

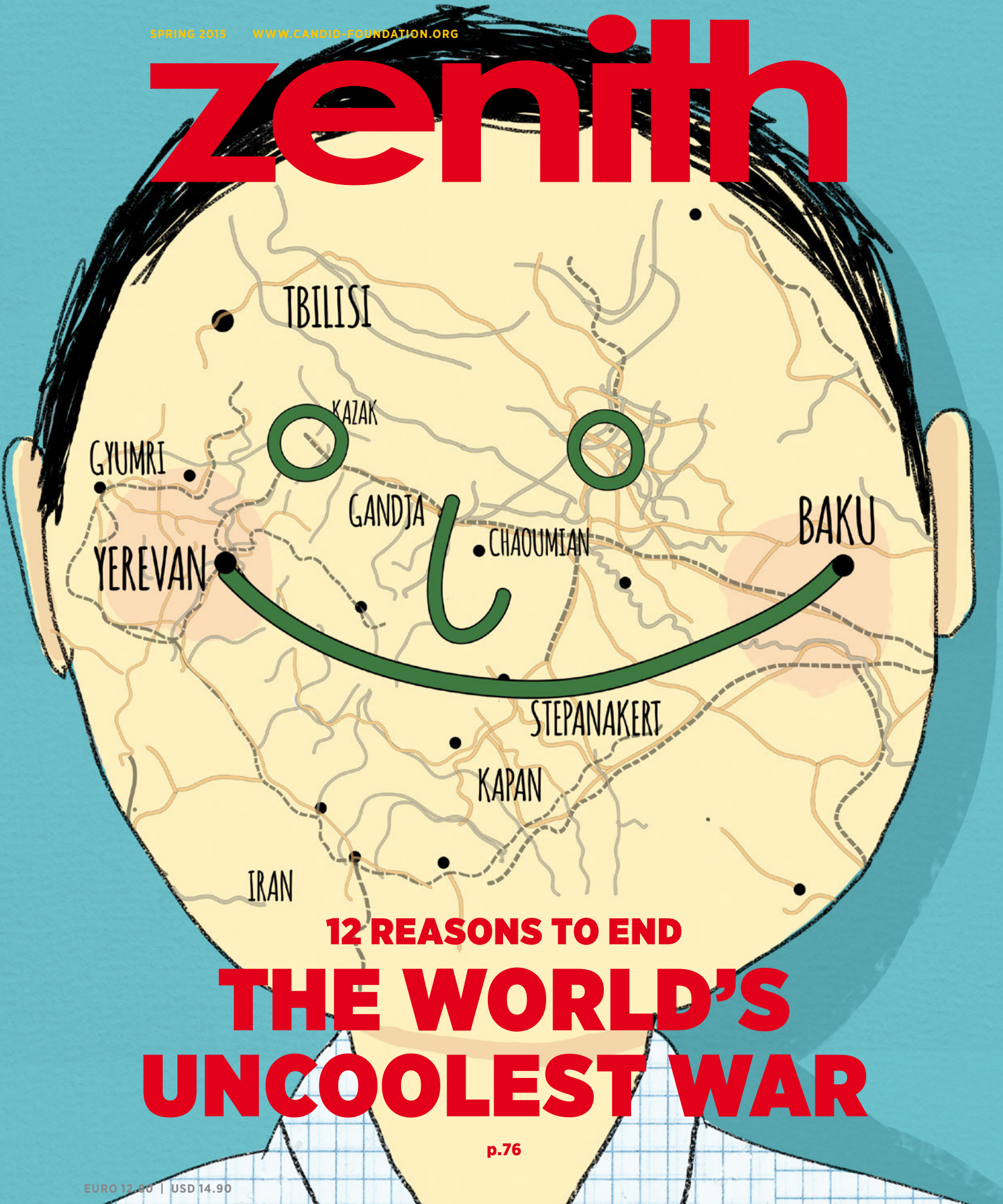
AN UNLIKELY HERO
BUT NOT WITHOUT HIS MOTHER

TRADING INSULTS
RUSSIA, TURKEY NEED EACH OTHER

PRINTING LIMBS
A FABULOUS LAB IN JORDAN

SPRING 2015 WWW.CANDID-FOUNDATION.ORG

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12 REASONS TO END THE WORLD'S UNCOOLEST WAR

p.76

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IMPRESSUM



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PRO & CONTRA

All options on the table

How should Daesh – a group that exceeds all the previously known parameters of a terrorist organisation – be dealt with? So far the only strategy for Western governments seems to be bombing the hell out of them. But what if their uncompromising fanaticism is just a propaganda ploy and Daesh's leadership is more concerned with maintaining its power?

Time for indecent proposals.

BY HENDRIK FENZ

MILITARY SOLUTION

Impacts of a major military offensive against IS

⊕ PRO

The international coalition is strong. In Turkey alone, by far the strongest military force in the region, NATO already has a powerful local ally. In contrast, Daesh commands a fighting force estimated at forty thousand soldiers, in a strategically unfavourable distribution over an area about as large as Austria. Turkish military superiority, coupled with international air support and ground troops, should thus be able to pulverise all of Daesh's ambitions for Syria and in the wider Levant. At the same time, the alliance between Russia and the Assad regime could massively restrict the mobility of Daesh, which would also face additional military pressure from Iraq. Loss of territory would jeopardise Daesh access to oil fields, and thus its economic base. The northern Iraqi Peshmerga, comprising more than 100,000 fighters, could push Daesh back behind the Iraq-Syria border, meaning they would have to compete for limited resources with other military players in the region, such as the Assad regime, al-Nusra Front and the Free Syrian Army, and thus would have to wage a war on multiple fronts.

Conclusion: The strength of an international coalition would cause Daesh to fragment, resulting in defeat.

⊖ CONTRA

At present, neither Turkey, the United States nor Russia have shown interest in carrying out a ground offensive. Wars are not won from the air – this strategic maxim was demonstrated in Afghanistan and again in the Iraq War. Saudi Arabia's announcement of plans to send troops can be relegated to the land of dreams. Furthermore, Western ground troops would only add fuel to the fire. Daesh could use an invasion for its own propaganda purposes, making it easier for them to recruit new followers even from among more moderate groups. Western troops would only be one more among the 10-15 military parties

already active in the Syrian conflict, and Assad would interpret the intervention as an attack on the sovereignty of his country and a violation of international law. Turkey, meanwhile, whose AKP government is focused on retaining domestic power and fighting the PKK, could be expected at best to make a commitment in Syria aimed against the Assad regime. And the Kurdish Peshmerga? They were able to deliver a prestigious victory in November 2015 when they took the city of Sinjar. However, should tensions between Iraq's President Barzani and his domestic rivals escalate any further, the Peshmerga run the risk of being drawn into a civil war in northern Iraq. So much the better for Daesh.

Conclusion: There is no unified military strategy against Daesh. The so-called international coalition is a tiger unwilling to use its claws.

POLITICAL SOLUTION

Reunite Syria – rehabilitate Assad

⊕ PRO

This is currently the West's and Saudi Arabia's unspoken preference. The Arab revolutions and thus the democratic project are seen as having failed, and so the United States returns to an ostensibly wiser policy: stability before democracy. Assad is the official head of state and retains support within elements of the Syrian population, in spite of everything. Meanwhile, Russia is taking on Assad's dirty work, clearing his path back to power with bombs. Aleppo will fall and other cities will follow. Moderate rebel groups fall by the wayside. Daesh is barely harmed by this, as its power base lies elsewhere. A strengthened Assad could turn his attention to Daesh and gain international support as a champion against Islamist terror. Europe would also benefit from Assad's new strength: refugee numbers would decrease,

the region would be stabilised, and economic opportunity would beckon from a country undergoing reconstruction.

Conclusion: Assad offers the only real chance for stability in Syria, and should be supported.

⊖ **CONTRA**

Like his father Hafez, Bashar Al-Assad holds to a policy of unscrupulously annihilating all political opponents. Helping him to regain a presidential office legitimised by sham elections would not just be unworthy of democratic states, it would constitute outright support for state terror. It would mean the suffocation of any democratic hopes in Syria for years to come, strengthen Assad's grip as a dictator, and continue to provide fuel for the fire of Islamic extremism. Propping up Assad would also force the Erdogan regime to react. To date, the Turkish AKP has done everything to weaken Assad, including providing Daesh with logistical support by tolerating its supply routes and oil smuggling. In other words: those who support Assad will simultaneously be strengthening Daesh.

Conclusion: If Assad recovers, Europe loses Turkey.

ECONOMIC SOLUTION

Weaken Daesh economically, reduce its attractiveness

⊕ **PRO**

Oil, cash, taxes – Daesh controls resources that other groupings in Syria, apart from the Assad regime, can only dream of. This financial cushion gives Daesh plenty of room to manoeuvre. On the other hand, wages, compensation, weapon purchases, infrastructural development and social services are all costly, and Daesh needs a balanced budget, as its access to international credit is limited. Rapid and long-term gains against Daesh could be made here: by shutting down oil fields, blocking the supply of arms and destroying infrastructure. These days roads and mobile phone networks are vital – if you don't have them, you will lose. A positive side effect: reconstruction could also constitute an economic stimulus package for Syria and international corporations.

Conclusion: Stop the supply of oil and money, and Daesh will dry out like a spring in the desert.

⊖ **CONTRA**

The most effective solution – which was also briefly considered – would be to bomb the oil wells. Why has no one done this? Because it would render oil production in the targeted areas impossible for years to come. Local and international actors are only too aware of this risk, and are allowing Daesh to continue diligently producing oil which is sold to local traders for use in the 'caliphate', in rebel-held areas in Syria, with some also smuggled into Turkey or Jordan. Taking economic measures against Daesh would do nothing to prevent terrorist attacks, which deliver maximum effectiveness for extremely little outlay. While the financial cost of terror is negligible, its logistical and ideological basis would be unaffected by an attempt to dry up IS finances. Furthermore, such an approach presents the additional risk of further radicalising Daesh. Anyone who thinks that this is impossible should remember Afghanistan: after the Taliban came al-Qaeda, which was in turn succeeded by Daesh – and after Daesh? The terrorist organisation currently operates as a military state: rational, visible and thus predictable. Post-Daesh splinter factions can be expected to act irrationally, in a decentralised manner beyond any control. While we currently face a more or less symmetrical war

(Daesh versus the international coalition) with asymmetric sprinklings (terrorist attacks), the situation could change radically.

Conclusion: If Daesh loses its appeal, its representatives will be driven to further excesses and new radical groups will emerge. Syrian economic development will be lastingly impaired.

INTERNATIONAL SOLUTION

Negotiation, not annihilation

⊖ **CONTRA**

There will be no negotiation with terrorists! Nearly thirty years after Helmut Schmidt's statement regarding the German terrorist organisation the Red Army Faction (RAF), the moral standpoint hasn't changed. Negotiation would strengthen IS and legitimise its actions. Expulsion, genocide, terrorist attacks – entering negotiations would wipe this gruesome slate clean, and guilt would cease to be guilt. Recognising Daesh as a negotiation partner would also imply that its recognition as an international player – and thus, the effective division of Syria between Daesh and the Assad regime – would not be far off. This would in turn pave the way for the expansion of Daesh into other regions. It is therefore a question of shedding blood to defend the dignity of democracy.

Conclusion: Elevating terrorists to the status of negotiation partners would only strengthen them; it would mean that Daesh had politically arrived in the 21st century.

⊕ **PRO**

There will be no negotiation with terrorists! Why not? The reality is shown by the example of the Taliban in Qatar. What else does the existence of their political office in Doha represent, if not entering into negotiations? Isn't it precisely with one's enemies that one must come to terms? The more that actors are integrated into networks, the more difficult and risky it will be for them to break with these same networks – and this is just as true for terrorists as for anyone else. The international coalition will have to take the first step. Even Daesh will require legitimacy if it hopes to function as the representative of Sunni Muslims, and this legitimacy will have to be bought with concessions. It will certainly not be achieved with bombings. It is this need for legitimacy that the international community can use as leverage to reach a resolution of the conflict. Since the 1970s, Europe has adopted similar tactics in the context of the CSCE / OSCE, and they should be applied to the Middle East. They provide useful guidelines: networking is conflict management which aims to contain a conflict. There are multiple ways of establishing contact; using informal channels would be just one of them. Scientific studies demonstrate the efficacy of negotiations instead of military intervention: Non-violent measures in conflict resolution within the last five decades have been significantly more successful than armed solutions. In case of military intervention, the probability of an ensuing democratic development stands at 4 per cent, but at 41 per cent if non-violent measures are taken.

Conclusion: Try to win over Daesh as a political partner!

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