“The threat from terrorism is real, but we will overcome it”, Barack Obama explained to the American people. Aware of the dwindling support for his approach towards terrorism, No Drama Obama opted for a formal address from the Oval Office after the attacks in San Bernardino. His speech exposes three problems with regard to the fight against terrorism, in my view.

First, the President recounts the story of a married couple who followed the dark path of radicalization. They had access to automatic weapons, enabled by the Second Amendment. This should never have been possible, according to Obama. As a result, Western politicians can exploit the attacks for their own political agenda. And that in this case is grist for the mill for people like Donald Trump, who charged Obama on Twitter: “Is that all there is? We need a new president fast!” While we should be standing united against Islamic State (ISIL), the fallout from the attacks is creating internal disharmony.

Second, the lessons learned from counterinsurgency operations, most notably in Iraq and Afghanistan, are still fresh. The lack of success thereof reinforces politicians in their efforts to prevent a new ground war in the Middle East, this time against ISIL. In this conflict, a clear Western response should come from air power. In my view, this is a problem, especially in terms of doctrine. For years we have convinced ourselves that wars are won on land. Because navies and air forces cannot occupy and hold territory, military professionals deem it practically impossible to decide the outcome of armed conflict through air power alone.

The final problem with the current methods of combating terrorism lies in the nature of war. It is a vicious circle, which was simply explained with this figure that appeared on social media: “Bomb Science 101: Apparently the only thing that’s harder to understand than rocket science.”

The fact that wars continue despite this logic can be attributed to two simple points. It is hard to agree who actually started a conflict, so it is equally difficult to determine who should be the first to stop.

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