

Committee: Disarmament and International Security

Issue: Strengthening international cooperation to counteract terrorist action of ISIS

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Introduction

Algeria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Egypt, France, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, USA. These countries are only a small part of the list of places in which the Islamic State of Iraq and the



Syria (ISIS), has conducted terrorist actions or inspired others to do so. These days it is common to hear of worldwide terrorist attacks in the news every day, but it is even more common that most people immediately link these attacks to ISIS, the wealthiest terrorist organization throughout history. Therefore, taking into consideration its numerous attacks, worldwide mass following, excessive media coverage and economic strength of \$2 billion on hand, it is clear that the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria poses an immediate threat to international security.

Image – NBC News

Despite several attempts to cease the action of ISIS and effectively put an end to international terrorism, the international community has yet to target this issue in complete unity. Judging from the attempts that have already taken place, it is going to take more than just operations from several coalitions competing against each other in the race against ISIS to secure international peace. What is necessary is strengthening international efforts to not only counteract the actions of ISIS as they happen but to be able to foresee such actions and act accordingly to prevent them from taking place.

Definition of Key-Terms

ISIS

Also known by its other names (ISIL, Daesh), the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is a militant group which follows a Salafi-jihadist regime and supports fundamentalist Wahhabi values of Sunni origin, known to for their ultra-conservatism. ISIS, known for its extreme religious-political opinion, has been classified as a terrorist organization by the UN and many countries worldwide after many shocking events which showcased the group's violent terrorist capabilities. The goal of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is to establish a worldwide caliphate, a single one-world government, and to enforce its own interpretation of the sharia law to the world. The power of ISIS is rocketing immensely, with the organization now controlling many regions in the Levant.

Sunni Islam

Sunni Islam is one of the two major religious groups of Islam, along with Shia Islam. When Prophet Muhammad died, some Muslims supported following his beliefs very closely from the Sunnah, the record of all his teachings. Thus, they were named Sunni. Almost 90% of Muslims worldwide are Sunnis.

Shia Islam

With a global population estimated around 150-200 million, Shia Muslims constitute 10% of Muslims globally. When Muhammad died, a group of Muslims supported that his son-in-law and cousin Ali should succeed him. Like Sunnis, they also follow the word of Muhammad, but choose to do so by following Ali.

Sunni-Shia Divide

The schism of Sunni-Shia is over fourteen centuries old and has played an important role in the events taking place in the Middle East. Although these groups lived together peacefully for a long time, their differences have fueled several incidents. In Syria, Iranian and other Shia troops have been assisting the Shia government in its fight against the Sunni opposition, which consists of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and other Sunni extremist groups. Furthermore, ISIS has declared that a Shia genocide is within its primary goals.

Caliphate

Generally, the Caliphate is how Muslims organized their lives after the death of Muhammad. However, specifically after his death, many Muslims sought to be his heir and successor, therefore also ruling over all of the Muslims. Because

Muhammad left no official successor, the struggle to succeed him and govern all Muslims is a deep desire of many, including ISIS.

Jihad and Salafi Jihadism

Although usually being translated as "holy war", the pure, linguistic definition of the term Jihad is the external or internal struggle of followers of Islam to be a good Muslim and believer. However, the beliefs of ISIS are rooted deeply in Salafi Jihadism, a transnational religious-political policy which relies on physical "*holy war*" and *military jihad* in order to return to the "true" Sunni Islam. Salafi Jihadism has four main points, which give us a clear insight of the mindset of ISIS supporters. Salafi Jihadism wants to raise awareness that Islam is on a decline, believes that this decline is a result of the constant humiliation of Muslims worldwide, wishes to create a new identity for its followers based on a new sense of belonging and proposes military jihad as a plan of action to achieve the above.

Counteract

To make ineffective or restrain or neutralize the usually ill effects of by means an opposite force, action, or influence (Merriam Webster definition).

Terrorist action

Terrorist action refers to violent acts used to frighten people in a specific area in order to achieve a political goal.

Levant

The Levant is a historical and geographical term referring to a large area in the eastern Mediterranean. Although the countries which it consists of vary according to the historic period in the subject, it now consists of Cyprus, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Turkey.

Background Information

Short history of ISIS

The history of ISIS begins in 1999 when an organization named "The Organization of Monotheism and Jihad" is founded by a Jordanian



Flag of ISIS, Image –
themuslimissue.wordpress.com

extremist named Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The organization was based on the Sunni ideology. Acknowledging the power of al-Qaeda, the most well-known terrorist organization at the time, al-Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden, their leader, in 2004. Wanting to expand even more, the organization changed its name and joined other Sunni insurgent minorities in 2006 and formed the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI).

When the two leaders of ISI were killed in a US-Iraqi operation the leadership of the organization was obtained by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Baghdadi decided to take advantage of the Arab Spring, which caused an uproar amongst Arab States, by delegating a mission into the Syrian Civil War. During that time, Syria was a battlefield with many, different forces. The Syrian government, the rebels, extremist groups, the Kurds, the US, Russia and many other forces established their presence in Syria. Under the name al-Nusra Front, this mission managed to establish a large presence in the Sunni provinces, fighting against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad alongside the rebels. Although al-Baghdadi proposed to merge al-Nusra with ISI, the leaders of al-Nusra and al-Qaeda rejected the proposal.

ISIS terrorist action

The rapid growth of ISIS in Iraq, Syria and the Levant, in general, has not been peaceful, resulting in the death of many civilians and the injury of even more. Furthermore, the organization has been accused of violating human rights continuously. However, ISIS does not only rely on their violent attempt for expansion for terrorist actions. A large part of their terrorist regime takes place internationally.

In 2013, the only attacks ISIS administered were in Iraq. The attacks, mostly bombings, and shootings, killed more than 1,000 people and injured more than 2,200.

During 2014, ISIS showed interest in attacking the international community, with the extremists opening fire at a museum in Belgium and stabbing counter-terrorism police officers in Australia. ISIS also operated in Canada, the US and France, resulting in a total of 9 deaths in the year overall.

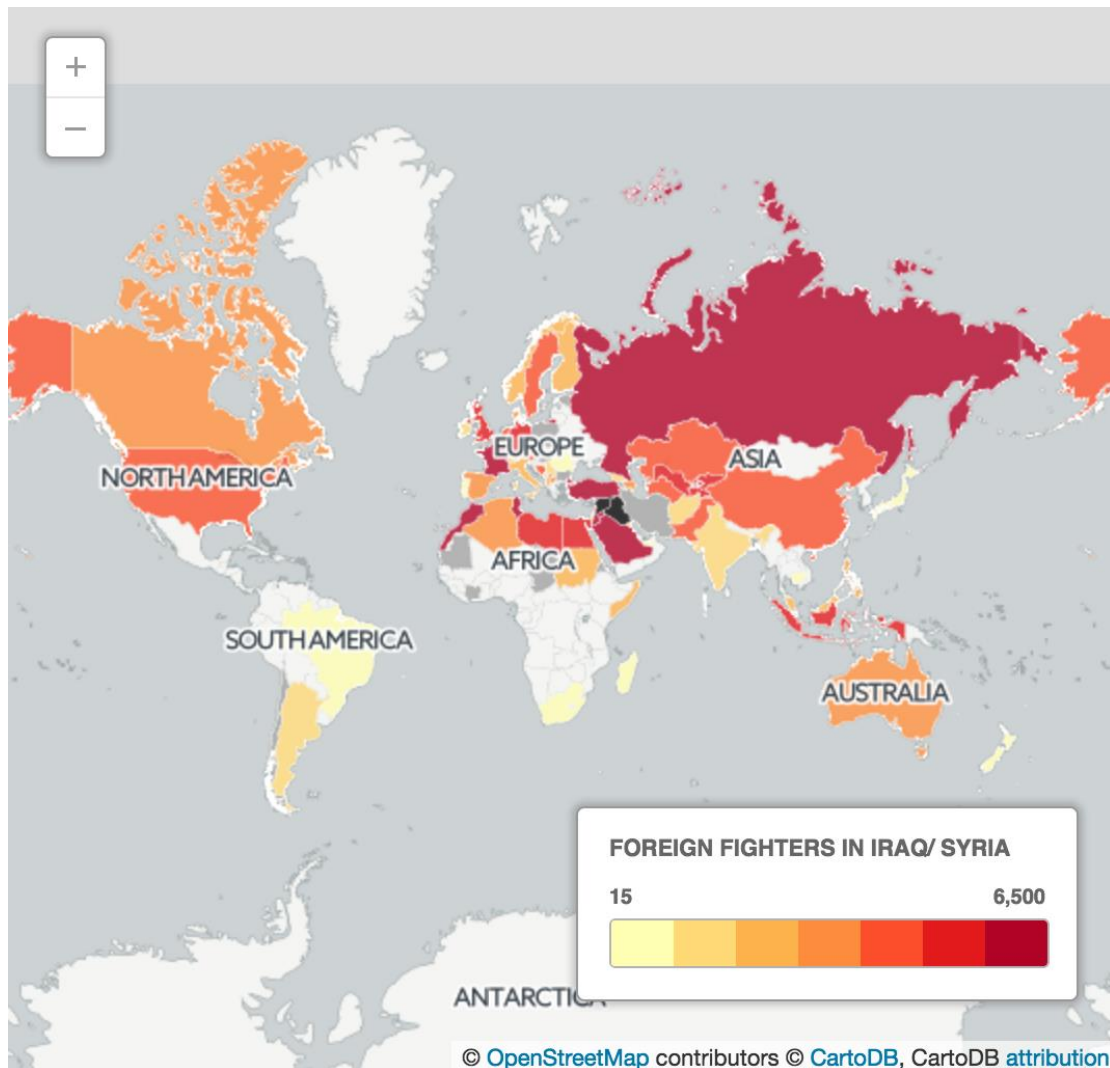
2015 was the year in which ISIS took full aim at the international community, via open fire, car bombings, beheadings, mass shootings and more inhuman methods. ISIS targeted 14 countries, demonstrating its full capability and true intent: establishing a worldwide caliphate and showing no mercy while doing so. In 2015 the world was shocked by events such as the bombing of Metrojet Flight 9268, which killed 224 passengers, the bombing of a peace rally in Turkey, with 102 victims and the Paris November 2015 attacks, which resulted in the death of 130 more civilians. Claiming responsibility for more than 1000 deaths and almost 2200 injuries, ISIS

demonstrated to the world that mass media coverage of their action and worldwide shock did nothing but strengthen them.

Judging by the terrorist attacks operated by ISIS so far in 2016, the terrorist group is bound to reach a new goal of massacres. By targeting police training camps (Libya), Shi'a mosques (Syria, Saudi Arabia), metro stations and airports (Brussels) and stadiums (Iraq), ISIS is orchestrating attacks with symbolic meanings: the organization wants to establish its presence at the core of the international society and showcase its power over the forces fighting it (police), alien religious beliefs (Shi'a mosques) and symbols of population and western civilization, contradicting to their fundamentalist values (metro, airport). The above actions are only a preview of what is to follow, with the death toll already counting more than 700 people and 1700 injured.

International support for ISIS

Although ISIS is responsible for cruel acts of cold-blooded violence, the terrorist organization has managed to establish a large international following, with people from all over the world finding that ISIS represents the same values they stand for. In fact, followers of ISIS from around the world are one of the main reasons the organization is the wealthiest and strongest terrorist group of all time. Donations from wealthy supporters, as well as citizens fleeing their countries to join ISIS, are two of the many ways ISIS followers pledge their allegiance to the organization. Concerning donations, the terrorist organization seeks out financing by hiring fundraisers to advocate for their cause and by utilizing social media to propagate their ideas and draw in international donors. According to a study, conducted by the Soufan Group, between 27,000 and 30,000 people have traveled to Syria and Iraq to join ISIS since 2011.



Worldwide map showing where ISIS foreign fighters come from

International fight against ISIS

The actions of ISIS have sparked a chain of international reactions of countries appalled by cruel acts of terrorism. The mass media coverage of these actions has led to international talks about possible counteractions. Coalitions were formed, countries got together, plans of action were discussed. International leaders addressed the issue, claiming that an end to terrorism was to be put immediately, but yet the fight against ISIS seems to be a race to prove which major power is stronger rather than a fight against terrorism. Although bombing runs were administered and troops were sent to the Levant, the Middle Eastern turmoil proved to be extremely difficult soil for the operation to grow in.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Iraq

Iraq's role in this issue is one of major importance, as it is the home of ISIS's base. Not only is Iraq mostly under ISIS control, but it has suffered more than any other country in terms of victims and destruction of cities. Although countries such as Iran and the US were the first to start sending drones and administering bombing runs over Iraq, the success they achieved was not enough to assist Iraq, as the number of casualties is worryingly large. Iraq supports the Russia-led coalition against ISIS, formally agreeing to let Russian drones fly above the country. However, Iraq is now in the crosshairs of every nation in the war against ISIS, meaning that it is constantly prone to attacks from nations competing against one another while trying to fight ISIS. With Iraqis being murdered every day by ISIS, and drones of different coalitions bombing the country on a regular basis, the country's current situation is more than unstable.

Syria

Understanding how involved Syria is in the current situation with ISIS is very easy: together with Iraq, Syria is under ISIS control and suffers from casualties and bombings every day due to the fact that these two countries are home to ISIS bases. Trying, however, to establish a way for the turmoil and unrest in Syria to come to an end and for ISIS to be defeated, is very complicated. After the Arab Spring in 2011 (a wave of protests in Arab League nations), protests broke out in Syria against president Bashar al-Assad's authoritarian regime. The government reacted to these protests by killing and imprisoning protesters. That was when a rebel group named The Free Syrian Army announced its goal of overthrowing the government, resulting in the Syrian Civil War. With both the government and rebels being caught up in the civil war, ISIS took the opportunity to send a group named the al-Nusra front in Syria and start fighting alongside the rebels. However, when a proposal of a merger between al-Nusra and ISIS was rejected by the leaders of al-Nusra and al-Qaeda, the two terrorist groups suddenly turned upon each other. As journalist Sarah Birke said, there are "*significant differences between al-Nusra Front and ISIS*". While al-Nusra actively calls for the overthrow of the Assad government, ISIS "*tends to be more focused on establishing its own rule on conquered territory*"¹. While the rebels fighting Assad are backed by the Gulf States and the United States of America, the Syrian government's effort to remain in power and tackle both the rebels and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is backed mostly by their major ally, the Russian Federation. Once again like Iraq, Syria is an example of disunity in the effort against ISIS.

¹ Sarah Birkes, *How al-Qaeda Changed the Syrian War*,
<http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2013/12/27/how-al-qaeda-changed-syrian-war/>

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation is one of the two major powers which are involved in the war against ISIS. Although President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly called for a united effort against ISIS, stressing the importance of cooperation and even going as far as admitting that Russia and the US share a common goal in this fight, he has refused to assist the US-



led coalition in Syria. This is due to the fact that Vladimir Putin addressing the issue of ISIS at the UN General Assembly in September 2015

Putin wants to support his ally, Assad, whom the US sees as a target. Instead, he has formed his own coalition together with allies such as Iraq, Iran, and Syria, insisting that the Russian intervention in Syria and therefore in the fight against ISIS is not only the most effective but also a correct one. Putin insists on this because the Syrian government never asked the US to intervene in their turmoil, as it did of the Russian Federation. The airstrike program operated by the Russian Federation could be considered a “double-edged sword”², as many sources, even a NATO report, praise it, but other reports accuse it of murdering innocent civilians. Whatever the case, the Russian Federation has demonstrated that it will do whatever it takes to fully erase ISIS from the picture.

The United States of America

The US is the second major power which is directly involved in the ongoing battle against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. The involvement of the United States in the Levant began to receive attention after Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein violated binding UNSC resolutions concerning allegations weapons of mass destruction and the dictator’s invasion of Kuwait. The US then began the Iraqi-US war. During the Syrian Civil War, the US backed the rebels fighting Syrian president Assad, sending troops and arms. However, when ISIS reached its peak power, the United States decided to focus on the terrorist organization as an enemy rather than the Syrian Government. The US-led coalition against ISIS, which consists of bombing runs and troops, although possessing more in terms of equipment, has been less effective than the Russian (which relies on precision air strikes and supply of arms).

² Ben Hubbard, *Putin Gambit Over Syria Proves to be Dual Edged Sword*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/16/world/europe/in-russia-john-kerry-pushes-forward-on-syrian-peace-process.html>

Despite accusations of not trying hard enough to combat terrorism, President Barack Obama is willing to prove that the coalition can achieve more.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1999	“The organization of Monotheism and Jihad” is founded by Jordanian extremist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi
2004	Zarqawi names the group al-Qaeda in Iraq, pledging allegiance to Osama bin Laden
2006	Zarqawi is killed in a US airstrike. Abu Ayyub al-Masri becomes the group’s new leader and creates the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI)
2010	Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi becomes the leader of ISI
2013	ISI is renamed ISIS. A merger between the al-Nusra Front and ISIS is proposed by Baghdadi
2014 January	ISIS takes control of cities Fallujah (Iraq) and Raqqa (Syria), with the latter becoming the group’s headquarters
February	Al-Qaeda cuts all ties with ISIS because they disagree with the group’s expansion into Syria, therefore the merger is rejected
June	ISIS declare their aim of creating a new worldwide caliphate
August	US president Barack Obama authorizes airstrikes against ISIS
September	Two US journalists are executed on tape
2015 February	Mass beheading of Egyptian Christians in Libya by ISIS
March	Boko Haram, a Nigerian terrorist group, pledge allegiance to ISIS
May	ISIS has control of half of Syria
June	ISIS urges followers to continue attacks on Western society
July	Suicide bombing in Turkey followed by first Turkish airstrikes against ISIS
September	Russian airstrikes begin in Syria and Iraq

November	Paris Attacks and Beirut Killings shock the international community
2016 March	The main suspect of Paris Attacks arrested in Brussels
May	Iraqi army advances on Fallujah with help from the US, Kurds advance on Raqqa with help from the US
June	World mourns over mass shooting in Orlando gay bar with 49 deaths, killer pledges allegiance to ISIS. Iraqi army takes control of Fallujah
July	Deadliest ISIS attack so far kills more than 200 civilians in busy Baghdad shopping street during the holy Muslim month of Ramadan



The Karrada shopping area in Baghdad, Iraq after a suicide car bomb killed more than 200 people
Image – Reuters/Khalid al Mousily

Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions, and Events

Security Council Resolutions

[S/RES/2170 \(15/08/14\)](#)

Condemned the recruiting of foreign fighters by ISIS and the al-Nusra Front and listed six individuals affiliated with these groups under the al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee regime.

S/RES/2178 (24/10/14)

Improved the counter-terrorism framework by obligating member states to respond to the threat of foreign terrorist fighters.

S/RES/2199 (12/02/15)

Addressed the illicit funding of ISIS and al-Nusra via oil exports, trafficking of cultural heritage, ransom payments, and external donations.

S/RES/2249 (20/11/15)

Called for member states to take all measures and operate on ISIS territory to prevent terrorist attacks by ISIS and other terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda affiliates.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

As mentioned previously, attempts to solve the issue have so far not succeeded. The Combined Joint Task Force, established by the US-led coalition, is the largest coalition with promising potential. However, its effort has not been as efficient as the one of the Russia-led coalition, which is a lot smaller in size. Both coalitions have assisted in the fight against ISIS, with Russia using precision airstrikes and the US using airstrikes and troops as well.

Other efforts include safety regulations being implemented in a stricter manner globally, since the fear of terrorists entering countries has grown. Besides security concerns and public awareness, another part of the plan against ISIS is binding Security Council resolutions. This is the part of the plan that has been the least successful, with resolutions either being disregarded or ineffective.

The two major coalitions fighting ISIS have not yet managed to obliterate their foe. The reasons behind this are many: First of all, ISIS has proven to be a very difficult target. Actions such as raising awareness through mainstream media have not only failed to stop ISIS from pursuing other cruel acts, but instead sparked a larger chain of such actions.

Another reason why ISIS has not been counteracted efficiently in the past is Russia's refusal to cooperate with the US and vice versa. All of the previous attempts against ISIS were at the same time valuable to Russia and the US. The Russian Federation, while attacking ISIS, has actually been helping long-time ally Assad fight the rebels protesting against him in Syria. The United States of America, although having sent troops and airstrikes, are not only being accused of assisting the Syrian rebels fight

Assad, but also letting the world know how strong they are once again. This is why all previous international efforts have not been executed in unison.

The turmoil in the Middle East has proven to be another reason why previous efforts have not been fruitful. The Middle East is an unstable region, whether that is economically, politically or socially. This battleground has faced issues such as the oil crisis, the Syrian Civil War and the Arab Spring. Particularly the latter, during which Arab states started to protest against governments, have rattled the Middle East and only added to ongoing conflicts.

The lack of conferences and talks between international leaders is also an example. Although this partly falls under the lack of cooperation against the coalitions, it constitutes a separate reason at the same time. Besides very powerful countries such as the Russian Federation and the United States, international leaders have not taken on such a viable plan of action. Instead, smaller countries have rushed to join the powerful coalition and not pursued to start conversations with immediate actions.

US-led coalition

Afghanistan	Finland	Lebanon	Qatar	
Albania	France	Lithuania	Romania	
Arab League	Georgia	Luxembourg	Saudi Arabia	Arabia
Australia	Germany	Macedonia	Serbia	
Austria	Greece	Malaysia	Singapore	
The Kingdom of Bahrain	Hungary	Moldova	Slovakia	
The Kingdom of Belgium	Iceland	Montenegro	Slovenia	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	The Republic of Iraq	Morocco	Somalia	
Bulgaria	Ireland	Netherlands	Spain	
Canada	Italy	New Zealand	Sweden	
Croatia	Japan	Nigeria	Taiwan	
Cyprus	Jordan	Norway	Tunisia	
Czech Republic	The Republic of Korea	Oman	Turkey	
Denmark	Kosovo	Panama	Ukraine	
The Arab Republic of Egypt	Kuwait	Poland	United Arab Emirates	Emirates
Estonia	Latvia	Portugal	United Kingdom	Kingdom
European Union			United States	

Russian-led coalition

Russia	Iraq
Syria	Iran

Possible Solutions

Finding a possible solution to this issue is a pressing but also extremely complicated matter. So far nations have claimed that they have engaged in the war against ISIS with a full arsenal. The results, though have not been the ones they set out for. A solution to this issue requires several steps to be taken, all of which need to be followed in a framework of cooperation and unity. Even though advancements in security matters have been made, organizations such as the European Union and the Arab League should enhance internal and external cooperation and enforce more efficient security checks. A popular opinion is that each country needs to focus on combating terrorism internally and preventing its citizens from assisting terrorist groups such as ISIS in order for terrorism to be addressed internationally. This could be done via enhanced citizen monitoring and safety checks, issues which will cause great disputes when debated. Another question which needs to be dealt with is that of military involvement against ISIS: should it be enhanced, in order to fully destroy ISIS, or should another method be used, seeing as the heavy military involvement has yet to do so? Finally, Russia and the United States need to set aside competitive conflicts. Although this may seem impossible to be achieved, other powerful nations such as France, Germany, Japan or the United Kingdom, should try and persuade them to do so. The unification of the different coalitions against ISIS should result in a powerful and efficient plan to ensure international safety and obliterate ISIS.

ISIS is not an easy target. As mentioned previously, the terrorist organization is strong in manpower, money and weapons. What makes it an even stronger enemy is its power over people, rooted deep in their beliefs, therefore attaching them to ISIS sentimentally

A very interesting approach concerning ISIS is found in this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WEd34oW9BI>

Further resources for research:

Security Council Resolutions: www.securitycouncilreport.org

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzmO6RWy1v8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOGLesXQ4Tc>

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Videos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzmO6RWy1v8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOGLesXQ4Tc>