

Perceiving the Shia Dimension of Terrorism

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By providing more effective governance and core services, Middle Eastern officials can prevent defeated terrorist groups from reemerging, but such efforts are largely futile without sustained U.S. and European military support.

In trying to figure out what to do about ISIS, the international community seems to have forgotten the other side of the coin, that is, Iran's Shia militias in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and other places in the region. Countering terrorism requires a broader look at terrorist groups, and understanding that they feed on each other's sectarian rhetoric. ISIS uses an anti-Shia sectarian rhetoric to recruit fighters, and Iran does the same with an increasingly anti-Sunni -- or anti-Takfiri -- rhetoric. To defeat ISIS, one must not ignore Iran's armed militias and their atrocities in the region, and vice versa. However, this does not mean that the solution is to bomb Iran's militias in Syria and Iraq. With the Russian involvement in Syria, the integration of Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) in Iraq's army, and Hizballah's control of Lebanon's state institutions, a military solution is not that simple...

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