



Counterterrorism, Coronavirus, and Confusion: America Is Facing Serious Challenges In Iraq

The United States needs a clear strategy.

by [Eldad Shavit](#) [Ari Heistein](#) / April 4, 2020

The future of the U.S. policy in Iraq is uncertain, as the American military presence there stands at the intersection of several key goals with considerable discord between them: counter-terrorism, ending “endless wars” in the Middle East, and the struggle to contain Iran.

The global outbreak of the coronavirus, Iraqi political deadlock, and the January 2020 assassination of Iranian Gen. Qassim Suleimani have now added considerable variability to what was already a volatile theater. Iranian-backed Iraqi militias, including Kataeb Hezbollah, appear to have caught the U.S. on the horns of its Iraq dilemma as they ramp up pressure on American forces based there.

One of the major predicaments in which the U.S. finds itself in Iraq relates to how it ought to respond to repeated attacks on its troops by Iran-backed factions. The initial inclination of every strategist would be to seek to instill deterrence, but those efforts would encounter formidable challenges.

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Eldad Shavit is a senior researcher at the [Institute for National Security Studies \(INSS\)](#) in Israel and previously served in senior roles in Israeli Defense Intelligence and the Prime Minister’s Office.

Ari Heistein is Chief of Staff to the Director and a Research Fellow at the [INSS](#).

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