

Meet the New Islamic State: Same as the Old Islamic State

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The tragic success of recent terrorist attacks shows that the group has not so much changed its strategy as learned from its past failures, so the West must now focus on limiting its external operational capabilities.

The recent attacks in Paris, Beirut, and Sharm Al-Sheikh demonstrated to world leaders that we have a serious problem: If the self-proclaimed Islamic State appeared to be contained in Syria and Iraq, the recent attacks proved exactly the opposite, that the group can execute external operations even while its territory is shrinking. The recent attacks also provoked a much-needed debate about whether this is a recent strategic shift by the Islamic State to focus more on terrorism abroad, or rather a chain of tactical wins representing the culmination of a strategy that was put in place a long time ago.

Those that argue that the recent attacks symbolize a strategic shift say that, as a result of losing territory, the Islamic State has decided to allocate more resources to terror operations abroad. This argument further suggests that because the group cannot show success on the ground due to these territorial losses, it needs to focus more on global terror to maintain its reputation and flow of recruits. This argument makes sense, especially in light of recent Islamic State defeats in Sinjar and Northern Syria, but other factors suggest that the group's recent successes abroad are actually part of a global effort the organization started long before its so-called state was shrinking...

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