

# **Capability (الاستطاعة al-istita'ah) and its Impact on the Shariah Obligation to Declare the Islamic State and Establish the Shariah: From Preventive Inability to Making Excuses for the Neglected Ability**

**(Part 4)**

## **Is the Scenario of War Against the Islamic State Inevitable? Or Is It a Gross Strategic Miscalculation?**

(Translated)

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Modern strategic studies, as found in analyses such as Robert A. Pape's "Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War (1999)", have shown that aerial bombardment campaigns alone do not break the will of the targeted state. Instead, they strengthen its resistance and often generate domestic solidarity against the attacker. Likewise, the core of renewed analytical perspectives indicates that strategic air bombardment alone does not constitute a revolution in the art of war, as studies in the United States have shown that reliance on it failed to achieve the desired battlefield reversal in five major conflicts following World War II (Air University).

As for nuclear deterrence, the principle of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) confirms that first use of nuclear weapons leads to total destruction of both parties, rendering this option practically almost impossible, and with the crystallization of the Stability-Instability Paradox theory, the presence of balanced nuclear arsenals between states reduces the likelihood of all-out, large-scale war. Talk of "limited nuclear war" has become widespread, but strategists warn against over-relying on it. It carries risks of radiation leakage over vast areas, may lead to uncontrollable escalation, or could become a future pretext that the state which struck first gives to the rest of the world's nuclear powers to use against it later if circumstances change. As a practical example, Russia has not moved to strike Ukrainian cities with nuclear weapons, despite possessing the material capability, and despite the possibility that it could force the adversary to surrender, out of awareness of the consequences of international retaliation. In the case of a potential strike on the emerging Islamic State, or on a major capital of the Islamic world, the enormous repercussions would arouse the Ummah's outrage, exposing the interests of the bombing state to grave danger. Military and strategic considerations dictate that such a gamble is unwise. It is not a matter of whim, but instead a profound strategic calculation.

### **First – The United States and Its Ability to Wage Comprehensive War in the Broad Middle East:**

The American experience over the past two decades provides an extremely clear picture of the cost of prolonged ground wars. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which were supposed to be swiftly decisive, turned into the longest foreign conflicts in United States history. Estimates from the "Costs of War Project," a nonpartisan research project based at the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown University, place the total cost of post-9/11 wars at approximately 8 trillion dollars through 2023, including Iraq, Afghanistan, debt interest, and veterans' care, according to the Congressional Research Service (CRS.) These figures represent a massive portion of U.S. GDP and continue to feed the American public debt through future interest payments, a continuous drain on resources.

**Drain on Combat Readiness:** At the peak, monthly defense costs were about 12.1 billion dollars (2008), with an annual military "equipment reset" bill of 16 billion dollars, for years even after withdrawal, meaning direct depletion of stocks, crews, vehicles, and training

capacity. Testimonies from military leadership in 2006–2008 described the strain as “exceeding the sustainable generation capacity of the force,” with negative effects on the readiness of combat brigades and the all-volunteer force.

**Practical Reading:** At the peak, emergency expenditures of Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) accounted for the equivalent of 1–2% of GDP annually for several years. This level of spending is usually associated with measurable decline in equipment and personnel readiness, delays in modernization, and logistical “gaps” that persist for years after fighting stops due to replacement and rebuilding costs (CRS data and Vice Chief of Staff testimonies support this conclusion). These wars not only weakened the American economy but exhausted the armed forces themselves. High rates of psychological and physical injuries were recorded among soldiers, and suicide rates rose among returning troops. Today, after Washington’s involvement in supplying Ukraine with weapons and ammunition against Russia and delivering huge quantities of guided munitions and interceptor missiles to the Jewish entity in the Gaza war, U.S. Army stockpiles have fallen to their lowest levels since the end of the Cold War. Pentagon reports themselves indicate that replenishing these stockpiles, especially systems such as Javelin and Stinger missiles and 155 mm artillery ammunition, will require three to five years of continuous production before returning to levels safe for any large-scale war.

### **Why Would a Third World War Today Be Even More Costly on Preparedness?**

#### **Ammunition Stockpiles and Supply Chains: A Real Bottleneck**

The United States has supplied Ukraine with more than 3 million 155 mm shells and is racing against time to raise production to 100,000 shells/month, yet reality through summer 2025 shows slowdown at 40,000/month and postponement of reaching 100,000 until spring 2026, with bottlenecks in explosives and filling, assembly capacities. Any new war will immediately hit these ceilings.

Industrial analyses show that replacing certain “smart” munitions, such as the M982 Excalibur, 155 mm extended-range guided artillery shell, could take four to seven years at previous/enhanced production rates and this is before opening a new major front.

On May 30, 2024, the US Department of War announced that, “The Army has inaugurated a new modular metal parts facility in Mesquite, Texas”...“The Universal Artillery Projectile Lines facility will increase the Army’s ability to produce 155 mm munitions, Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh told reporters during a briefing. “The Army is spending more than a billion dollars every year to make these critical improvements, and this plant is an important example of how we are modernizing our industrial base,” Singh said.” The US is pumping billions, but the industrial boom is still hostage to long-term contracts and fragile global supply chains. This means that the ability to “generate ammunition” will not keep pace with the rate of consumption in a large, multi-front war.

#### **Operational Consumption and Subsequent costs**

The Iraq and Afghanistan experiences showed that the military’s “reset cost” alone reached 16 billion dollars annually for several years after combat ended. In today’s environment, after Ukraine and Gaza, the bill for replacement and expansion will be higher due to price inflation, production capacity constraints, and the need to renew expensive systems, such as the Patriot PAC-3 (Patriot Advanced Capability-3) missile interceptor system and precision munitions.

### **Estimate of the impact of a World War 3 on American capability, as a conservative analytical scenario**

**Assumptive premise:** a sustained campaign of twelve to eighteenth months involving intensive air sorties, protection of bases and fleets, land–sea–air fire consumption, need to reinforce other theaters, specifically Eastern Europe, the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and, most importantly, the need to maintain a force capable of confronting any unexpected global dangers with full combat readiness:

**On ammunition stockpiles:** Given recent firing rates in Ukraine and U.S. production constraints, a third world war would impose periodic deficits between consumption and production in major equipment, 155 mm shells, missile air defense, precision munitions, dropping actual U.S. stockpile readiness in some sensitive categories into double-digit deficit range, 15–30%, within the first months unless strict limits are imposed on firing and flight rates or a larger share of allied production is diverted to fill the gap. The deficit range is based on a 40,000 per month production gap against operational needs that could far exceed it, and on CSIS/CRS estimates for replacement timelines.

**On Unit Combat Readiness:** Ammunition and equipment depletion and faster deployment cycles means a tangible drop in “full combat readiness” for some brigades and support systems, with accumulation of “maintenance backlogs” exactly as happened previously, which required years of maintenance and replacement after Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Cautious Assessment:** A drop from the double digits in readiness indicators for some first-shift formations during the first year, gradually recovering after funding and manufacturing, but not before three to five years from the end of operations.

**On the Economy and Public Finances:** By historical comparison, OCO spending at its peak reached a level equivalent to 1–2% of GDP annually for several years.

A third world war on this scale, on top of the commitments regarding Ukraine, Gaza and Taiwan is likely to add one to two trillion dollars over three to five years, made of direct costs, replacement costs and borrowing interest, raising the interest burden and crowding out long-term modernization. This projection is calibrated against Iraq and Afghanistan experiences and interest costs documented by the “Costs of War Project.”

### **Practical Conclusion**

Yes, the history of Iraq and Afghanistan confirms that prolonged ground wars exhaust readiness and impose years of rebuilding, and today’s industrial constraints on ammunition, especially 155 mm shells, make any third world war translate quickly into tangible capability gaps, before factories can catch up with the pace. The expected impact on combat capability is not a single simple number, but in the near term it means noticeable deficit in major ammunition types and a significant drop in readiness of some formations, along with a financial cost measured in trillions, all while Washington tries to maintain sufficient deterrence posture against Russia and China! The decision to go to war is undoubtedly strategically dangerous for America!

The American experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, which cost the US Treasury more than eight trillion dollars and exhausted the military structure for two decades, show that any new engagement in a major, prolonged war in the Muslim World would be a compound depletion: economically, by deepening deficits and raising borrowing costs; logistically, by stressing ammunition and precision-missile stockpiles already suffering acute shortage after supporting Ukraine and the Jewish entity; and industrially, by exposing the limited defense industrial base that needs years to replace shortages. These considerations, documented by reports from research centers such as the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the RAND Corporation and U.S. government circles, make the option of prolonged ground war today a strategic gamble that shrinks Washington’s maneuvering room against its major competitors and weakens deterrence in Asia and Europe. With the shift in national defense doctrine from the principle of fighting two simultaneous wars to focusing on competition with China and Russia, the political decision becomes even more complicated: the decision-maker will find himself facing a war-weary public, a hesitant Congress about funding a new adventure, and a military establishment warning of risks to global readiness if force is depleted in the Middle East theater.

From the political perspective, the American domestic mood after Afghanistan and Iraq is no longer receptive to the idea of a major war abroad, especially amid an economy facing inflation challenges, public debt exceeding 34 trillion dollars, and the administration’s need to direct resources toward rebuilding domestic infrastructure and confronting competition with

China in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. This means that any administration contemplating launching a comprehensive war in the Middle East will face two obstacles: shortage of military and logistical readiness, and absence of popular and congressional cover for such an option. Based on this, any potential American intervention becomes closer to limited strikes or working through proxies, rather than direct ground engagement, which experience has proven to be a costly strategic drain. Such options cannot abort the emergence of a state, if the Islamic State uses its strengths, which we will refer to later, inshaAllah, in response to that.

List of the most important research references on the impact of a third world war in the Middle East on the capability of the U.S. Army, combining academic sources, think-tank reports, and government statistics:

#### **Major Academic Studies and Research Projects:**

**Brown University – Costs of War Project, Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs.** Comprehensive estimates of the costs of post-9/11 wars within Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria, including direct expenditures, veterans' care, and future debt interest. <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar>

**Congressional Research Service (CRS) – The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11.** Periodic reports explaining annual expenditures, their impact on the budget, and OCO (Overseas Contingency Operations) tables.

#### **Strategic Studies Centers:**

**CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies).** Reports on the impact of ammunition depletion in Ukraine and Gaza on U.S. capability, especially 155 mm munitions and precision systems. <https://www.csis.org>

**IISS (International Institute for Strategic Studies) – The Military Balance.** Annual data on troop size, stockpiles, and military readiness estimates for major countries. <https://www.iiiss.org>

**RAND Corporation – Sustaining Army Readiness & Rebuilding Military Readiness after Major Conflicts.** Logistical and financial analyses on how readiness declines during prolonged wars and paths to recovery. <https://www.rand.org>

#### **Government Documents and Congressional Testimonies:**

**U.S. Department of Defense – Budget Justification Books.** OCO/Global War on Terrorism sections, including operational costs and replacement (reset) costs. <https://comptroller.defense.gov>

**Testimony of U.S. Army Vice Chief of Staff (2006–2008).** Before the armed services committees in Congress, on the impact of Iraq and Afghanistan on readiness and Army stockpiles.

#### **Reliable Analytical Journalistic Reports:**

**Defense News, Breaking Defense, and War on the Rocks.** Analytical articles on U.S. production capacity, ammunition production increase programs, and the effect of supporting Ukraine on strategic stockpiles.

**Reuters / Associated Press Special Reports.** Investigations into U.S. ammunition production lines and the timeline for reaching production targets, 155 mm, the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), the Patriot PAC-3 (Patriot Advanced Capability-3) missile interceptor system.

#### **Historical Statistics and Economic Comparisons:**

##### **U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) & Congressional Budget Office (CBO)**

- GDP data, military spending ratios to GDP, and its impact on public debt.

## **Second: The Ability of the Jewish Entity to Wage Comprehensive War Against Syria:**

Since the outbreak of the battle of October 7, the Jewish entity has been engaged in the longest and most violent military confrontation since 1948, placing its army in a state of comprehensive depletion at the human, material, and morale levels. The ground operation in Gaza has cost the army thousands of killed and tens of thousands of wounded, along with unprecedented losses of armored vehicles, including advanced Merkava IV tanks. As for the air force, it has carried out a record number of flights and consumed a large portion of its fleet's service life, especially F-16 and F-35 fighters, requiring costly maintenance and lengthy repairs to restore full readiness.

In addition to direct military losses, the war has caused disruption in the labor market and economy, with sectors such as high-end technology and tourism paralyzed, foreign investments sharply declining, and the budget deficit rising to levels threatening economic stability. Domestically, the war has revealed the depth of political and societal division and resurfaced crises of trust between military and political leadership, especially after the intelligence and operational failures of October 7.

If it enters a comprehensive war with Syria, the Jewish entity would face the danger of opening multiple fronts in the north and south, while being unable to decisively end the war in Gaza or show any image of victory in it, in addition to threats via precision missiles and drones. This type of war requires rapid mobilization capability and economic capacity to support extended operations, two elements in which the entity is currently suffering a clear decline. Most importantly, the prolongation of the war could accelerate domestic collapse due to popular pressure and ongoing losses, a scenario that research centers within the Jewish entity itself warn against as an existential threat, not merely a security challenge.

In contemporary military estimates, confrontation probabilities are not viewed as immediate decisions but as factors influencing the shaping of defensive and offensive doctrine for any actor. In the current situation, the Jewish entity's decision-making command realizes that the current Syrian leadership tends to avoid direct confrontation, and seeks to improve its position and image on the international stage, which reduces the chances of a large-scale war breaking out in the near term. Therefore, it carries out air strikes and ground incursions feeling safe from punishment. However, any shift in the political landscape, such as the emergence of an Islamic state that considers confrontation a Shariah option, would change deterrence equations and force the Jewish security establishment to incorporate more complex scenarios into its strategic calculations.

For example, IISS Military Balance reports, while not providing precise field numbers, indicate that Syria still possesses hundreds of deployable tanks, such as the T-72, T-62, and T-55 models with varying upgrades of varying degrees, and despite their limited parity with modern "Merkava" tanks of the Jewish entity, the entity's heavy losses in the Gaza war, including the destruction of hundreds of vehicles and the need to reactivate tanks taken out of service since 2014, plus its contract with Germany for engines for 150 Merkava-4 tanks, reveal a ground capability that needs rebuilding and cannot endure prolonged depletion.

Likewise, the development that has occurred in Syria's drone arsenal since 2018, with Iranian and Russian support, reflects a shift in deterrence balances. Estimates from some Western research centers place this arsenal today in the range of hundreds of drones of various categories, including dozens of long-range suicide drones theoretically capable of reaching the depth of the occupied territories in Palestine, with the remainder for reconnaissance and short-range attacks. Even if this stockpile is limited, it is sufficient to impose complex challenges on the air-defense and radar systems of the Jewish entity that have been exhausted by the two-year war.

As for human forces, the existence of a fighting force estimated at around one million ideologically mobilized and trained personnel, who have gained extensive field experience

from the Syrian civil war, opens the door to ground scenarios that must be included in the estimates of the Jewish entity.

**Among these scenarios** are multi-axis attacks across the Golan and Shebaa Farms or Syrian–Lebanese contact points, supported by fire saturation and missile strikes, drone strikes to disrupt early warning systems, or limited operations that exploit weather conditions that reduce the effectiveness of air reconnaissance. Success factors here do not depend solely on equipment and numbers but on the element of surprise, operational deception, the ability to disperse the efforts of the Jewish entity across multiple fronts, and flexible command capable of managing large operations in a complex combat environment. In the final analysis, these scenarios constitute an estimative framework that imposes itself on any Jewish military planning if the Syrian political context changes, especially given the human and logistical exhaustion the Jewish army is experiencing after the Gaza war and its extreme sensitivity toward opening wide ground fronts in the north.

However, what has preceded is only within the framework of material power balances calculated in numbers and tables, whereas what this exceptional study will reveal is a profound presentation of enormous strategic capabilities possessed by the Islamic State, capabilities sufficient to make enemies recalculate a thousand times, and multiply many times over their dread of embarking on war with it, for they see before them a combination of solid pillars on which the strength of the Islamic State rests, turning the idea of confrontation into an adventure fraught with existential risks.

Consequently, it becomes clear to every person of vision/wisdom that the Sharʿī ruling on the existence of capability, upon which the greatest decisions are built, from declaring the Islamic State to establishing Sharia of Allah (swt), is not derived from a hasty calculation of material power balances alone, nor from an isolated individual's view of himself, comparing the state's capabilities and capacity to that view, but from a broad strategic vision that encompasses present elements of strength, explores ways to maximize them by mobilizing the Ummah, awakening its masses, mobilizing its latent energies, and tightly managing its resources, while estimating the probabilities and their outcomes. When the Ummah unifies its ranks, extends its authority, invests the resources of strength and deterrent capabilities that Allah (swt) has bestowed upon it, seeks help from its Lord (swt), and places its reliance (tawwakul) in Him (swt), it becomes capable of imposing a deterrent equation, breaking the will of the aggressors, and establishing the pillars of the state on a foundation of strength, dignity, and empowerment.

### **Third: The Anticipated War is not a Walk in the Park that will Take Hours to Resolve!**

Thus, the Syrian revolution continued to fight the conflict on the ground against Iran and its allies from 2011 until September 30, 2015, and although Russian intervention changed the air power balance, it did not produce swift decision. Instead, the country entered a prolonged multi-front war of attrition that required years of intensive bombardment, ground assaults led by regime forces and Iranian, Iraqi, and “Hezbollah” militias, and extensive intelligence and logistical support, yet without the ability to end the revolution/opposition with a lightning strike. The complex nature of the conflict, multiple fronts, dense urban environment, interweaving of international and regional actors, made the time, human, and material costs very high and kept large opposition pockets in existence for years relying on local capabilities and limited supply networks despite repeated campaigns. International Crisis Group (ICG) and Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) reports document the prolonged duration, complexity, and continuation of the conflict as a proxy international war.

Despite the heavy Russian air cover, with thousands of sorties, decisive operations still required prolonged sieges, forced evacuation agreements, and back-and-forth battles, as made clear in Aleppo 2016, Ghouta and Daraa 2018, then Idlib. RAND Corporation and the Central of Naval Analyses (CAN) studies show the intensity of air sorites, and the extensive reliance on unguided munitions, increasing the need to repeat strikes over months and even years.

## **Russian Aerial Intensity... Without Swift Decision:**

**Thousands of sorties:** A CNA report estimates that Russian forces conducted approximately 6,500 sorties in just 60 days, 24 December 2015–22 February 2016, averaging 107 sorties/ per day, with high rates continuing later, such as 70 sorties per day on Aleppo in August 2016, illustrating the long duration of operations required to subdue a single urban front.

**Force size:** Military estimates show that Russian deployment mostly remained in the range of 30–50 fighter aircraft and 16–40 helicopters, sufficient to change the local balance of power but not for immediate decision at the countrywide level, explaining Moscow's reliance on successive campaigns, sieges, and evacuation agreements.

## **Ground Structure Supported by Iran and Cross-Border Militias... Yet the Fighting was Prolonged**

**Iranian forces and foreign militias:** The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) estimated around 2,500 Iranian personnel on the ground, both Revolutionary Guards and regular forces, and 8,000–12,000 foreign Shia fighters, including Afghans and Iraqis, organized through the Quds Force and support networks. Likewise, Hezbollah played a major assault force role. This qualitative size did not produce lightning decision but prolonged campaigns.

Iraqi militias allied with Iran, such as the Harakat al-Nujaba, fought in Syria as part of the Axis of Resistance, reflecting the internationalization of the theater and confirming that the fall of opposition areas required the accumulation of cross-border forces.

**Allied losses:** the Syrian Observatory For Human Rights (SOHR) documented 1,139–1,1736 “Hezbollah” fighters killed through 2023, figures reflecting the intensity and duration of fighting despite Russian air cover. Journalistic reports also pointed to the fall of prominent Iranian commanders.

## **Mutual Attrition and Symbolic Losses for Russia show the Stubbornness of the Battlefield**

A Russian Su-24 was shot down by Turkey, in November 2015, and a Su-25 over Idlib (February 2018). An Il-20 reconnaissance plane was also shot down by Syrian air defense fire, in September 2018. These incidents are not militarily decisive, but they demonstrate the danger of the operational environment and the difficulty of achieving a quick resolution.

## **Enormous Humanitarian Impact without Immediate End to the Conflict**

**Massive displacement:** More than 14 million Syrians have been forced to flee since 2011, with over 7.4 million remaining internally displaced through 2025, an indication of the war's length and multiple waves of operations instead of a “lightning war (blitzkrieg).”

## **Operational Implications in Favor of the Argument “No Lightning War against an Emerging State with Popular Support”**

Air power alone does not resolve quickly in a dense urban environment with fragmented fronts; even with thousands of Russian sorties, each opposition enclave required months and years of siege and assault, meaning that limited air strikes will not bring down an established entity.

The decisive victory required a massive ground presence of organized militias with Iranian support, yet large pockets remained steadfast in areas in the north under Turkish protection, proving that popular mobilization and accumulated combat experience made rapid subjugation unlikely.

The prolonged attrition raised costs on the intervening forces, with symbolic human losses for Russia, major losses for Iran and Hezbollah, without translating into a lightning decisive victory, but into successive stages of advance, agreements, and setbacks.

**Strategic Bottom Line:** If preventing an armed revolution from establishing its presence required a multi-country, multi-militia, air-ground alliance over years, then a lightning war against an emerging state with societal cohesion and combat experience will be harder and far more costly. It will not be decided by limited bombardment or rapid landing of boots on ground. When we consider the enormous difference between a revolution composed of armed groups and a state that has an army supported by those same armed groups, this makes the adventure of war against it even more difficult. Time is sufficient to grant the emerging Islamic State the ability to expand, spread, and activate the necessary plans to foil the schemes to foil it.

**The Conclusion of the Comparative Argument:** The Syrian theatre practically demonstrates that large-scale foreign intervention does not produce a “war picnic,” even with a sustained Russian air force, ground assault forces from Iran, Iraqi militias and “Hezbollah”, and an international intelligence umbrella. Subduing the opposition pockets took years of attrition, and no quick resolution was achieved. Therefore, any lightning war against an emerging state enjoying social cohesion and combat experience is likely, according to the Syrian experience to turn into a prolonged, high-cost conflict with uncertain outcome, not limited bombardment that topples the project in days. Neither America in its current state of exhaustion from the wars of Afghanistan and Iraq and depletion in Gaza and Ukraine, nor Russia, especially after its exhaustion in the Ukraine war, nor the Jewish entity, especially after its exhaustion in the Gaza war, are capable of plunging into such a war, as we have previously proven through precise analysis and figures.

Most important references used in this summary: RAND and CNA reports on the Russian air campaign; International Crisis Group and CFR analyses on the nature of the prolonged conflict; CSIS estimates on the size of Iranian forces and foreign militias; SOHR/SNHR documentation of casualties; and UN data on displacement and the humanitarian catastrophe.

**Brief summary of Joseph S. Nye Jr’s view: Hard power versus soft power in an era of difficulty in achieving decision:**

In his book, “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics,” Joseph S. Nye Jr. defines soft power in the following terms “it is also important to set the agenda and attract others in world politics, and not only to force them to change by threatening military force or economic sanctions. This soft power, getting others to want the outcomes that you want, co-opts people rather than coerces them. Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others,” and its sources are the attractiveness of culture, values, and the legitimacy of domestic and foreign policy. When policy appears legitimate, soft power expands and reliance on coercion decreases.

In contrast, hard power rests on coercion through military and economic capabilities, as Nye states, “Everyone is familiar with hard power. We know that military and economic might often get others to change their position. Hard power can rest on inducements (“carrots”) or threats (“sticks”).”

Nye believes that the smart combination of the two types, smart power, is most suitable for managing interests in a world where the effectiveness of rapid military decision is declining, stating, “Smart power means learning better how to combine our hard and soft power.”

**Why do non-military actors gain an advantage over direct military actors in modern conflicts?**

Lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq clarified that direct wars are costly, prolonged, and politically indecisive, prompting Western decision-makers to rehabilitate soft power and indirect influence tools after 2004.



The “non-combat” costs of wars, including legal and moral obligations, from international humanitarian law and public opinion accountability, and waves of refugees crossing borders, raise the price of direct intervention and create strong incentives to avoid it.

**How this appears in practice, brief examples include,**

**Algeria (1990s):** After canceling the electoral process, Western powers conspired with the army to plunge the country into a bloody civil war, and external powers turned to betting on internal dynamics rather than direct military intervention, a model of preferring indirect tools in an environment fertile for ignition. The principle for us Muslims is that we should not always be in the position of the acted-upon, saying that if we declare a state they will ignite civil war among us, especially with the advanced awareness in the Ummah after three decades since the Algerian model.

**Iraq (1990s):** A harsh economic embargo was imposed and ended with the Oil-for-Food Programme (OFFP) (1996), widely criticized for its humanitarian consequences, an economic coercive tool classified as non-military hard power, accompanied by soft narratives to justify it internationally.

**Syria and Europe 2015:** The West avoided sending large ground armies, relying instead on sanctions, support through intermediaries, and management of mass refugee consequences, a mix of indirect hard tools, economic and security, and soft tools, building legitimacy and narratives.

**Practical Conclusion:** When rapid decision is impossible and occupation or direct intervention becomes costly, the decision balance, according to Nye, shifts from military coercion to a composite package of tools: economic coercion and diplomatic pressure, non-military (hard), and attracting, legitimacy and narratives (soft), which is “smart power” that achieves policy goals at lower cost and over longer time, without waging a politically and ethically costly lightning war.

Therefore, it is most likely that states will not resort to the option of war against the emerging Islamic State but rather to the option of economic siege.

[To be continued]