less than a gang of followers in an Iraqi desert.

Upon initiating different publications on their ‘activities’, the ISIS jihadists often cheek it in order to attract more soldiers of fortune (both Arab and Western) into their own lot and try to gain control over the region on the border of Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. For instance, an article by Josh Siegel dated October 28, 2014, published in the American journal ‘The Daily Signal’ says that the terrorist group ISIS recently published a propaganda video depicting a British hostage as a Western news correspondent who allegedly confirms that the long suffering city of Kobani, on the Syria-Turkey border, “will be jihadist any moment.” Dressed in all black (so that even his face is not seen), the journalist Cantlie in the above-mentioned video material ascertains that “Kobani fight is ending in favour of ISIS.” Talking about this ISIS material, ‘The Daily Signal’ points out that the journalist Cantlie was captured by the terrorists as far as November 2012 and could not confirm all this in October 2014.

International and local observers draw our attention to the exceptional cruelty with which these newly emerged ‘fighters for religion purity’ deal with their opponents and also act in relation to women and children. As CNN correspondents (Odai Sadik, Steve Always) informed on November 4, 2014, “ISIS militants’ killed more than 300 members of Sunni population in the region in late October this year. More than 322 people were shot by them during this period, the majority of them being women and children.”
In this respect, the Pentagon representative vice-admiral John Kirby announced that Washington does not have a 100% proof for this data but as he put it: “We have no reason to doubt their authenticity.”

The USA, supported by a number of allied countries including Arab ones, started airstrikes on ISIS positions in Syria on September 23, without permission of the Syrian authorities, which contradicts the international law, and Russia, in the person of the Foreign Affairs minister Sergey Lavrov, pointed to that. As Kazakhstan RIA Novosti informed on November 4 this year, quoting Pentagon, “costs on anti-terror campaign against ISIS in Syria and Iraq exceeded 700 thousand dollars a day.”

As a result of NATO airstrikes and increasing attacks against the militants, ISIS wants to replenish its numbers and expand the scale of activities by involving extremist groups from Europe and Central Asia in order to reach the ‘common goals’ together. Taking into account the public discontent with the policy of the governments in a number of central Asian republics and various countries of the West, as well as the growing geopolitical standoff, the growth of radical Islamic ideas such as creation of a caliphate constitutes serious risks.

For instance, according to different estimates, more than two thousand young people (both men and women) from Central Asia countries are already standing under the black ISIS flags by now.

The EU commission estimated that more than two thousand radicals, who have their origins in Europe, are fighting in Iraq and Syria. However, many experts believe these figures to be heavily underestimated. Thus, according to the data of Peter Neumann, Professor of International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence at King’s College, London, approximately 12 thousand militants are fighting in Iraq and Syria on the ISIS side, representing 74 countries, including about 1.5 thousand militants of British origin only. As ‘The Daily Telegraph’ put it recently: “British Islamists went to fight abroad before, including to Chechnya, Bosnia, Afghanistan and Libya. However the civil war in Syria, which affected Iraq as well, attracted more foreign jihadists than any other military conflict. And Britain supplies the most of Western recruits.”

According to the information made public by France, the Islamists have already recruited about 900 French citizens, who either already have arrived in the conflict zone in Iraq and Syria or are about to. As the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution informed, more than 400 Islamists, who are German nationals, have left for Syria since 2011. According to German law enforcement agencies, about 100 radicals returned to the Federal Republic of Germany and a quarter of them gained some combat experience and now represent ‘the fatal danger’.

According to many Western experts’ opinions, there is a great danger that jihadists coming back to their countries will spread the Islamic State’s ideology and take an active part in establishing a caliphate as the majority of foreign jihadists fighting on the Islamists’ side in Syria and Iraq have already cherished a hatred against the West.

Under such circumstances, the fight against the ‘Islamic State’ should be at the broadest international level, however strictly observing the United Nations Charter and not solely limiting to Washington’s desire to create a coalition of loyal allies and solve its own geopolitical tasks in these territories.

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