

Aligning Means and Ends, Policies and Strategy in the War on ISIL

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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The means-ends mismatch in Washington's approach to ISIL is a function of several problems, including inadequate commitment of resources, the jihadist group's resilience, the weakness of America's regional partners, and the incoherence of current U.S. strategy.

The following is an excerpt from remarks prepared for a House Armed Services subcommittee hearing.
Download the PDF to read the full testimony, or [watch video on the committee's website](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCD506yORW2voSanqEgLOUIQ>.

Recent gains by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq and Syria mark major setbacks in the nearly year-old campaign against the group. These developments undermine Obama administration claims of progress in the war, and highlight fundamental flaws in the administration's strategy that need to be rectified if the United States and its coalition of sixty-plus states are to succeed. President Obama was only partially right when he said several weeks ago that America lacks a "complete strategy" for dealing with ISIL because of Iraq's lack of commitment. In fact, much of the dysfunction in U.S. strategy derives from American policies, the policies of partners in the counter-ISIL campaign, and the policies of the Iraqi government.

For starters, the United States needs to address the means-ends mismatch in its strategy. It has devoted inadequate resources in pursuit of a goal -- to "degrade and eventually destroy" ISIL -- whose ultimate objective is likely to remain unattainable for the foreseeable future. This is due to ISIL's resilience, the weakness of America's regional partners, and the incoherence of current U.S. strategy... ❖

House Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities

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