THE SPREAD OF ISIS INTO LEBANON: A STRATEGIC RESPONSE TO COUNTER THE THREAT

[**Issue Number 96 - April 2016**](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/96-d)

**The Spread Of Isis Into Lebanon: A Strategic Response To Counter The Threat**
Prepared By: Lt.col Fady Dergham
Lieutenant Colonel at the lebanese army

**Introduction**

Amy likes to go on long treks, dine out and The Middle East is in turmoil with several states on the verge of failure and collapse, where extremism, sectarianism, and the impact of international and regional powers in the region have created chaos.The spread of extremist groups has grown significantly in the Middle East in the last few years, and has become an important problem for the international community. The most dangerous group that has emerged and grown in the Middle East since 2013 is the so-called Islamic State (ISIS or DAESH).

In 2014, events evolved dramatically in Iraq; key cities fell under the control of ISIS. Then the group moved toward the Iraqi-Syrian borders and declared that the borders were no longer valid between the two countries. After gaining territories in both Iraq and Syria, ISIS began infiltrating into Lebanon to recruit fighters and gain supporters and then spread in the country. The spread of ISIS into Lebanon does not mean only controlling territories but also spreading of its ideology, forming sleeper cells, and gaining supporters. ISIS is finding fertile ground in some regions in Lebanon, especially in the northern parts of the country (Trofimov 2014).

ISIS considers Lebanon as a part of the caliphate it established in parts of Iraq and Syria. Unlike Syria and Iraq, ISIS does not seize large areas in Lebanon, but it has established footholds along the Northeastern Lebanese-Syrian borders (Karam and Mroue 2014). Even though the territories of ISIS in Syria are separated from Lebanon by strongholds of the Syrian Army, ISIS still poses a threat from within the country.

The emergence of the ISIS threat into Lebanon and on its borders in the summer of 2014 is a critical danger that threatens Lebanon’s security and stability. Even though the government dealt with other extremist groups, it was ill prepared to address the ISIS threat. Through 2014 and 2015, ISIS demonstrated that it has capabilities to conduct military operations on Lebanon’s borders and terrorist attacks inside Lebanon through the use of sleeper cells and supporters.ISIS is a significant threat to Lebanon because of the potential uprising of extremist groups, and the presence of the refugee camps in Lebanon.

The spread of ISIS in Lebanon results from internal and external factors that have impacted the country. The internal factors consist of domestic issues such as the emergence of the extremists, the political problems, and socio-economic grievances that the Lebanese Government has not found complete solutions for or even implemented partial solutions. The political and military conflicts in the Middle East, the influence of foreign countries in Lebanon, and the spread of terrorist groups in various regions of the world compose the external factors. In addition to these factors the coexistence of Lebanese religious groups and the democratic system in Lebanon pose a challenge to the extremist groups.

The Lebanese Government is responding to the threat, but its present response is inadequate because it does not address all aspects of the problem. The situation is not only a security problem; the government must conduct a whole of government approach to address the roots of the problem, the ISIS frame and narrative, and its strategy. Lebanon must coordinate all of these efforts in a harmonious fashion and every element in the government must be involved in the response. The goal of this recommended response is to counter the threat of ISIS effectively and stop the threat from threatening the Lebanese population and the coexistence of its sectarian groups.

This response provides a whole of government response after assessing ISIS to understand why it is a threat to Lebanon, and the impacts in the Middle East and in other regions of the world if ISIS keeps expanding its territory and capabilities. This response is applicable to counter other threat groups because these groups are exploiting the same grievances, and use a similar frame and narrative, only differing in strategy.

**Concept of the Response**

**Political Opportunity Structure (POS)**

Some groups in Lebanon believe that other groups have more influence in decision-making in the government. Poverty, unemployment, and lack of education are widespread in some regions to a much greater extent than other regions. For some extremist groups, the political system is not working well and they believe that others benefit from the system more than themselves. Some individuals feel a growing sense of alienation and marginalization from the political system (Sly 2012).

Lebanon has to conducta counterinsurgency in a whole of government fashion to address the economic, social, and political grievances that influence and impact Lebanesegroups, therefore depriving ISIS of a mass base in Lebanon. The strategic response of Lebanon must address the whole problem, because any threat components that are not addressed will negatively impact the response and potentially lead to failure. This strategic response will consist of six lines of effort: Governance, Strategic Messaging, Religious Messaging, Security, Intelligence, andPartnership with associated campaigns.

**Center of Gravity and Critical Vulnerability**

The Lebanese Government’s center of gravity is its legitimacy among its population, regional, and international partners to support Lebanese efforts in counterinsurgency. Furthermore, Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) play an important role in the response and are composed from the diversity of the Lebanese people from several regions of the country. The Lebanese Government’s critical vulnerability is its lack of financial resources that adversely affects the LAF, and prevents it from possessing sophisticated arms and equipment.

The ISIS center of gravity is its supporters and loyalists inside Lebanon. Its critical vulnerability is the over-extension of the territory that it controls, and the need for significant logistic support to conduct its military campaigns. It also has geographic vulnerabilities if it redistributes forces to reinforce some of its fronts. ISIS also faces competing religious voices that deny the caliphate and speak out against ISIS; the group requires a declaration of loyalty and recognition of its state to gain legitimacy.

**Legal**

Lebanon conducts a hybrid approach that includes law enforcement and law of warfare elements. This response requires legal procedures reform that will empower Lebanese efforts to counter the threat of ISIS, and isolate it from any mass base in Lebanon. This reform consists of implementing or improving old laws, and developing new laws as necessary. The legal part of the response is very important because it enables the response at the political, judicial, economic, and social levels.

Even though the political system is based on power sharing among the various religions in the country and governing the state, it is still based on a democratic system that allows for the transition of power. A French mandate provided Lebanon with its first constitution in 1926; in 1943 Lebanon gained independence and developed amendments in the constitution following the National Pact between Christians and Muslims. Following the Ta’if Accord In 1989, Lebanon made new amendments that consist of a new formula for power sharing, and reforms to the political, economic, and social systems.

At the political level, the 1989 amendments contain several political reforms that consist of expanding the numbers of the representatives in the parliament to be equal between Christians and Muslims regardless of the percentages of the sectarian groups, and make these representatives proportional inside the Christian and Muslim sects(Constitution of Lebanon 1990, Article 24).It also contains a provision for establishing another legislative council as representatives of all sectarian communities and would have the authority to deal with the critical issues that impact the future of Lebanon(Constitution of Lebanon 1990, Article 22).

One of the most important changes Lebanon made in 1989 was to cancel the religious considerations in the political system and embark on deconfessionalization. The 1989 amendments also establish new electoral districts that encourage the coexistence of the various sectarian groups and minimize divisions. The intent of this provision is that all Lebanese will have the same political opportunities without fear of majority injustice, since no sectarian group will have a majority representation in the government.

The amendments in 1989 also call for the establishment of a council to judge the legislative laws and the executive decisions and provide improvements as required (Constitution of Lebanon 1990, Article 19). At the economic and social level, the Lebanese Government plans for a balanced development in all regions of the country. It will help and facilitate the development of the private sector in coordination with the public sector. It must also encourage foreign countries and investors to invest in Lebanon because these investments will improve the economic and social situations in the country.

The failure of implementing all the reforms in the Constitution will damage the effort and the credibility of the state toward its population. Lebanon must also develop de-radicalization and reintegration laws to address Lebanese individuals who become radicalized and do not participate in the political system. Unfortunately, to date Lebanon has failed to implement many of these amendments. Real change in the country will not occur until Lebanon fully implements all amendments.

**Assumptions**

There are several assumptions that underpin this whole of government response; some are related to internal factors while others are related to external ones. Internally, talks between sectariangroups’ leaders in Lebanon can decrease sectarian tensions between these groups. All Lebanese parties will support the response of the government because any escalation of violence in the country will affect all of them. Most of the individuals in the Lebanese community will cooperate with their moderate leaders and the government for the purpose of successfully accomplishing the response. The situation is affecting the economic and social situations in Lebanon; any cooperation will help solve the problems and lead to improvetheeconomic and social situations.

Some extremist groups and individuals will not facilitate the process of the response and will try to spoil it, because these groups and individualswillconsider the proposed response as targeting them and threatening their existence. The involvement of individuals in the conflict in Syria will impact negatively on the efforts of the government; the return of the fighters from Syria can affect the internal security situation. Sleeper cells of ISIS inside Lebanon will conduct terrorist attacks to disrupt the stability of Lebanon, and disperse the efforts of the LAF to focus its efforts on the borders.

There are several external assumptions that inform this response. International and regional countries will provide resources and assets to improve the capabilities of Lebanon, but in limited quantities and for a limited time period. This aid is critical for halting the fall of Lebanon in this critical security situation.

The spillover of the continuous war in Syria to Lebanon will impact negatively on the situation and can adversely affect the efforts of Lebanon to combat the problem, in particular because of the influx of refugees and the infiltration of extremist elements into Lebanon. ISIS will continue to conduct attacks across Lebanese borders to control strongholds in Lebanon for the purpose of expanding its territory.

**Response**

**Political Opportunity Structure Reform**

Political Opporunity Structure reform must consist of a whole of government approach emphasizing political, economic, and social reforms to offer opportunities and security for the population. The Lebanese Government must counter the roots of the problem, frame and narrative of ISIS, and its strategy through integrated lines of effort with associated campaigns (see figure 1). Government ministries will serve as the means and will participate in the response; some ministries will take the lead in the lines of effort, while others will support these lines (see table 1). The government must address all issues when conducting a counterinsurgency.

Failure to do this will result in failed efforts to address the problem and it will continue to affect Lebanon and threaten its stability and security. The Ends of the Lebanese State are: Keep ISIS militants outside the borders and dismantle its sleeper cells inside the country for the purpose of maintaininga secure and stable Lebanon, and preventing sectarian tensions, which will threaten the coexistence of the sectarian groups in the country.



**Countering the Roots of the Problem**

There is one line of effort to counter the roots of the problem—the Governance Line of Effort to improve the political, economic, and social conditions, including religious issues that arise from the Confessional System of government in Lebanon. The general purpose of the Governance Line of Effort is to address the political, economic, and social roots that have led to the problem of ISIS and made some of the population in Lebanon vulnerable to radicalization. The reforms in the political, economic, and social areas of the nation will set favorable conditions for the government to address the security issues and maintain the stability of the country.

**Governance Line of Effort**

The objectives of the Governance Line of Effort are improving the Political Opportunity Structure, making it equal for all sectarians communities, and solving the economic and social problems that encourage individuals to find their own solutions through radicalization and violence to include joining groups like ISIS. The Governance Line of Effort consists of three campaigns: Political Reform, Economic Reform, and Social Reform.

The Political Reform Campaign will ensure all Lebanese parties are inclusive in the political process. Lebanon does not need to make major changes in its Constitution, but the government has to implement all the 1989 amendments that were added to the Constitution, also known as the Ta’if Accord. The most important part of the Constitution is Article 95, which requires the establishment of a National Committee to examine ways to achieve deconfessionalization and the formation of a non-confessional Parliament(Salamey 2014, 57).

Another important issue for the Political Reform Campaign to address is the electoral redistricting called for in the 1989 amendments, since Lebanon has failed to implement this due to political influence(Khalaf 2004, 300). After implementing all the changes called for in the Constitution, the government must assess the results of the implementation and provide further reforms as necessary as the Constitution may need further amendments. Its full implementation and any changes made after the assessment will give the same opportunities to the entire Lebanese population regardless of the sectarian community. The government must also find a political solution for the involvement of Lebanese individuals in the Syrian Civil War due to the adverse impact these individuals have on the security of Lebanon and the sectarian tensions between the different groups.

The purpose of the Economic Reform Campaign is to integrate the population into the economic system of the country and provide opportunities for the people to improve their financial situation. This will result in additional positive impacts on the social situation of the people. The creation of jobs will lead to a decrease in the unemployment rate, stimulate the market, and encourage local, regional, and international companies to invest in Lebanese projects and create new jobs. The creation of jobs for young men and women will decrease the number of individuals who join ISIS for financial reasons. Encouraging tourism and establishing public and private institutes for the purpose of providing several services will create new jobs and opportunities for the unemployed individuals to find jobs, and to the current employees to progress in their careers. In addressing these previous issues, the government will find ways to diminish poverty levels, which are one of the key drivers of the conflict and is the cause for some individuals to join ISIS. The government must improve the infrastructure to encourage private and corporate investment and enable the provision of essential services.

The purpose of the Social Reform Campaign is to improve the social situation of the population, which is related to the economic situation. Education is an essential right for all children and young people and the government must find solutions for the regions where citizens have difficulties in finance, transportation, or housing that can affect their opportunities to receive a good education. Education reform should include the establishment of new public schools and the improvement of existing ones as well as providing financial aid to families and free transportation to and from school.

Furthermore, the Lebanese Government must address social issues at the community level; it must look for the children who work and beg in the streets, the broken families, the poor families, and the families that are not self-sufficient because of several factors that negatively affect their lives and unity. These socially disposed individuals are a major source of ISIS recruitment and the government must find ways to address social grievances and deprive ISIS of this recruiting base. Moreover, after improving the social situation of families and individuals, the government must also encourage people to participate in sporting events and provide public and recreational sports programs and centers for people to relieve the pressures of life. These activities can be useful to gather youths from similar or different sectarian groups, which can help connect them and understand each other.

The influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon has had severe economic and social impacts on Lebanon. The government has to address this issue in coordination with international partners to decrease the impacts of the presence of Syrian refugees on the Lebanese population in both economic and social affairs(Yacoubian 2014, 3-7). Lebanon cannot bear the burden of these huge numbers of refugees without assistance from the international community.

The government does not need to reform its judicial system, but it does need to observe this system and make sure that it implements and enforces all applicable laws without exception. The government has to complete the trial process of some individuals for involvement in terrorist activities. Many of these individuals have spent years in prison without trial. This has a serious affect on the legitimacy of the judicial systemandthe government must also address the corruption issue that has damaged efforts to solve the problems.It must make the judicial system more effective and ensure that anti-corruption laws are implemented and are not spoiling its efforts.

The means of this line of effort include the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities as the lead, since it involves political laws and reforms. These suggested changes to the Parliament in accordance with the legal procedures the representatives of the Parliamentdiscussed and ratified would greatly enhance the political process in the country. This ministry also deals with the municipalities in all regions of Lebanon, which address social and economic issues in the various regions. It will need support from other ministries to execute the campaigns and succeed. These ministries include: Finance, Information, Education, Economy and Trade, Labor, Telecommunications, Culture, Justice, Energy and Water, Tourism, Industry, Agriculture, Public Works and Transport, Social Affairs, Health, and Sports and Youth.

**Countering the Frame and the Narrative of ISIS**

ISIS proclaims it is involved in Jihad, and is fighting for the glory and the victory of the Islamic nation. The Strategic Messaging Line of Effort and the Religious Messaging Line of Effort will counter the Frame and Narrative of ISIS. Likewise, these lines of effort while also support the Frame and Narrative of the Lebanese Government. The purpose of the Strategic Messaging Line of Effort is to address all internal and external parties that are related to the problem and impact the situation in Lebanon. The Religious Messaging Line of Effort is required to address the religious aspects of the problem and provide the correct interpretation of Islamic teaching. ISIS exploits Islam for the purpose of inciting the Sunni community and gaining the support and sympathy of this community.

**Strategic Messaging Line of Effort**

The Strategic Messaging Line of Effort consists of four campaigns. The Population Communications Campaign addresses the population for the purpose of convincing them that the government is committed in its efforts to solve the problem, and that the people can benefit from the reforms in the political, economic, and social areas of the nation. This campaign is necessary to build trust between the government and its population to encourage them to support its plans and efforts. The government must convince the communities in Lebanon that it is committed to defending them against the threats, and will address and find solutions for their problems and concerns and not enable extremist groups such as ISIS.

The Lebanese Fighters Communications Campaign addresses the young Lebanese who fight in Syria or who have returned to Lebanon. The purpose of this campaign is to encourage these fighters to abandon their involvement in the Syrian Civil War by explaining the critical impacts of their actions not only on themselves, but also on their families and the country as well. The government must address the returning fighters and require them to participate in de-radicalization and reintegration programs that the government will establish to address this problem.

The Partners Communications Campaign addresses the regional and international partners of Lebanon to support its response and provide required aid for the purpose of improving the Lebanese capabilities to counter ISIS. Lebanon must convince its regional and international partners that the spillover of the Syrian Conflict to Lebanon will damage the country and the region, and that the external support of ISIS to some groups in Lebanon has negative impacts and leads to sectarian tensions into the country.

The ISIS Communications Campaign communicates with ISIS the efforts of the Lebanese Government to counter its threat, and its capabilities to face this threat on the stability of the country. This campaign has to demonstrate the will of the government to fight ISIS, and the support of its population, which is united in this fight against ISIS. The government has to show that it not only reacts, but also has the initiative to act and spoil the strategy of ISIS that threatens the stability and the future of Lebanon.

**Religious Messaging Line of Effort**

The Religious Messaging Line of Effort supplements the Strategic Messaging Line of Effort because the narrative of ISIS uses religious messaging to mobilize Muslims in Lebanon and in various regions of the world. ISIS faces competing religious voices that deny and speak out against the ISIS caliphate; it requires a declaration of loyalty and recognition of its state to gain legitimacy. The Religious Messaging Line of Effort involves both internal and external levels due to the connection between the two levels and the impact of each one on the other. There are two Campaigns in this Line of Effort: an Internal Religious Communications Campaign and an External Religious Communications Campaign.

The purpose of the Internal Religious Communications Campaign is to counter ISIS messaging addressed to the Sunni community by showing the statements of Sunni clerics and religious groups who condemn the group’s ideology and actions. This messaging led by Sunni clerics supports the Strategic Messaging of the government that addresses the population and the Lebanese fighters. The government has to encourage sectarian clerics and leaders to release combined statements that address the Lebanese community to build strong ties between the people and decrease the sectarian tensions. The government should also encourage dialogue between all sectarian leaders to decrease tensions among the groups.

The External Religious Communications Campaign will strengthen the Internal Religious Campaign through providing more credibility to the Lebanese clerics who show the danger and the threat of ISIS. The government can conduct plans for the purpose of providing an External Religious Communications Campaign that can supplement the internal one and make it more credible with countries like Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.

The means of this line of effort include the Ministry of Information as lead. This ministry is best suited to conduct strategic messaging since this is its domain and it can manage the process and its procedures. It will need support from other ministries to execute the campaigns: Culture, Telecommunications, and Foreign Affairs and Emigrants.

**Countering ISIS Strategy**

Countering the ISIS strategy requires a Security Line of Effort to secure the Lebanese community from internal and external threats that can target and threaten the country; an Intelligence Line of Effort to gather information about ISIS and all issues related to the group; and a Partnership Line of Effort to combine the efforts with regional and international partners to counter the ISIS threat internally and externally.

**Security Line of Effort**

The purpose of the Security Line of Effort is to secure Lebanon from internal and external threats and bring the militants and the supporters of ISIS to justice. This line of effort consists of a combination of Law Enforcement and Military instruments in harmony to counter the threat and the strategy of ISIS. It consists of three campaigns: Law Enforcement Campaign, Border Management Campaign, and Counter Terrorism Campaign.

The purpose of the Law Enforcement Campaign is to secure the population and promote the rule of law. This campaign emphasizes the enforcement of laws and demonstrates to the Lebanese people that the procedures dealing with the individuals and the issues related to ISIS are in accordance with Lebanese laws and its judicial process. This campaign is necessary to provide more security to the population and encourages them to participate in helping the Internal Security Forces (ISF) to achieve its missions.

The purpose of the Border Management Campaign is to secure the Lebanese borders with Syria from the infiltration and the attacks of ISIS, the movement of Lebanese individuals to go and fight in Syria, and the movement of arms and supplies between the two countries across the borders. This campaign consists of countering the trafficking activities that ISIS benefits from along the eastern borders with Syria. Registration and documentation procedures must be effective for the identification process of the daily border crossings, especially with the movement of Syrian refugees to and from Lebanon. The Lebanese Government has already begun to establish observation towers across the borders, but this process must continue, as the number of towersis insufficient. A British team built these towers in July 2014 as a part of British aid to Lebanon to counter the threat of ISIS and other extremist groups(Watt 2014).

 The Counter Terrorism Campaign will target ISIS networks in Lebanon, eliminate its personnel and supply resources to secure the regions that it threatens, and stop ISIS terrorist attacks. Even though the Lebanese Government addresses the roots of the problem and the frame and narrative of ISIS, this does not mean that the military should cease it operations against ISIS. Indeed, the Lebanese Armed Forces must target ISIS and conduct preventive military operations on the borders to spoil ISIS plans to attack Lebanon. The government has to reduce the resources of ISIS in Lebanon that are necessary for it to fight, conduct terrorist attacks, and destabilize the situation. Furthermore, it is necessary to establish security zones on the borders and maintain the flexibility of the forces to provide mobility to rapidly respond to threats as necessary.

The means for this line of effort include the Ministry of Defense that has more capabilities than other ministries to deal with security issues. Other ministries to implement the campaigns include: Interior and Municipalities, Justice, and Foreign Affairs and Emigrants.

**Intelligence Line of Effort**

This line of effort supports the entire strategy and all lines of efforts, and the Lebanese Government will apply it broadly across the entire strategy. The Intelligence Line of Effort provides necessary information and intelligence to set conditions and properly execute the other lines of effort. The information is also useful in the Strategic Messaging Line of Effort to address the population and the Lebanese fighters. The Intelligence Line of Effort consists of three campaigns: the Human Intelligence Networks Campaign, the Intelligence Sharing Campaign, and the Identity, Location, and Targeting Campaign.

The Human Intelligence Networks Campaign focuses on collecting information about individuals and supporters of ISIS in Lebanon. It can help recruit agents within ISIS to have information about its plans and capabilities and prevent new recruits within ISIS. The Intelligence Sharing Campaign has internal and external components. Internal sharing information between the Lebanese Intelligence Agencies strengthens the internal efforts to gather and analyze information, while external sharing information asserts the partnership between Lebanon and other countries and covers the gaps in the internal intelligence process.

The integration of Internal and External Sharing components provides a complete understanding of the situation and strengthens the efforts to resolve the external factors that affect the Lebanese situation. The Identification, Location and Targeting Campaign provide information to identify, locate, and target ISIS members and assets through Military and Law Enforcement operations. These operations cannot be effective without the information gathered about ISIS and its intention against Lebanon.

The means for this line of effort include the Ministry of Defense as the lead, since it has the capacity to gather, analyze, and properly treat the information. The ministries that are in support include: Interiorand Municipalities, Information, and Foreign Affairs and Emigrants.

**Partnership Line of Effort**

The purpose of the Partnership Line of Effort is to reinforce the capabilities of Lebanon in countering the strategy of ISIS. Lebanon cannot defeat ISIS without international and regional support and aid. This aid will be useful in improving border management, conducting military operations, and information sharing in support of the Lebanese strategy (Yacoubian 2014, 6-8), and for its partners in countering terrorism in their own countries. The campaigns in this line of effort consist of Arms and Supplies Campaign, Training Campaign, and Israeli Threat Campaign.

Due to financial difficulties and some international restrictions related to Israel, Lebanon does not have enough sophisticated weapons and equipment to conduct military operations to defeat ISIS on its borders. The purpose of the Arms and Supplies Campaign is to improve Lebanese military capabilities and reinforce its troops for fighting ISIS. The new arms and equipment must also come with training programs for the LAF to properly operate and maintain the items. This is the purpose of the Training Campaign and is necessary to train the LAF on these new arms and equipment, which regional and international partners, especially the United States will provide.

The LAF is also deployed on the southern borders of Lebanon to counter the threat of Israel. This threat keeps some LAF units unavailable in the operations against ISIS, which can disperse the efforts of the LAF countering the threat of ISIS and other extremist groups. LAF also reinforces the ISF in its law enforcement operations inside the country. The purpose of the Israeli Threat Campaign is to use international efforts, especially from the United States, to put pressure on Israel and prevent it from threatening Lebanon. Another purpose is to pressure Israel to withdraw from Lebanese territory in the southeastern part of Lebanon (Chebaa Farms). If these two purposes are achieved, the Lebanese Government will increase its ability to deal with the arms of Hezbollah and manage this issue; the extremists use this issue as one of the causes to justify their actions.

The means for this line of effort are primarilythe Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants as the lead in accordance with diplomatic laws and procedures. Ministries that will support its efforts are: Interior and Municipalities, Defense, Finance, Justice, and Information.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| LOE | Governance | Strategic Messaging | Religious Messaging | Security | Intelligence | Partnership |
| Ministries |
| Interior | X |   |   | + | + | + |
| Information | + | X | X |   | + | + |
| Foreign Affairs |   | + | + | + | + | X |
| Defense |   |   |   | X | X | + |
| Economy | + |   |   |   |   |   |
| Labor | + |   |   |   |   |   |
| Communications | + | + | + |   |   |   |
| Culture | + | + | + |   |   |   |
| Justice | + |   |   | + |   | + |
| Energy | + |   |   |   |   |   |
| Tourism | + |   |   |   |   |   |
| Industry | + |   |   |   |   |   |
| Agriculture | + |   |   |   |   |   |
| Transport | + |   |   |   |   |   |
| Social Affairs | + |   |   |   |   |   |
| Health | + |   |   |   |   |   |
| Youth and Sports | + |   |   |   |   |   |
| Finance | + |   |   |   |   | + |
| Education | + |   |   |   |   |   |

**Phases and Metrics**

**Phases**

Lebanon must implement the strategy, especially the economic and social reforms, across all regions of the country with priority to the poorest regions particularly in the North, because if it is only focusing on specific sectarian groups or regions, some other regions and communities will feel marginalized. Lebanon will execute this strategy in a condition-based phasing because there are conditions to be met before moving from one phase to the one that follows.

Lebanon will execute the strategy in four phases (see table 2). Phase Zero consists of the Intelligence Line of Effort,as the government needs accurate and updated information about the situation. It also consists of the Strategic Messaging and Religious Messaging Lines of Effort because it needs to prepare the ground for the response and explain the strategy to gain the support of the population, deprive ISIS from this support and from Lebanese recruits, and explain the process to partners for the purpose of obtaining support and aid from them.

Phase One will focus primarily on the Security Line of Effort because the government has to maintain security to protect its population and prevent failure of the phases that follow this phase. The people will not participate in the governance process if they do not feel that they are secure and protected from any threat.

Phase Two consists of the Governance Line of Effort that will come after gaining the information, preparing the population, spreading the strategic and religious messaging, and providing security. These previous issues can build trust between the government and the population; this trust is very important for the success of the government in its response.

Phase Three consists of the ongoing Governance Line of Effort to confirm that the population, especially the groups that feel marginalized, feel that there is equality between all the individuals and communities in the country, and that all have the same political opportunitystructure.

Even though the phases consist of primary lines of efforts in each phase, this does not mean that other Lines of efforts are not activated. The Intelligence Line of Effort will continue to provide the necessary information; the Strategic Messaging Line of Effort will continue if the government needs to focus on something or to clarify some points. The Security Line of Effort must be ongoing, but is the primary effort in Phase One. The Partnership Line of Effort will be a part of Phase Zero to provide necessary support that Lebanon needs to implement its strategy effectively in the other phases.

There are conditions the government mustmeetin each phase before moving to the phase that follows since this strategy is implemented in a condition-based phasing. To move from Phase Zero to Phase One the government has to ensure that it has enough information about the recent situation, and that the Strategic Messaging and Religious Messaging Lines of Effort have succeed in reaching the population, depriving ISIS of internal support and recruitment, and that Lebanon is receiving aid from partners. The aid from partners needs to be effective to increase the capabilities of Lebanon to conduct the Security Line of Effort in Phase One.

For the transition from Phase One to Phase Two, the government has to maintain security on the borders and inside the country. This does not mean that attacks and incidents will completely stop, but it is necessary to show a significant decrease in these attacks and incidents. People will invest in the governance process if they are not secure. Phase Three, which is ongoing governance, will begin after achieving significant changes in Phase Two. Phase Three consists of improving the governance process; this improvement can be done only if changes are set and in their places so we can assess the success and make improvement if it is necessary.

| **Phases** | **LOE** | **Conditions** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Zero** | Intelligence - Strategic and Religious Messaging - Partnership | - Enough Information.- Success in population, Lebanese Fighters, ISIS, and International Messaging.- Increase in the capabilities.  |
| **One** | Security | Decrease significantly the attacks and incidents. |
| **Two** | Governance | Decrease the feeling of marginalization. |
| **Three** | Ongoing Governance | Achieve significant success in the Governance process. |

**Metrics**

Measuring the success and failure of the various components of the strategy is vital to ensure it achieves specific results. If this does not occur, the lines of efforts and associated campaigns may fail and the situation will escalate because of the lack of credibility. The Lebanese Government must reinforce its successes and prevent any failures that can occur if conditions change and favor ISIS over the government.

The Political Reform Campaign and implementation of constitutional reforms will begin in the Phase Two and continue in Phase Three to confirm and improve the execution of the reforms after assessing the process. In the Economic Reform Campaign, success is measured by the reduction of unemployment, the increase of the number of tourists, and the reduction of poverty. In the Social Reform Campaign, success is measured by increasing the level of literacy especially in the poorest regions, and increasing of the social and public services aid for the communities. There must also be a reduction of the number of Syrian refugees by sending them back to their regions in Syria if they are safe or move some of them to other countries in coordination with the governments of these countries. Like the Political Reform Campaign, the Economic and Social Reform Campaigns will begin in the Phase Two and will be improved upon in Phase Three.

The Strategic Messaging Campaign and the Religious Messaging Campaign will begin immediately at Phase Zero; they may be used in other phases if they are necessary to provide continuous information about the strategy. The Law Enforcement Campaign will also begin during Phase One to secure the country and to create conditions for the security of the other campaigns. Concurrently, Countering Trafficking, Registration and Documentation in the Border Management Campaign will also begin in Phase One. The Lebanese Government will complete construction of the watchtowers with the aid of partners in concert with strengthening checkpoints and positions across the borders.

The Counter Terrorism Campaign will establish security zones within Phase Two on the borders immediately with the construction of the towers and the strengthening of the positions. The Military Counter Terrorism Campaign will begin in concert with the external sharing of information to diminish the capabilities of ISIS to attack Lebanon. Moreover, intelligence campaigns have to be done in concert with the Strategic Messaging Campaign and continue in all phases, as needed. The Sharing Information Campaign must improve immediately internally in Phase Zero, and must increase to benefit from all information.

The Partners Campaigns including arms and supplies, training,andaddress the threat of Israel must begin in Phase Zero. This campaign will assist withreinforcingLebanesecapabilities in law enforcement and the militaryareas.ThesePartnership Campaigns must be in Phase Zero to increase the capabilities before moving to Phase One, which focuses on the Security Line of Effort.

**Risk Assessment and Mitigation**

There are several risks associated with executing this strategy. One type of risk Lebanon may face is the internal risk of an ends, ways, means mismatch if it lacks financial resources to fund the strategy in all domains to include economic, and social reforms, as well as LAF equipping and training the troops. This can result from not receiving adequate and timely aid from partners. To mitigate this risk, the Lebanese Government must convince its partners that their aid is vitally important to Lebanon’s success and the potential impacts on its strategy and the security of the country in the absence of sufficient aid. The government must also make changes to its budget in coordination with the parliament to fund this strategic response.

There is also risk associated with the political reforms called for in this strategic response. Some political parties will refuse to implement all the articles of the Constitution or make changes because it will result in a loss of some political power. The Lebanese Government must focus on its strategic messaging and address the population to gain its support and put popular pressure on the parties that refuse to reform the political system.

Systemic risk includes the risk of unintended consequences and will occur if ISIS affiliates and supporters in Lebanon conduct operations inside Lebanon to disperse military forces and decrease LAF efficacy on the borders facing ISIS. To mitigate this risk, the LAF and the ISF must conduct preventive operations based on accurate intelligence information to avoid the arrest of innocents, which will have negative impacts on the population and strengthen the narrative of ISIS.

Another risk of unintended consequences will occur if Israel conducts military operations in Lebanon and weakens the LAF because it does not have the capacity to fight against Israel and ISIS at the same time. To mitigate this, the Lebanese Government must coordinate with the International Community and with its partners to put pressure on Israel and prevent it from conducting military operations in Lebanon.

**Conclusion**

The Syrian Civil War enabled extremists and ISIS to spread into Lebanon with sleeper cells conducting violent attacks in Lebanon while ISIS conducts offensive operations toward the Lebanese-Syrian borders. The extremists in Lebanon find in ISIS an entity that provides protection and assistance to achieve social and political demands, and the spreading of Sharia law.

This article did not provide a response to the threat of ISIS in the Middle East or the world; rather it is a response that the Lebanese Government can use to counter the threat of ISIS in Lebanon only, but it is adaptable to other violent radical extremist groups in the country. The article provides a response based on political opportunities structure reform that consists of a whole government approach that has to emphasize political, economic, and social reforms to offer opportunities and security for the population.

The success of this strategy depends on the readiness and intent of the Lebanese Government to solve the problem. Lebanon must convince its population and partners, and at the same time ISIS, that it is committed to address the grievances and conducting a counterinsurgency. Moreover, the partners of Lebanon must support the efforts of the Lebanese Government to improve its capabilities in implement the strategy. Lebanon will face an escalation in violence that it cannot control if it is not successful in its response. Lebanon cannot let the potential risks spoil the response, and it must implement this response in a complete way, with flexibility ensuring it executes all parts for the success of the response.

The Lebanese Government must plan for post conflict operations after countering the threat of ISIS and defeating it in Lebanon. Keeping ISIS militants outside the borders and dismantling its sleeper cells inside the country will ultimately defeat the group. Following this successful execution of the strategy, Lebanon will likely have hundreds of former Lebanese terrorists and militants. Developing a de-radicalization and reintegration program at the national level is crucial for Lebanon to deal with this emerging problem.

 ISIS is a complex threat for Lebanon and the Middle East and ultimately to the rest of the world. The Lebanese Government takes this threat seriously, but it must make changes to its recent response to ISIS threat. The response outlined in this article will set Lebanon on a course to defeat ISIS within the country, bridge the divide that separates the sectarian groups from each other, and set the country towards the path to lasting peace.

**Bibliography**

Charles River Editors. 2014. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria : The History of ISIS/ISIL. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Charles River Editors.

Constitution of Lebanon, Lebanon (1990).

Ghosn, Faten. Forthcoming.**"Lebanon: The Lack of a Unified and Independent Foreign Policy."** In [Democratic Peace Across the Middle East: Islam and Political Modernization], edited by Halabi Yaacoub: I.B.Taurus.

Ghosn, Faten and Amal Khoury. 2011. **"Lebanon After the Civil War: Peace Or the Illusion of Peace?"**Middle East Journal 63 (3).

Habeeb, William Mark. 2012. The Middle East in Turmoil: Conflict, Revolution, and Change. Greenwood Pub.: Greenwood.

Karam, Zeina and Bassem Mroue. 2014. Lebanon Pulled into War with Islamic State Group. Lebanon: Associate Press, October 18.

Khalaf, Samir. 2004. Civil and Uncivil Violence : A History of the Internationalization of Communal Conflict in Lebanon. New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press.

Khashan, Hilal. 2013. **"The Political Isolation of Lebanese Sunnis."** Middle East Quarterly.

Khatib, Lina. 2014.**"Regional Spillover: Lebanon and the Syrian Conflict."**Carnegie Endowment.

Lewis, Jessica. 2014.**"The Islamic State: A Counter-Strategy for a Counter-State."** Institute for the Study of War.

Makhoul, Jihad and Lindsey Harrison. 2002. **"Development Persepectives: Views from Rural Lebanon."** Development in Practice 12 (5).

Naylor, Hugh. 2014. **"Lebanese Sunnis Who Fought in Syria’s War are Returning Home Radicalized."**The Washington Post, November 27.

Oxford Analytical Ltd. 2014. Lebanon: Syrian Refugees Pose New Risk to Stability. United Kingdom, Oxford.

Rabil, Robert. 2014. Salafism in Lebanon: From Apotilicism to Transnational Jihadism. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Rougier, Bernard. 2007. Everyday Jihad : The Rise of Militant Islam among Palestinians in Lebanon. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Rudner, Martin. 2013. **"Al Qaeda's Twenty-Year Strategic Plan: The Current Phase of Global Terror."** Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 36 (12).

Saab, Bilal Y. and Magnus Ranstorp. 2007. **"Securing Lebanon from the Threat of Salafist Jihadism."** Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 30 (10).

Salamey, Imad. 2014. The Government and Politics of Lebanon. New York, N.Y.: Routledge.

Salem, Paul. 2012.**"Can Lebanon Survive the Syrian Crisis?"** Carnegie Middle East Center - Carnegie Endowement for International Peace.

Sly, Liz. 2012.**"Lebanon’s Sunnis at Risk of Radicalization."**The Washington Post, October 31.

Thibos, Cameron. 2014. One Million Syrians in Lebanon: A Milestone Quickly Passed. Italy: Migration Policy Centre, EUI.

Trofimov, Yaroslav. 2014.**"Islamic State’s Sway Spreads to Lebanon."** The Wall Street Journal, October 20.

UNHCR. 2014. UNHCR Lebanon Monthly Updates . New York, N.Y.:

UNHCR (The UN Refugee Agency).

———. 2015. Syria Regional Refugee Response . New York, N.Y.: UNHCR (The UN Refugee Agency).

Watt, Holy. 2014. **"Secret British Role in Halting ISIL 'Massacre' in Lebanon."**The Telegraph, November 30.

Yacoubian, Mona. 2014. Renewed Conflict in Lebanon. USA: Council on Foreign Relations Press.

**تمدد "داعش" إلى لبنان: رد استراتيجي لمواجهة التهديد**
الشرق الأوسط في حالة اضطراب مع وصول العديد من البلدان إلى حافة الفشل والانهيار حيث أدى نمو مظاهر التطرف والطائفية وتأثيرات القوى الإقليمية والدولية في المنطقة إلى تفشي الفوضى. تمدد المجموعات المتطرفة تنامى بشكل كبير في الشرق الأوسط خلال الأعوام القليلة الماضية وبدأ يشكل مشكلة كبيرة للمجتمع الدولي.
المجموعة الأخطر التي برزت وتنامت أعدادها في الشرق الأوسط منذ العام 2013 هي ما أصبح يُعرف بـ"الدولة الإسلامية" أو "الدولة الإسلامية في العراق والشام أو داعش".
بروز تهديد "داعش" وتمدده إلى لبنان وحدوده في صيف العام 2014 يمثل خطرًا كبيرًا يهدد أمن لبنان واستقراره. ورغم أن الحكومة واجهت مجموعات متطرفة أخرى فهي لم تكن مستعد بالشكل المناسب للتعامل مع تهديد "داعش". خلال العامين 2014 و2015 أظهر "داعش" تمتعه بقدرات تمكّنه من تنفيذ عمليات عسكرية على الحدود مع لبنان وشن هجمات إرهابية في الداخل اللبناني من خلال اللجوء إلى "خلايا نائمة" ومؤيدين له.
بدأت الحكومة اللبنانيّة بالتعامل مع التهديد لكن ردها الحالي لا يبدو متناسبًا مع حجم هذا التهديد لأنه لا يعالج كل مظاهر المشكلة. الوضع لا يقتصر فقط على المشكلة الأمنية إذ يجدر بالحكومة أن تضع مقاربة شاملة لمعالجة جذور المشكلة  ومواجهة استراتيجية "داعش". على لبنان تنسيق كل هذه الجهود بشكل متناغم  وعلى كل الأعضاء المشاركين في الحكومة المساهمة في هذا الرد.
هذا الرد يتضمن تدابير حكومية شاملة بعد تقييم وضع "داعش" لفهم سبب تشكيلها تهديدًا للبنان وتأثيرات التنظيم في الشرق الأوسط وفي مناطق أخرى من العالم إذا واصل تنظيم "داعش" توسيع نطاق سيطرته وزيادة قدراته.
هذا الرد يمكن اللجوء إليه لمواجهة تهديدات مجموعات متطرفة أخرى لأنّ هذه المجموعات تستغل المظلمات وتستعمل إطارًا مشابهًا إنّما بالاعتماد على استراتيجية مختلفة.

- See more at: https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/spread-isis-lebanon-strategic-response-counter-threat#sthash.csnbqGQU.dpuf