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The tug of war on ISIS inside Donald Trump's head: Does he escalate or avoid what is likely to be a counterproductive war?

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Now in office, it's time for President Trump to deliver on his campaign promises. A critical one will be his promise to destroy the Islamic State. CNN recently reported that the Pentagon has already developed a set of options for Trump to review, purportedly including significantly increased American military forces and the deployment of thousands of ground troops.

The question is: What plan of attack is likely to appeal most to Trump? As the President evaluates the options, his operating style and his worldview will pull him in distinctly different directions.

From an operating standpoint, Trump consistently seeks supremacy, views all deals as having winners and losers, and prefers a muscular approach in achieving victory. His promise on the campaign trail to "bomb the s--t" out of ISIS, his support for torture and his call to ban all adherents of the world's second largest religion from entering the United States reflect this operating style. He routinely derides others as "losers" and "chokers," while referring to himself with superlatives: I have the best words, I am the least racist person, I alone can fix it, etc.

In other words, he wins and somebody else loses.

If this side of Trump wins out, he is likely to choose an option that emphasizes significant and obvious U.S. power and short-term results — the re-introduction of substantial ground forces, increased drone strikes, and special forces. Though risky, this course of action would allow Trump to look strong and to display the sort of decisiveness he boasted about during the campaign.

Trump's more general worldview, however, suggests quite a different outcome. Most obviously, Trump is highly skeptical of the utility of U.S. military intervention. He famously (and repeatedly) criticized the war in Iraq as a terrible mistake, and argued that the efforts and resources of that war and others would have been better spent at home. During last year's

Commander-in-Chief Forum, for instance, he criticized Hillary Clinton for having "a happy trigger" and referred to his own approach as "very, very cautious."

Moreover, his comments suggest he views foreign policy as primarily transactional, from a heavily American-centric perspective, and with a strong focus on economic outcomes. Trump has said little that suggests he believes the United States must preserve the global order or help other nations on principle. These instincts incline Trump toward disregarding options he believes would require an enduring U.S. presence abroad or come at a high financial cost.

Unfortunately, we believe that in light of his tough talk on the campaign trail, Trump will feel he has little choice but to escalate the fight against the Islamic State.

Though this approach may produce short-term gains, any plan to "defeat" ISIS has identified the wrong goal.

Over 15 years, America and her allies have spent trillions of dollars trying to defeat Al Qaeda, the Islamic State and other terrorist groups. Roughly two-and-a-half million Americans have been sent into harm's way, and nearly 7,000 have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

America's reliance on military force abroad, however, has fueled terrorist recruitment and operations, and the result has been the proliferation of Islamist-inspired terrorist groups and jihadists. Thus, in seeking to address the risk of terrorism, the United States has chosen a strategy more costly than the problem it seeks to resolve.

The truth is that the terror threat does not require the U.S. to defeat anyone. While terrorism has always been and will continue to be a fact of life in America, law enforcement and intelligence agencies have a strong track record. Since 9/11, the Heritage Foundation estimates that Islamist terrorists plotted 93 attacks in the homeland. However, Islamist terrorists have, on average, carried out less than one attack that killed six per year.

Moreover, neither Al Qaeda nor the Islamic State were responsible for any of these successful attacks: Almost all such attacks were carried out by American citizens. This further illustrates why more aggressive intervention in the Middle East is unlikely to be of much use.

If Trump opts to go all in on the defeat of ISIS, he will find the opposite of the quick and decisive victory he seeks. Escalating the campaign will only sink the United States further into the quagmire of the Middle East. As Trump's non-interventionist side knows, this would be disastrous to his goal of making America great again.

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