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STUDIES

After ISIS: U.S. Political-Military Strategy in the Global War on Terror

March 10, 2017 | **Hal Brands**

Resources: Strategy & Policy

Sooner or later, and probably within the next few months, the United States and its coalition partners will defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) militarily, by collapsing its control of key areas in Iraq and Syria. That operational victory, however, will not necessarily prevent remnants of ISIS from reforming at a later date, nor will it bring a larger strategic triumph in the global war on terror. As long as large parts of the greater Middle East remain founts of ideological extremism, the United States will continue to confront a dangerous challenge from jihadist terrorism.

In this report, Hal Brands and Peter Feaver assess America's strategic options after ISIS by examining four politico-military strategies for counter-terrorism. They conclude that an enhanced version of the approach that the Obama administration took to defeating ISIS represents the best strategy for waging a dangerous conflict that is likely to endure for many years.