

## How will military action against ISIS evolve?

[Chris Scott](#) looks at the possible next steps in the war against ISIS

Friday 12 September 2014



Photo Credit: Stephen Melkisetian

Few images are likely to haunt any politician as much as George Bush's appearance under a banner reading 'Mission Accomplished' on the USS Abraham Lincoln in May 2003. Supposed to mark the end of the Iraq war, what followed instead was a long, drawn out conflict against militias in Iraq. Since then people in Western countries have become increasingly isolationist in their outlook, and increasingly hostile to the use of their country's troops in conflicts abroad. For America in particular, when operations in Iraq ended in 2011 it was largely greeted with relief, and considered a success for President Barack Obama.

However following the beheadings of 2 US journalists by ISIS, the United States is looking to step up its operations in Iraq in order to combat the threat which ISIS poses. Since August both America and European Union countries have provided military arms and intelligence support to Kurds fighting the militias. This went further when on Sunday the 7th of September the US carried out air strikes to support Iraqi forces in the region, enabling them to remove IS militants around the Haditha dam, an important water supply. Up until that point the US had refused to support Iraqi forces until a more inclusive government was formed.

The UK government is also looking increasingly likely to step up its involvement in the region, with Conservative party whips reported to be asking MPs if they would support airstrikes against ISIS, if a motion was voted upon in the House of Commons.

Although this all suggests that greater intervention is highly probable over the coming months, how it would be executed is still unclear. Due to a lack of public appetite in western countries for soldiers fighting on Iraqi soil, coupled with the possible spillover effects of such a move, it remains likely that any Western involvement would be limited to airstrikes on strategic targets.

To try and avoid the mistakes of the Iraq invasion, America is currently trying to gain international support for action, in particular from other regional powers in the Middle East. Iran, which has previously been marginalised by the United States, is now seen by the international community as having an important role in helping to counter the threat posed by ISIS. Since ISIS is made up predominantly of Sunni fighters,

Iran, which has a Shia majority, sees its rapid expansion as a threat. So far the Iranian Revolutionary Guard have been offering support to the Iraqi army, and has even been cooperating with American airstrikes in the region.

However although there is a growing international coalition in support of action, there are still divisions over whether this should extend to carrying out airstrikes on ISIS in Syria. While it would be necessary for the international community to bomb ISIS targets in Syria in order to completely tackle the threat it poses, there are concerns that it could violate international law if done without the permission of the government. Furthermore Western nations are reluctant to take action that could aid Bashar al-Assad in the Syrian civil war, given that his government has been accused of war crimes, and was itself considered for airstrikes last year.

There are other logistical challenges to military intervention, in particular relating to Iraq's domestic politics. Although the former prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki, has been replaced by Haider al-Abadi, it will remain difficult to convince the Sunnis who became disillusioned with the former Shia dominated government that Iraq's political system can become more inclusive. This is made more difficult by the fact that Mr Abadi is part of the same political party, the Islamic Dawa Party that Maliki had been part of. Even though Mr Abadi's new cabinet does contain representatives from the Sunni and Kurdish sects, in addition to from the Shia majority, it will take time to show that it can rise above sectarian difficulties in the country.

While the success of military intervention is largely dependent on Iraq's politics, taking no action would come at a great humanitarian cost to those inside the caliphate. Furthermore as ISIS increases its foothold in the region, it could increasingly be able to threaten the West. It has already proved itself capable of forming a sophisticated society, providing public services and collecting taxes. Eventually this could lead to it becoming a safe haven to plan attacks on the West. As such it remains important to try and combat the threat that it poses, while continuing to apply pressure to Iraq to continue building a more inclusive government.



Most Read Discussed

1. [What is the difference between tax evasion and tax avoidance?](#)
2. [Review: Little Mix - LM5](#)
3. [Penalty for submitting work up to an hour late halved](#)
4. [UK government in contempt of Parliament ahead of key Brexit vote](#)
5. [How to depose a Conservative leader](#)
6. [Led Astray - The Case Against Greta Van Fleet](#)

### Write for Nouse Politics

[Get in touch with the editors](#)

[Join the Facebook group](#)

### More in Politics

[UK government in contempt of Parliament ahead of key Brexit vote](#)

[How to depose a Conservative leader](#)

[Aufwiedersehen: Merkel plans her departure](#)

[US turnout surges in Midterms](#)

[Trans-Atlantic spats overshadow Centenary](#)

[Up to a million Muslims imprisoned by China](#)

- [About Nouse](#)
- [Who's Nouse](#)
- [Website Credits](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Advertising](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Student Discounts](#)
- [Print Editions](#)
- [Mini-Sites](#)
- [Nouse on Twitter](#)
- [Nouse on Facebook](#)
- [Nouse on Google+](#)

