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ENDING ISLAMIC STATE'S REIGN OF TERROR

Monapo Mokose & Hussein Solomon

(Department of Political Studies and Governance,

University of the Free State, Republic of South Africa)

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Glossary of Terms

Al-Qaeda: a radical Sunni Muslim organization, militantly opposed to Western foreign policy and dedicated to the elimination of Western presence in Arab countries and. It was founded by Osama bin Laden in 1988.

ANF: Al-Nusra Front, sometimes called Al Qaeda in Syria or Al-Qaeda in the Levant.

AQI: Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers. A precursor rebel organization to ISIS that operated in Iraq between 2003 and 2013.

Baathism: the policies and principles of the Baath party of Iraq and Syria, chiefly characterized by the promotion of pan-Arab socialism.

Baya'a: an oath of allegiance to a leader, traditionally the Caliph or Imam.

Caliph: it literally means "successor."A political and/or religious title used by individuals who claim to be successors to Muhammad's historical leadership over the early Islamic community or ummah, and who therefore possess theoretical authority over the ummah of their own time.

Caliphate: a term referring to a type of Islamic state headed by a caliph.

Hakmiyyah: a concept that pertains to the theoretical inclination towards Allah's ultimate sovereignty over social, economic and political affairs.

ISIS: the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), or the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham, the Islamic State (IS), or Daesh. It is a salafi-jihadist militant group whose goal is to restore an Islamic State, or caliphate, which is led by and mainly composed of Sunni Arabs from Iraq and Syria.

Islam: "submission to God". The Arabic root word for Islam means submission, obedience, peace, and purity.

Imam: leader of prayers, mosque leader in Sunni Islam, for Shi'is charismatic descendant from the Prophet.

Jahil: ignorance.

Jahiliyya: the time of ignorance before Islam was realized. Describes pre-Islamic Arab societies where societies are founded on the principle of domination of one man over another rather than belief in the sovereignty of God.

Jihad: literally means "struggle." Jihad is a term ascribed to a variety of Islamic concepts of religious struggle against oneself or against external forces. It has various meanings. In its most restricted sense, it may refer to a defensive military action undertaken to protect a Muslim community from a non-Muslim armed aggressor.

Jihadism: just as Islamism is the politicisation of Islam, jihadists take the traditional concept of jihad and use it as a political and military tool to meet a political end.

Salafi: a reform movement advocating for a return to worship as it was at time the of the Prophet Muhammad.

Sectarianism: a form of bigotry, discrimination, or hatred arising from attaching importance to perceived differences between subdivisions within a group, such as between different denominations of a religion, nationalism, class, regional or factions of a political movement.

Sharia law: a body of Islamic religious law.

Shia, Shii, Shiite: it literally means "Party." Adherents of the Shia or party which holds Ali and his successors to be the rightful inheritors of leadership over the Islamic community. While many Muslims chose to follow leaders chosen by consensus, a dissenting minority held that Muhammad's son-in-law Ali had been specifically designated by the prophet to succeed him (see also Caliph, Imam).

Sunni: a term referring to those Muslims who do not advocate the right of the descendants to lead the Muslim community. They are the most numerous Islamic division or denomination.

1. INTRODUCTION: FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

The advent of the month of June in 2014 coincided with an occasion that injected into the global community, a terror and distress whose intensity would only be aggravated by the corresponding events that succeeded it. Mosul, Iraq's second largest city was captured, with the Shia-dominated Iraqi forces that had been instated there, driven out (Baloch, 2015: 13). The architecture of this occasion, the Islamic State (ISIS) would go on to declare itself to be a worldwide caliphate on the 29th of that same month (African Defence Forum, 2015: 38). What followed was an anticipated consolidation of thought as to best practices for stopping the group. The distinct orientation of strategies likely to be employed *towards* this effort, was alluded to by President Obama. On 10 September 2014, Obama referenced ISIS as a "terrorist organization, pure and simple" (Obama, 2014), and for the torture, beheadings and crucifixions that are all too common in terrorism and equally so to the group, there was a measure of legitimacy to that characterization (Saltman and Winter, 2014: 31). This notwithstanding, the rapid and manifest accomplishments of the group thus far, as well as the contextual basis from which they are pursued, call to question, the relevance of that disposition. Their degree of control, sophisticated command, propaganda and logistical capabilities (Kumar, 2015, 346) prescribes a modified designation that would more aptly translate into constructive remedial strategies.

Reflecting on the differences that separate it from its precursors (Al-Qaeda), we see the urgency of the need for reform. Like most other terrorist organizations, Al-Qaeda central boasts a membership of only a dozen to a hundred people, carries out attacks against civilians, holds no territory, and is unable to directly confront military forces. ISIS' profile demonstrates a greater capacity. With some 30, 000 fighters, administrative rule over the civil lives of some 8 million people, territory in both Syria and Iraq, extensive military capabilities, control over infrastructure and lines of communication, unmatched financial independence, and demonstrated capacity to conduct sophisticated military operations, it is argued that "if ISIS is purely and simply anything, it is a pseudo state led by a conventional army" (Cronin, 2015, Saltman and Winter, 2014: 11).

Even if we *do* submit to the classification of ISIS as a terrorist organization, resurrecting tried and tested counterterrorism and counterinsurgency measures would inevitably render any

strategic recourse to the group threat inept. Cognizance must always be taken of the revolutionary nature of the terrorist threat. Its unceasing ability to evolve and corresponding changes in the means by which its subscribers raise, store, and move funds remains an unyielding hindrance to countervailing measures (Levit and Jacobson, 2010: 118). The intricacies of these circumstances become even more complex where dogma is concerned. For ISIS, it becomes crucial to have a firm understanding of the terms Islam and jihadism. The practical manifestations of the group's persuasion exposes an inclination to jihadism, a violent sub-category of Islam.

While Islam, a spectrum of late 19th century political ideologies, sought to reconcile the Muslim religion with modernity; jihadism, a result of years of the religion's exposure to extremism and consequent distillation of rejection over reconciliation, repudiates modernity. The result has been "a form of religiously sanctioned militancy" – Salafi-jihadism - that is based on three concepts of hakmiyyah, jahiliyyah and global jihad. As subscribers to that militancy, ISIS understands the highest social, economic, political, and legal authority to be vested in God alone (hakmiyyah) (Saltman and Winter, 2014: 13, Khatab, 2002: 145). It views contemporary societies, both Islamic and non-Islamic as being in a state of ignorance of Islam (jahiiyya) and in pre-Islamic Arab societies where societies are founded on the principle of domination of one man over another, rather than belief in the sovereignty of God (Cheema, 2008; 1). By this account, there is an urgent need for a radical and violent change to the existing order. Lastly, the group understands all Muslims, regardless of nationality, to be obligated to fight defensive jihad against enemies invading a Muslim land that could not defend itself (global Jihad) (Saltman and Winter, 2014: 13,14).

Towards appeasing the aforesaid concepts on which it is premised, ISIS has proclaimed itself to be a worldwide caliphate. It has well resumed its undertaking to demolish the political borders of the Middle East towards the creation of a "pure" Sunni Islamist state that is governed by a brutal interpretation of Sharia law. The group would necessarily, and has thus far assumed control over that state as it stands, positioning itself as the sole political, religious, and military authority of all Muslims worldwide (Cronin, 2015). The practical manifestations of this orientation has dictated access to an extensive pool of resources, and in this regard, ISIS seems to have established measures that run parallel to its needs. The degree to which these are conducive for its cause are so manifest as to justify a concern that the group might well satisfy their intentions to expand beyond the confines of Syria and Iraq. In

this paper, these measures will be investigated and contextualized through the use of case studies. In section 1, the "terrorist" organization that is ISIS will be unraveled, through an account of its history, its organizational structure as well as the various terror tactics it has deployed. Section 2 will progress with the sources of the group's financial independence and prowess, while the final section will reference the policy strategies that have thus far been deployed to stop the group and proffer recommendations that might stop these illicit activities.

2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW
2.1. BACKGROUND

ISIS has commonly been misconceived as coming out of nowhere when Mosul fell to its militants at the beginning of 2014. Many have touted the view of a previously insignificant group of militants that constituted only the periphery of the global jihadist movement; a view that is profoundly and categorically incorrect (Saltman and Winter, 2014: 27). Recently renamed "the Islamic State", the group in theory finds its inception in the 1990s, from which time it evolved in name and in shape to demonstrate the design of the evolution of modern terrorism from a political and religious ideal into a death cult. At that time, it was merely a fervid fantasy in the mind of a Jordanian named Abu Musab-al-Zarqawi (Ghosh, 2014). Practically however, the group developed out of a string of precursor rebel organizations which operated in Iraq between 2003 and 2013, particularly Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers, commonly known as AQI (Patel 2015:2).

Born in Jordan in 1966, Zarqawi was a one-time street thug who found himself imprisoned on terrorism charges for guns and explosives that were found in his possession. This time would prove to be a significant one for ISIS as the years he spent there refined his ideological inclinations. There Zarqawi adopted a more austere form of Salafi-jihadism that stressed the need for piety in praxis over knowledge in theology, a feat that essentially obliged the strict interpretation of the Salafi-jihadi doctrine that we now witness in ISIS' conduct (Saltman and Winter, 2014: 28).

Upon his release from prison at the end of the 1990s, Al-Zarqawi returned to Afghanistan where he secured logistical assistance from bin Laden to establish a training camp in Herat. Nevertheless, the camp bore no affiliation to Al-Qaeda, nor did the group - Jama'at al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad (JWTJ) – that he continued to lead in Iraq. It would only be in 2004 that

Al-Zarqawi solidified his relations with Al-Qaeda, obligatorily pledging bay'ah. With that, JWTJ was renamed the Al-Qaeda Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers, or Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Notwithstanding this however, Al-Zarqawi continued to promote his distinct jihadist agenda, far removed from bin Laden's preferences. It was characterized by a campaign of terror across Iraq that comprised of kidnappings, beheadings, and suicide operations against Shiites, government workers as well as foreign workers. The reality was that his and bin Laden's relationship was nothing short of a marriage of convenience, whose pragmatism lay in Al-Zarqawi's need for the financial resources that Al-Qaeda Central provided, and the subordination to bin Laden it obliged (Saltman and Winter, 2014: 28, 29)

The contextual basis from which Al-Zarqawi exacted his ideological leanings was the rupture that the US-led invasion and occupation in Iraq caused to the already fractured Iraqi society IN 2003. America brought destruction to Iraqi institutions, and orchestrated the bloody vanquishing of Baathism, creating a vacuum which unleashed a violent power struggle that allowed non-state actors, including Al-Qaeda, to permeate the frail body politic. Iraqi Sunnis fell victim to marginalization and discrimination at the hands of Shiites and Kurds and Al-Zarqawi saw the opportunity to instrumentalize their grievances (Gerges, 2014: 339). He drew from the feelings of Sunni disenfranchisement to discharge a uniquely sectarian agenda whose distinctiveness from Al-Qaeda's bore great significance (Blanchard, Humud, Katzman and Weed, 2015: 2). Like ISIS, Al-Qaeda subscribed to Salafi-jihadism but assumed a more defensive strategy, preferring to attack the "head" of the snake that was the United States and Israel (Saltman and Winter, 2014: 16). It "conceived of itself as the vanguard of a global insurgency mobilizing Muslim communities against secular rule" (Cronin, 2015). ISIS on the other hand has shown a preference for offensive measures (Saltman and Winter, 2014: 27) aspiring to purge "Muslim-majority states of impurities and establishing a "caliphate" first, before taking the fight to the West" (Saltman and Winter, 2014: 17). This preference would not only yield a greater support base, but also an organizational structure that would help garner the legitimacy the group needed to be as successful as it has been.

2.2.   Organizational structure

When ISIS seizes a city, it keeps select services operating while brutally imposing its vision of a fundamentalist Islamic state. From instructing women to cover their hair and face in public to having shops close during Muslim prayers, religious police keep the order. Markets, bakeries and gas stations are left to keep functioning, and official documentation for various

focus areas availed, while people charged with disobeying the law are met with harsh reprimands, such as amputations and public executions. What is clear is that ISIS' form of governance is one of precision; apparently attributable to a decent and effective organizational structure (Shubert, 2015). This structure exhibits the transition of the group from being a purely military force to a system that can provide basic amenities like food and gas to its new citizens. Indeed, a snapshot of its bureaucratic hierarchy reveals a resemblance to some of the very Western nations, whose tenets it rebuffs – "if you take away the democracy and add in a council to consider who should be beheaded" (Thompson and Shubert, 2015).

Diagram of ISIS's Hierarchy

Each department drafts and and implements policies, reporting to above emirs

Leadership councils | Shura council | Milirary council | Legal council | Security council | Intelligence council | Financial council | Media council | Fighters Assistance Council
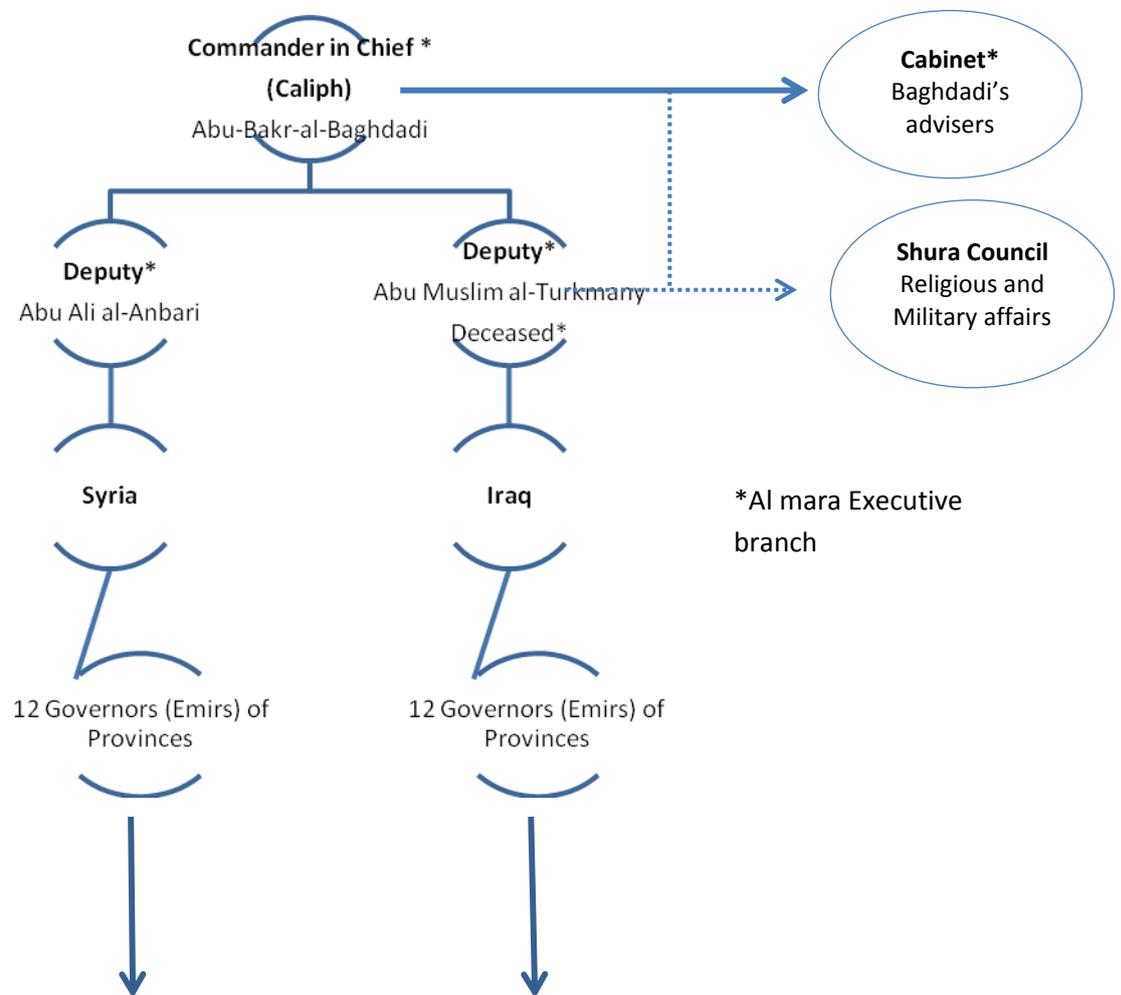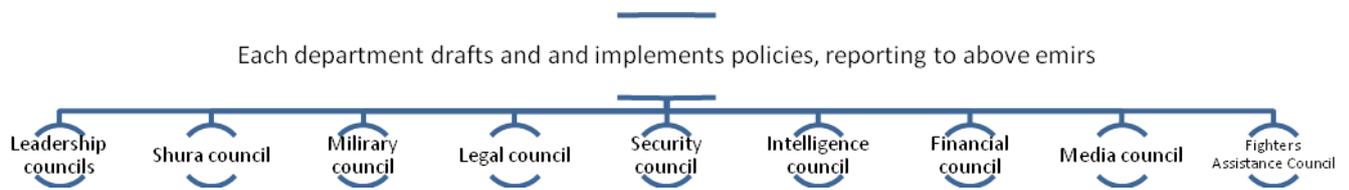
(Source: Thompson and Shubert, 2015)

The anatomy of the Islamic State is comprised of several tiers that encompass various functions and jurisdictions (New York Times, 2014). At the top of the organization is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-proclaimed leader of all Muslims and radical chief executive of sorts (Hubbard and Schmitt, 2014). He is accompanied by the cabinet, a consolidation of managers that act as Baghdadi's advisers and oversee among others, the departments of finance, security, media, prisoners as well as recruitment (New York Times, 2014). The rest of the organizational structure is constituted by leaders, many of whom he met a decade ago as a prisoner in American custody at Camp Bacca detention center (Hubbard and Schmitt, 2014).

In the second tier, we find Baghdadi's two deputies, Abu Muslim al-Turkman and Abu Ali al-Anbari. Along with his cabinet and the two key deputies, Baghdadi comprises the Al-Imara, that is, the executive branch of the government (Thompson and Schubert, 2015).

Baghdadi's two deputies share the second tier with the Shura council, the caliphate's religious monitor. It reports directly to the executive branch and ensures that all loyal council and governors are abiding by ISIS' version of Islamic law. In this regard, the recent beheadings of Western hostages James Foley, Steven Sotloff and David Haines would have been approved by the Shura council without whom any significant execution could take place. The council is also mandated to oust Baghdadi if he contravenes the group's religious standards; an unlikely probability but one that serves to indicate the council's prominence (Thompson and Schubert, 2015).

Regarding the two deputies, the first, Al-Turkmani, a former lieutenant colonel or general in Saddam's military intelligence, oversees the Iraqi provinces. The second, Al-Anbari a former major general in the Iraqi military, oversees the Syrian provinces (Patel, 2015: 3). They are each succeeded by at least a dozen governors or emirs that are in charge of the various provinces or sub-states, and many of whom were military officers in Saddam's rule. All of them report to the deputy of the country in which they are deployed (New York Times, 2014). The two deputies are tasked with delivering orders to the governors, who then instruct the local councils whose specific mandate it is to implement decrees issued by the executive branch on matters ranging from media relations, recruitment, policy and financial matters (Thompson and Schubert, 2015).

Prominent among the councils is the leadership council. In it, Baghdadi has several advisers on which he relies to assist in handling religious differences, ordering executions, and ensuring that policies conform to ISIS' doctrine (New York Times, 2014).

Finally, it is worth it to make reference to the two different governments of Syria and Iraq. The caliphate is seen as one state, and the split in governance arises as a mere administrative matter that is meant to facilitate ease of governance (Thompson and Schubert, 2015).

3. OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES

Couched in the foundation of ISIS' operational strategy is their desire to remain and expand. Each tactic employed by the group is inevitably oriented towards this result; with an apparent end justifies the means disposition. The rampancy of the group as we have witnessed owes much to these tactics, whose immutable success this paper argues, lies in an accompanying propaganda that plays to the specific needs and grievances of Muslims over those of the group itself. In the group's declaration of a caliphate; authority over a specific territory; a demonstrated penchant for savagery; sophisticated military operations; and exploitation of sectarianism as facilitating alliances, we find reinforcement for this assessment.

3.1. The Caliphate: Legitimacy and Devotion

The proclamation of the Islamic State as a caliphate is perhaps their most ingenious strategy to date. Its profound importance draws from its service to ISIS' legitimacy as well as the Muslim's aspiration to pledge *baya'a* (allegiance). This legitimacy is particularly evidenced in the reference to the shared goal of ISIS and its predecessor to establish a caliphate. Having proclaimed itself as such, and with the corresponding territorial gains to validate that

proclamation, ISIS asserted itself as the vanguard of Islam and *only* legitimate jihadist movement to which all other 'emirates, groups, states and organizations' were subordinate. (Saltman and Winter, 2014: 32). From this, the greater relevance to the proclamation is found in the matter of devotion. For Muslims, a caliphate is more than just a political entity; it is a vehicle for salvation.

It services the Muslim's need to pledge *baya'a*, which if one dies without so doing, they die *jahil* (ignorant), and therefore a "death of disbelief". We may consider here how Muslims and Christians alike imagine that God receives the souls of those that died without gaining knowledge about the one true religion. "They are neither obviously saved nor definitely condemned". Contextualizing this from a Muslim's perspective, we see that to be said to have lived a fully Islamic life not only obliges the acknowledgment of a single omnipotent God, but also a pledge to a valid caliph and consequent assumption of the obligations of that oath. ISIS offers that as a possibility (Wood, 2015).

3.2. Territorial Rule

ISIS' seizure of territory is generally conducted within a general theme; that is, to portray themselves as more just and fair to the inhabitants than the previous rulers. This is primarily effected through the greater provision of basic amenities; among them food, education and health. In Syria, ISIS' first plan of action saw a welcomed reduction in the price of bread. Health facilities were availed to all and not just wounded fighters, through a fully functional Health Department comprised of maternity wards, health clinics, and even a mobile vaccination unit. The result? A willing submission to ISIS as a source of stability and order, particularly in those areas where multiple parties, rebel factions and the Syrian government had previously been in control. Similarly, in Mosul, ISIS succeeded its takeover of the city with an effort to demonstrate their aptitude for bringing stability and facilitating the resumption of daily life. They quickly reopened the University of Mosul, albeit with a radically amended curriculum and subjects that it perceived to undermine Islam, banned (Shubert, 2015). To populations whose communities are ravaged by insecurity and persistent volatility, ISIS' efforts do well to endow them with the command they so desire. The reception they have tended to get from these populations is demonstrative of the success of their tactic. When ISIS swept into northwestern Iraq, Iraqi soldiers fled, and Sunnis welcomed the group with the traditional Arab gifts of rice and flowers (Broder, 2015: 17).
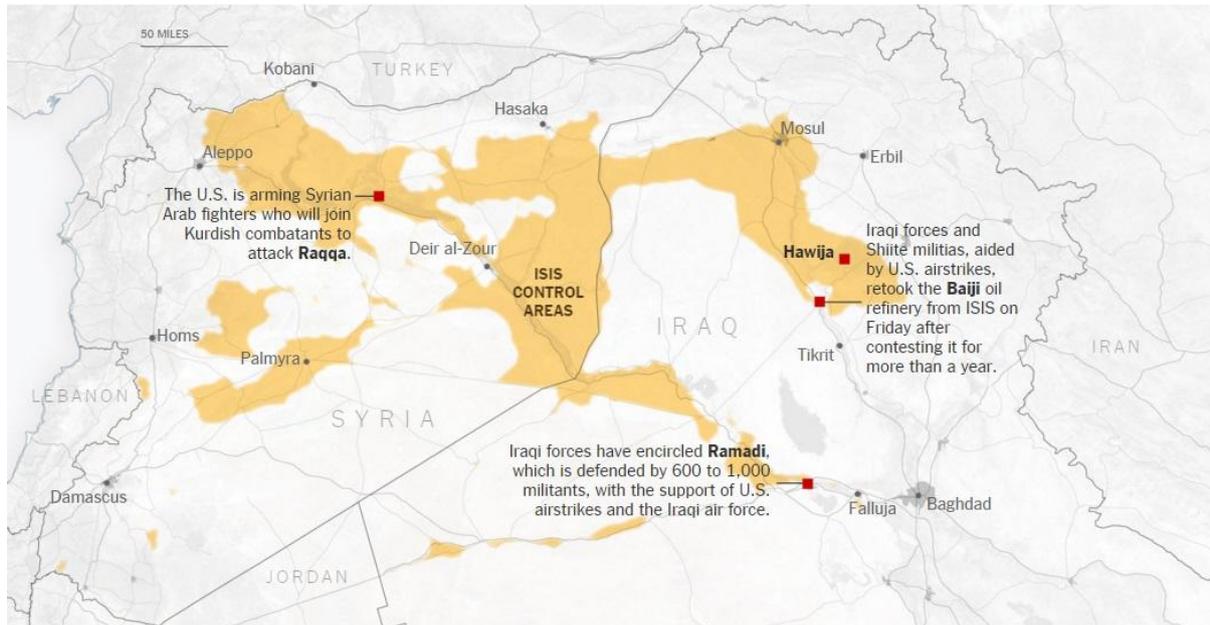
(Source: New York Times, 2015)

3.3.   Rational savagery

Bin Laden said, "When people see a strong horse and a weak horse, by nature they will like the strong horse." With his slogan of "victory through fear and terrorism" Baghdadi signals to friend and foe that ISIS is indeed a strong and *winning* horse (Gerges, 2014: 342). The savagery to which ISIS resorts in exacting their gains extends corroboration to this slogan, in the notoriety it has garnered from the massacres, beheadings, ethnic cleansing and other atrocities with which the group has become synonymous. Reception, as well as evaluation of the reason for success of these measures are mixed. On the one hand, it is argued that this savagery is not only effective for terrorizing its enemies, but is useful as a tool for recruitment. This goes to the classification of ISIS as practicing a 'ruralized' jihadism that distinguishes it from previous waves of jihadism whose leadership was constituted by social elites and rank and file of mainly lower-middle class university graduates. This against ISIS' rural cadre that lacks in both theological and intellectual accomplishment. It is contended therefore that the group's social profile is attractive to poor, disenfranchised Sunni communities in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and elsewhere, who find the savagery impressive (Gerges, 2014: 340).

Another assessment of the relevance of savagery to ISIS' tactics goes to the ideological inclinations that the group and its adherents subscribe to. Reference has been made to the fact that ISIS touts a strict interpretation of salafi-jihadism that abides by piety in praxis over knowledge in theology. In this regard, the beheadings, and massacres become relevant beyond the disenfranchised poor to encompass those groups that although accomplished in both theology and intellect, show preference for ISIS' strict ideology. We may refer here to the last caliphate, the Ottoman Empire, which reached its peak in the 16th century and reached its end in 1924 at the hands of the Republic of Turkey's euthanasia. Many ISIS' supporters do not acknowledge that caliphate as having been legitimate. This, because it failed to fully enforce Islamic law, which required of it to impose stoning, slavery, as well as amputations (Wood, 2015). That ISIS fully observes these requirements plays well into the disposition of these believers.

3.4. Military Operations

Al-Baghdadi's penchant for military men has previously been mentioned. So too has the fact that most of the men within his governance structure served in one capacity or other in Saddam Hussein's long-disbanded army. It is no wonder then that ISIS' military operations boast such sophistication. ISIS has moved from the exclusive use of terrorist activities and is now conducting conventional military operations in company and battalion formations to successfully "clear towns and urban settlements, and then hold and then build settlements". Interestingly, this tactic of clear-hold-build is the counterinsurgency tactic which coalition forces applied in both Iraq and Afghanistan (Kumar, 2015: 349).

In both Iraq and Syria, ISIS' military strategy has demonstrated a cohesion and sophistication that have rendered it more successful than any other force with which they have come into violent contact. In Syria specifically, this strategic capability was evidenced most notably in the offensive to seize control of urban terrain and oil fields in Deir ez-Zour province. The practical manifestations of the group's military prowess are seen in the fact that the group can operate with impunity "in a great stretch of territory in western Iraq and eastern Syria, making it militarily the most successful jihadi movement ever". While its exact size is unclear, it is believed that the group includes thousands of fighters (Kumar, 2015: 346, 349).

3.5. Online Tools

Like many other groups before it, ISIS has taken to exploiting social media in the dissemination of their messages, but the efficiency with which it is has done so *far* surpasses its predecessors. From online magazines, videos, apps and video games and with the dual purpose of recruitment as well as intimidating and disseminating threats, ISIS has produced material that has been deemed to be "the gold standard for propaganda in terms of its quality and quantity" (Alberto Fernandez, quoted in Saltman and Winter, 2014: 38). We see this in Dabiq, a multi-lingual magazine that proffers insight on theology and reinforces key themes, strategic exploits and ideological constructs; and the complementary videos - "The End of Sykes-Picot" and "The Flames of War" - that comprise a seductive model of grievance, agency and victory, in which the daily lives of fighters is documented in an overwhelmingly positive light. These platforms are fortified by social apps such as the "Dawn of Glad Tidings", responsible for the 40,000 tweets in a single day, that were posted as the group marched into Mosul, and video games like 'Grand Theft Auto: Salil al-Sawarim', a tribute by ISIS supporters where players dressed as IS fighters are tasked with shooting and blowing up police and military targets (Saltman and Winter, 2014: 38, 40).

3.6. Alliances in Sectarianism

At the heart of how ISIS has managed to make the huge territorial advances that it has is the support it receives from similarly motivated groups. Without close collusion with other political actors in Iraq and Syria, ISIS would still be a militant group and not the *de facto* state that it has come to be. To this, the group owes thanks to the years of sectarian-based rule in Syria and Iraq because of which tribes have suffered from a skewed sense of subservience that has *motivated* a desire for vengeance (Saltman and Winter, 2014: 34, 36). Therefore, from unaffiliated jihadists to even securalists, ISIS has enjoyed the subjugation of these groups, who see it as necessary to fight a common enemy.

Recognizing the value of sectarianism to its cause, ISIS took to exacerbating the situation further, routinely posting gruesome executions of Yazidis, Christians and Muslims of moderate dispensation. The polarity that ISIS has secured in Iraq and Syria is just as manifest in the West, specifically in Europe, where following the Charlie Hebdo attack in January 2015, a wave of Islamophobia swept the continent. In Germany, this manifested itself in a group called the Patriotic Europeans against the Islamification of the West (PEGIDA). This

was soon replicated in other European capitals, a feat that was surely bound to provoke the already ostracized European Muslim community – "hundreds of whom have already left to join ISIS" (Solomon, 2015: 2).

The matter of sectarianism in so far as garnering alliances also pertains to the community at large; not just rebel groups in the communities concerned. From this dynamic, ISIS finds support because of its religious objectives and their intended affliction against the Shia imams and believers. These conciliate the burdens of marginalization under Nouri al-Maliki's administration and are conveniently accompanied by the socioeconomic benefits that Sunni Arabs find in the preferential treatment and better opportunities that ISIS offers them. The group's social constitution and aversion to hierarchy speaks to the poor, agrarian Sunni society and as an entity of the same sect of Islam, presents leeway for their assuaging the economic deprivation they have endured since the 2003 US invasion. At this time, the neglect and conflict that had undermined the agricultural sector for years before the war were aggravated to result in a 90% decline in productivity (Fisher, 2014). In Syria, ISIS moved in with free rein to land that was captured by rebels from the Shia government's forces; a feat that might have well been welcomed by President Assad. It transpired that the Syrian government assisted ISIS in that regard - perhaps in the efforts to weaken its opponents – so that Assad's claims of support for counterterrorism measures against the group were delegitimized (Aljazeera, 2015) and clarity gained of the fact that ISIS' capture of rebel occupied Syrian territory was mutually beneficial to itself and the Assad regime. Today the group enjoys a willing submission from Syrian citizens; a plight that is apparently demonstrative not of a shared ideology but the pursuit of security and order in an unruly and ill-governed country.

4. FUNDING

Since it swept into the spotlight in June 2014, ISIS has been portrayed in the media as being 'light years' ahead of its counterparts (Stephens, 2014). This is particularly the case with regards to the group's financial structure. Close scrutiny reveals a financial autonomy that greatly distinguishes it from most other terrorist organizations, such as its precursor Al-Qaeda. Common among these antecedent groups was the burden of a heavy reliance on patronage. ISIS on the other hand, is revealed to have had the foresight to seek out this autonomy, early on (Saltman and Winter, 2014: 48). Kidnappings and extortion, availed by

the unique environment of instability in post-war Iraq, primarily serviced this endeavor, to be later accompanied by a more intricate resource pool of oil, trafficking, and looting of archeological sites (Kumar, 2014: 348).

4.1. Patronage

While it may account for a proportionately small source of revenue, overlooking the influence of patronage or donations entirely would be precarious. For ISIS, this source of revenue has proven to be reliable for a decade, dating back to when it was AQI. In September 2007, documents that were seized from the raid of what was believed to be an AQl safe house revealed that between 2006 and 2007, the group depended on donations, most of which came from its leaders, foreign fighters as well as local Iraqis. This dependency has since withered away over the years but remains relevant nonetheless. Over the last three years, ISIS has accumulated approximately $40 million from donors in the oil rich nations of Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia (Levitt, 2014). The Gulf States are of particular concern therefore, and have been the main source of funding for ISIS' predecessor Al-Qaeda. Although it is believed that most of these funders show a preference for sponsoring groups that are identified as more moderate than ISIS (Kumar, 2014: 348), when the group needed seed money for the recruitment of personnel and acquisition of military equipment to conquer the Sunni-dominated areas of Iraq, a portion of it came from donors in the Gulf States (Shelly, 2014). In this same light, it has been estimated that the amount of money reaching militants in Syria and Iraq comes up to hundreds of millions of dollars (Kumar, 2014: 348).

In September 2014, 11 foreign fighters facilitators and one entity, were named by the United States Department of the Treasury as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDTGs), having sent financial and material support to Syria and elsewhere. Among them, Tariq Bin-Al-Tahar Bin Al Falih Al-ʻAwni Al-Harzi, a high-profile ISIS member operating in Syria, was especially identified as having made arrangements for the group to receive approximately $2 million from a financial facilitator based in Qatar (Press Center, 2014).

Recent speculation suggests that in the wake of brutal executions by ISIS, there has been a sharp decline in donations from the Middle East. Intelligence informs that these have shocked public opinion to such a degree as to carve down their empathy. On March of this year, a man was discovered to have been soliciting donations at Harvard University for a charity connected to ISIS (Hayward, 2015); a possible testament to the validity of these speculations.

4.2. Criminal enterprises

Extortion and *illicit taxation* systems are rather pertinent to the revenue pool of the Islamic State, and deemed to be one of the most sustainable. Prior to seizing Mosul, the group was already raking in monthly earnings of $12 million in the city alone. This is now being replicated with greater organization across ISIS-controlled territory, as well as covertly, in areas where the group enjoys only partial influence (Lister, 2014). This is predominantly manifest in the "taxes" levied on individuals and companies. In early 2014, Tawfik, a computer shop owner in Mosul shared that the extortionists "told us that everyone in the street who is working pays for them and that we should pay too…". He went on to add that three people had been killed for being late to pay. With an income of up to $1,000 per month, Tawfik fled to Erbil after an anonymous caller demanded $114, 000 from him (Fordham, 2014). Furthermore, pharmacists who had previously been taxed $100 to $200 per month, were being forced to pay upwards of $20, 000 per month (Levitt, 2014).

Taxes are also levied on goods and all vehicles and trucks that bring those goods into populations like Mosul. Cars are typically subjected to a $50 levy, while small trucks are charged $100 and large trucks $400. And as part of a broader effort to strengthen ISIS-civilian mutual dependency, the group has seized approximately 40% of Iraq's wheat production, including 16 silos, while farmers have been forced to pay tax either in cash or in wheat, much higher than the price at which they sell their product. At the end of 2014, a kilo of wheat that used to sell for 10, 000 – 11, 000 dinars, was being sold at 4,000 - 5,000, chiefly because it had been stolen and advertised on the black market (Fick, 2014).

Looting has been a serious problem for Iraq for parts of the past decade. Between 2003 and 2006, the country fell prey to a violent period whose chaos opened it up to a stream of organized looters that pilfered many sites, particularly those in southern Iraq. At the time, these lootings were primarily conducted by way of hand-digging, a stark contrast to the bulldozing we now see with ISIS (Kohn, 2014).

As it stands, more than a third of Iraq's 12, 000 archeological sites are under ISIS control. Therefore, in the excavation and sale of artifacts dating back 9, 000 BCE, as well as lucrative consolidation of intermediaries, collectors and dealers, ISIS finds its second largest revenue stream after illicit oil sales. Palaces, shrines, tombs, churches and archeological sites are dug up and useful objects are sold, while the rest are destroyed (Kumar, 2014: 348).

A large majority of these artifacts is smuggled into Europe through Turkey, Iran and Syria (Levitt, 2014). While challenging to estimate the specific gains made from selling these artifacts, it is known that in 2007, a 5000 year old Mesopotamian lion sculpture sold for more than $50 million at an auction in New York (Kohn, 2014).

One of the group's biggest paydays came from the looting of the 9th century B.C. grand palace of the Assyrian King Ashurnasirpal II at Kalhu. Assyrian tablets were stolen and located in European cities, with some of them having been cut up and sold piecemeal. With these findings, it becomes increasingly clear that neighboring countries such as Jordan and Turkey need to take greater care to stop such items from crossing their borders (Al Arabiya, 2014).

At present, signs that the situation is near mitigation, are few. On 23 August 2015, the Islamic State blew up the ancient temple of Baal Shamin in the Syrian city of Palmyra whose ruins date back 2000 years. This following the beheading of 82 year old Khaled Asaad, an antiquities scholar who refused to reveal where certain artifacts were hidden. In June, the group destroyed two ancient Muslim museums in the city, followed by the beheadings of 25 Syrian soldiers at Palmyra's ancient amphitheater (Al Arabiya, 2015).

ISIS was once a faction of Al-Qaeda and so, although the two groups operate separately, they *do* share similarities. Just as Al-Qaeda before it saw the value in *kidnapping* for ransom, so too does ISIS. Kidnappings have revealed themselves to be a significant source of revenue for the Islamic State, and it is said that that they constitute approximately 20% of their income. In 2012, the US Department of the Treasury estimated that Al-Qaeda and its associates had accumulated a wealth of $120 million from ransoms over the previous 8 years. In 2014, an investigation conducted by the New York Times "found that since 2008, Al-Qaeda and its affiliates had received $125 million from ransoms, including $66 million in 2013" (Fantz, 2015). Standing on its own, the Department revealed ISIS to have secured from ransom payments, $20 million in 2014 alone (Levitt, 2014). Kurdish forces proffer their own estimate, proclaiming the group to rake in a monthly income of $10 million (Filkins, 2014).

While figures are naturally devoid of precision, those that have been advanced validate this criminal enterprise as a worthy source of income. And while it is not all countries that make financial concessions for hostage negotiations, in September of 2014, it is said that France may have paid $18 million for the release of 4 of its journalists that had been captured in

April (Black and Borger, 2014). Companies are also subject to manipulation as was seen with a Swedish company from whom ISIS demanded $70, 000 to have its employee released (Fantz, 2015).

Countries that have policies against negotiating with militant groups such as the US have seen their citizens beheaded. James Foley was one such citizen, and upon his government's refusal to advance the hundreds of millions of dollars demanded from it, he was executed. Early this year, two Japanese citizens were similarly slaughtered, when Japan failed to pay the $200 million demand (Wagner, 2015). In both cases, the beheadings were broadcast, sparking debate as to whether the policy of non-negotiation should be amended (Fantz, 2015).

Another aspect of kidnapping for ISIS is the platform that it extends for human trafficking. However, this criminal activity has received little attention as a funding mechanism for the fact that the group mainly uses it as a recruitment mechanism. To serve that purpose, it was purported in 2014 that an estimate of 2,500 to 4,000 Yazidi women and girls had been forced into marriage or sex slavery for a conveniently meager sum (Levitt, 2014). In August, a price list that is purported to have been circulated 8 months ago provided better detail to the exact figures. It reveals a recognized preference for younger women, with girls and boys aged 1 to 9 fetching approximately $165, adolescent girls $124, and women over 20 years even cheaper. It revealed further that in actual fact, outsiders are awarded first choice as they pay more hard cash. It is said that these girls get paddled like barrels of petrol, with some being sold and bought by 5 to 6 different men. At times, these girls are sold back to their families for thousands of dollars of ransom (Graham, 2015).

4.3. Oil

Kidnappings, lootings and patronage have all served ISIS well as sources of income. It is from smuggling oil however, that the group finds its largest and most resilient revenue stream. Its expansion over the years has evidently coincided with the development and fortification of its systematic and consolidated control over some of the region's largest oil fields (Amos, 2014). With authority over hundreds of black market refineries, ISIS has reactivated many of the smuggling networks that were formed over the course of the 1990s to the early 2000s (Saltman and Winter, 2014: 49).

The matter of how much ISIS makes from oil and gas sales is inundated with uncertainty however, fluctuating from a figure of $1 to $3 million per day. Whatever the case may be, oil forms a steady and sizeable income, demonstrating a greater reliability than the other revenue streams (Saltman and Winter, 2014: 50). It comes as no surprise then that oil refineries constitute the chief target of the US's attempts to tame and ultimately destroy ISIS (Obama, 2014).

The salience of oil to ISIS was clear in Mosul, where the seizure of territory was largely coordinated around Iraq's most lucrative refineries and oil fields. The group would move south the following day to surround Beiji's oil refinery, Iraq's largest. The seizure of 4 more oil fields would follow, including one of the most productive, Ajeel, near the city of Tikrit. Upon their arrival at the Al Kaz field in Anbar province, the group took all of the cash as well as vehicles, administering strict instruction that nothing be touched (Amos, 2014). By that time, the plan was clear. And where any doubts might arise, as to the group's fondness for oil as their chief revenue source, a map that was first circulated by ISIS supporters back in 2006 might offer some clarity. In it, we see ISIS's territorial ambitions at the time and nothing is clearer from it than the centrality of the resource to the group's cause. The map is a hypothetical one, drawn up by ISIS. It shows the areas that the group wished to control as well as overlapping oil fields. Although there is not much oil *in* that area, it shows that the group has long been contemplating the economics of its war and how to self-fund (Beauchamp, Fisher and Matthews, 2014).

Today, ISIS has control over 6 million people in Iraq and Syria, all of whom need fuel. The group is estimated to produce about 44,000 barrels a day in Syria and 4,000 barrels in Iraq. They then smuggle the resource into southern Turkey, for example, and sell it to people who need it to maintain some semblance of a normal life (Fantz, 2015). The group also sells to elites and established businesses as was established by a Kurdish newspaper that identified several members of Kurdish ruling families, a Toyota branch in Erbil that sells trucks to ISIS, a military leader, a Politburo leader and oil refineries among its clients (Shelly, 2014).

5. STOPPING ISIS

5.1. Current strategies

5.1.1. Airstrikes

A consolidation of countries including the US, the UK, Australia, Belgium, France and others, have all made concerted efforts to undermine the IS threat with air strikes (Mills, Brooke-Holland and Smith, 2015: 8) ranging from sea launched cruise missiles, used combat aircraft and armed unmanned aerial vehicles. These strikes were primarily conducted in Iraq on the 8th of August 2014 to be followed by Syria on 22 September (Blanchard, Humud, Katzman and Weed, 2015: 16), and by 30 June 2015, 18, 042 air strikes had been conducted, 4, 175 of which had resulted in the release of ordnance or artillery (Mills, at al., 2015: 8).

The Islamic State is a creature of transition, and objectives to tame it have seemed to try and reciprocate this. With regard to the US specifically, and as the country leading the fight against ISIS, we see this in the evolution of the stated objectives of the military air strikes. In Iraq, the US's plan was initially to stop the advance of the group's forces and reduce threats to American personnel and religious minorities. It then shifted to supporting the defensive and offensive military operations of Iraq's military and Kurdish forces to weaken the organization (Blanchard at al., 2015: 16).

In leading the effort, the US has amassed an extensive volume of resources to achieve its evolving objectives. On 31 July 2015 estimates released by the Department of Defense indicated the US to have spent $3.5 billion, or $9.8 million per day on IS related operations since August 2014. It is further estimated that airstrikes make up 50% of those costs, excluding munitions, which account for a further 23% (Press Center, 2015).

On the 3rd of March, US Central Command, General Lloyd Austin, presented a statement before the House of Armed Services Committee that described ISIS as "losing the fight", reporting that anti-IS operations had killed over 8,500 fighters, destroyed hundreds of their vehicles and heavy weapons systems, and considerably degraded the group's command and control capabilities (Lloyd, 2015). Furthermore, President Obama informed, in April 2015, that "About a quarter of the territory fallen under Daesh control has been recovered". He added that not only had the thousands of air strikes taken down ISIS war fighters, they had left their infrastructure deteriorated and decayed (Obama, 2015).

The air strikes have however received considerable criticism, not only from onlookers but Iraqi forces on the ground. One officer in Anbar Province, Muhammed al-Dulaimi stated that US airstrikes in Anbar failed to facilitate for their security forces, successful resistance and confrontation against ISIS attacks. He added that "We lost large territories in Anbar because of the inefficiency of the US-led coalition airstrikes". The criticism is exacerbated by the fact that ISIS has adjusted to the coalition's strategy, fighting within civilian populations and using some of their buildings to hold prisoners. Were the US to kill a Western hostage, ISIS could well use that as forming part of their propaganda material to turn locals against the West and recruit them into the group (Engel, 2015).

It has been a year since the coalition launched air strikes against the coalition but this has not translated into any lucrative gains for the anti-ISIS forces. Costs have spiraled past $3.5 billion, thousands of bombs have been dropped and 10, 000 lives lost but the war on terror has thus far made no substantial progress towards degrading and destroying the Islamic State. Intelligence has offered insight into the specific matter of the coalition's military campaign, citing that the problem is the lack of forces on the ground. The reality is that it is there that ISIS is winning the battle, and IS fighters can be replaced faster than the coalition can kill them. With the continued reluctance of these countries to engage ISIS on the ground, "it could take a decade more to drive the Islamic state from its havens" (News.Com. 2015).

5.1.2. Train and Equip

The military campaign against ISIS is just one aspect of that broader strategy. Another is the advancement of train and equip services by the US-led international coalition against ISIS. American citizens have expressed a clear reluctance to have their country spearhead another war and the US has taken heed of that. It has elected therefore to provide 'train and equip'

assistance to the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), Kursdish peshmerga and Sunni Arab tribal forces (Mills et al., 2015: 6). From June 2015, the US deployed about 3,100 military personnel to the Iraqi theater of operations, where they would extend advise as well as training, gather intelligence on ISIS, and safeguard US personnel and facilities (Blanchard et al., 2015: 17). As part of the coalition of countries who in November 2014 announced a package to offer training and support countries such as the UK, Belgium, Australia and Canada have also followed suit, providing non-combat troops to advance the cause (Mills et al., 2015: 6).

Reflecting on ISIS's recent gains however, including the fall of Ramadi in May, the matter of concern becomes whether the train and equip programme is worthwhile (Chandler, 2015). On 8 June 2015 President Obama acknowledged that the US "lacks a complete strategy" to help Iraq regain the territory it lost to ISIS. He added that a review of how better the coalition can assist Iraq was underway (BBC, 2015). On the other hand, he also suggested that the Iraqi government had to do more to facilitate the training programme, citing the lack of recruits and poor ability of Iraq's army to absorb training as standing in the way of its success (The Guardian, 2015).

5.1.3. Humanitarian Aid

Recognition has also been awarded to the terrible hardships that many Iraqis have undergone as a consequence of ISIS's brutal activities, as well as the displacements that have ensued. The US has thus committed $200 million in humanitarian aid to help bring stability to the communities and assist those that were displaced from their homes, lost their jobs and had their property destroyed. The President encouraged cognizance of the fact that insurgency in Iraq was not just an abstract matter, but one in which individual families and children were suffering as a consequence thereof (Obama, 2015). The relevance of aid in these communities then pertains to its potential to tame the increasing frustration of the people within them. Disgruntled societies look for sources of stability and if their governments do not afford them that, ISIS *has* and can continue to capitalize on these situations if they are not dealt with.

5.1.4. Disrupting finances

One of the more pivotal measures that have been taken by anti-ISIS forces has been the disruption of the group's financial resources. The US for example has taken on an agenda that focuses on the disruption of the group's revenue streams, limiting their access to formal

financial systems, and imposing sanctions on ISIS's senior leadership and financial facilitators. The specific measures that would be taken in this regard were stated in late 2014 to involve the targeting of those actors that refine, transport, handle and sell oil. A US led regional effort is also in the works to identify cross-border smuggling routes and the people involved in smuggling networks. Furthermore, the US has advised United Nations (UN) member states to extend their support in cutting off resources to the Islamic State, and in September 2014, the UN Security Council (UNSC) passed resolution 2178 and 2199 to curb the flow of money as well as foreign fighters to ISIS and their support front, Al Qaeda affiliated Jabhat al Nusra (Blanchard et al, 2015: 23). Observers have noted however that while some states within the region go on to pass relevant legislation, these laws are often not implemented or enforced. Qatar is notorious for this as has been demonstrated in legislation it has passed to counter terror financing over the last decade. In 2004, it passed a law criminalizing terror financing, and another in 2006, expanding charitable oversight and giving additional authorities to the Ministry of Civil Service and Housing Affairs. In 2009, IMF assessors raised non-implementation of these laws as matters of grave concern, and despite assurances by the Qatar Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), as of November 2013, the unit had referred to the public prosecutor, a grand total of 1 case for investigation (Levitt, 2014).

With regard to sanctions, the US designated individuals for their involvement in soliciting funds, securing military equipment, and recruiting foreign fighters (Press Center, 2014). Sanctions were in fact imposed on these individuals but to date, few members of ISIS have been designated based on the challenges faced in identifying individuals through the formal financial system (Blanchard et al, 2015: 24).

5.1.5. Restricting flows of foreign fighters

The influx of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq continue to be a source of concern for the international community. Not only are these fighters a firm basis for the fortification of ISIS's military and intelligence capacity, but they potentially pose a grave danger to their home countries upon their return. In both Syria and Iraq, these fighters gain combat experience, are provided with weapons and explosives training, and given access to terrorist networks that might be planning attacks against Western countries. Nicholas Rasmussen, Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, estimated that since 2011, more than 20, 000 foreign fighters from over 90 countries, including more than 3,400 Westerners may have

travelled to Syria (NCTC) (Rasmussen, 2015). US officials have approximated that *among* those figures are 180 U.S. citizens that have either attempted to or travelled to Syria to support the armed groups there. Furthermore, and as of September 2014, US officials estimated that approximately 12 Americans have been fighting there. As aforementioned, anti-ISIS operations have resulted in the deaths of thousands of ISIS personnel since August 2014. These include an unknown number of foreign fighters (Blanchard et al, 2015: 25).

The shared threat that the foreign fighter pandemic constitutes has resulted in consolidated efforts by the international community to bring it to a halt. We see that in diplomatic and intelligence efforts that focus on coordinating with source, transit and returnee countries to fortify shared responses as well as preventative measures (Blanchard et al, 2015: 24). These measures have thus far included the adoption of UNSC resolutions to strengthen global sanctions and stop the flow of foreign fighters and finances to the Islamic State and related entities. Resolution 2170 calls for member states to "to take national measures to suppress the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, and bring to justice, in accordance with applicable international law, foreign terrorist fighters of ISIS, ANF (Al-Nusra Front, sometimes called Al Qaeda in Syriaor Al-Qaeda in the Levant) and all other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al Qaeda". It reiterates that member countries are obliged to prevent terrorist travel, limit weapons and finance supplies and exchange information about the groups (UN, 2014a). Resolution 2178 offers reinforcement, by obliging states to prevent the "recruiting, organizing, transporting or equipping" of individuals travelling to countries other than their country of residence or nationality with the aim of perpetrating, planning or participating in terrorist acts (UN, 2014b).

Several countries have enacted or proposed legislation pertinent to these UNSC resolutions in order to facilitate the prosecution of these foreign fighters. Turkey is among them and has gone to great lengths to ensure enforcement. Early this year, it solidified its efforts to deny entry to potential foreign fighters on the basis of information that was provided by the fighters' countries of origin. Moreover, the country has identified 10, 000 individuals for designation on the Turkish Banned from Entry List (Rasmussen, 2015).

Finally, after the Charlie Hebdo attacks and subsequent arrests of violent extremists planning terrorist attacks, we see a greater political will among European countries to enhance border

controls and establish stronger watch-listing and information sharing arrangements (Rasmussen, 2015).

The current strategies, while they have to some extent placated the successes of ISIS have proven to be inconducive for the magnitude of the group as a terrorist threat. Worse still is the fact that some of the measures undermine sustainability, so that even where there are successes, there is very little prospect for permanency. There seems to be little effort in identifying and consolidating factors that mutually service each other and for future efforts at rebuilding, this is the greatest of detriments. This paper offers some strategies for consideration and advice on the necessary revision of current strategies. While the revolutionary nature of ISIS means that efforts will always have to be revised, some can be applicable in all cases especially when they target those factors that serve as the foundation as well as sustenance of the group.

5.2. Proposed strategies

This paper finds that there are several factors that should be placed at the forefront, where there is deliberation on what might be the most beneficial line of attack against ISIS. It is proposed that the nature of the group itself should be revised beyond the label of terrorist group so that strategies better cater to the realities over the traditional conceptualizations that have been pinned to the group. The politics of Iraq and Syria are identified as most important, particularly because they form the foundation of the rise and sustenance of the group, and as such, are the very reason for the group's existence. Further strategies address the matter of military air strikes, and whether or not they should be discontinued and external intervention, which in consideration of several factors, might better serve the efforts to obstruct ISIS if it was abandoned.

5.2.1. The Nature of ISIS

If there is one thing that ISIS funding mechanisms demonstrate, it is that more than anything, ISIS resembles a legitimate business. It boasts multiple revenue sources, looks for, as well as cultivates new profit lines and awards the greatest focus to those products in which it has competitive advantage. Corroboration of this perspective is found in the sale of artifacts that find their way to Western auction houses, as well as the clients it has secured in elite members of the Kurdish ruling families, oil refineries, and proprietors that have relations with esteemed companies such as Toyota.

The coalition forces have gone to great lengths to destroy the group's oil fields, and yet the group forges on. A new angle must be adopted, that specifically targets the business deals that really make possession of these oil fields lucrative. In this regard, the coalition forces must engage the business community to gain insight into the parties that comprise the group's networks. The ease with which ISIS has managed to gain from their looting is proof of this strategy as a matter of urgency. To prevent the smuggling and sale of stolen ancient artifacts, the global community might look to the strategy used in the Kimberly process to stop stolen antiquities from financing terrorism. Be it in their activities related to human trafficking, smuggling oil, and kidnapping, measures must be enforced such that parties involved in the trade are obliged to present evidence that artifacts were not solicited through illegal means.

5.2.2. The Politics of Iraq and Syria

It is the submission of this paper that in tackling ISIS, a multi-pronged approach must be taken. Strategies initiated as measures against the group should be enforced in tandem. This is particularly the case where factors that are foundational to, as well as sustain ISIS, exist in mutual service of each other. In such instance, obstructing one factor in isolation of the other would leave room for the revival of the abated factor. With that in mind, this paper identifies the politics and socio-economic factors of Iraq and Syria as distinctly relevant. The politics of the Middle East with their tattered and delegitimized state institutions, as well as rampancy of civil war in Iraq and Syria (Gerges, 2014: 339) are distinctly tenuous. More than any other, the Sunni Arab community bore the brunt of their nature. Fervently disenfranchised, they faced social and economic challenges that would form the basis of their support for ISIS. Reference has been made to the Iraqi government's reluctance to enforce democratization so that Sunni Arabs were awarded greater participation and agency, not only in governance structures but in their communities generally. Reference has also been made to the fall of Ramadi where the majority of the population there belongs to the Sunni Arab community and where ISIS received a great deal of support from ordinary people. Socioeconomic factors gave way to this support, exposing a need for them to be mitigated towards ISIS's defeat. These same factors comprise the fuel to ISIS's continued success.

The implication of these circumstances is that degrading ISIS will require migrating from the confines of military exploits into the terrain of politics. The underlying structural concerns will not be moderated by military victories against the group, and it is likely that if the

weaknesses of its opponents (Syria with its inability to find an all-inclusive solution to its conflict and Iraq with its failure to address sectarianism) persist, ISIS will go on unabated. Alternatively, if ISIS is defeated militarily, a similar group will surface. The US's military success over Sadaam Hussein's regime is a good example of this. Effect rather than cause was obstructed; leaving fertile ground for an upshot of similar circumstances as we are witnessing them now with ISIS. Greater care then should be awarded to locating tangible measures that would achieve a consolidated political response from the Arab threat by the Arab community over the threat of terrorism in isolation. These measures would necessarily address the genuine local grievances which may not necessarily be specific to the group, but to the population which because of them, ISIS is able to secure their support. The frustration of the Sunni Arab population in the Islamic State is certainly an issue that the Arab community must begin to recognize as one that is pivotal for the advancement of the greater Muslim community.

5.2.3. Military air strikes

The matter of military airstrikes is quite a challenging one. Discontinuing them might create latitude for ISIS to grow, while carrying on with them is arguably a greater subversion to their intended goal. This paper is of the latter view and to that extent advises a reassessment of the military air strikes. As previously mentioned, when the threat that is ISIS was introduced into the world, President Barack Obama deemed the group to be a terrorist organization, pure and simple. In that regard, the succeeding recourse to air strikes as a strategy to degrade ISIS made sense, particularly if we reflect on the measures taken against its predecessor Al-Qaeda. This paper has suggested that looking at ISIS from the lens of a terrorist group threatens to impose limitations on the degree to which countervailing measures could be successful. Reference is made to ISIS's operational strategy of territorial rule as stripping the globally recognized governments of those populations it now has control over, of their legitimacy. The destruction and disorder within those states provides a steady platform for the group to be embraced as that source of stability. If the air strikes persist, and buildings continue to be destroyed, along with the meaning that they have for the communities; even if the territories seized by ISIS are later regained and government control over them reinstated, the legitimacy of that government would be difficult to assert and be embraced as accurate if the means through which it can do that are no longer available. America's invasion in 2003, which resulted in the rise of militant groups, adds reinforcement

to this view. If the military airstrikes do succeed to stop ISIS, the future seems bleak in terms of sustainability of peace. In consideration of US interests in the Middle East, and what it perceived to be a lucrative setting for those interests to be cultivated after its invasion, the certainty that the socio-economic challenges that aroused the growth of and maintained ISIS would not ensue, is weakened. This paper then suggests that the coalition forces re-evaluate their military strategy because evidently, ISIS cannot simply be blown away, and because blowing up these cities would mean that winning the fight against ISIS might essentially be a loss for these communities who would be robbed of the semblance of normalcy that the group has gone out of their way to provide. Countries must go to greater lengths to integrate rebuilding strategies into their agenda as a necessary foundation to inject some permanency into the order that these reconstructed societies would have.

5.2.4. External intervention

Towards the effort of redressing local grievances of the Sunni Arab community, recognition must be awarded to the reality that those grievances owe their gravity not only to internal circumstances but external forces as well. Therefore, the specifics of this contribution must be identified and efforts made to avoid these forces from being overlooked. In this regard, an assessment of America's place in the crisis becomes pivotal. Its intervention in Syria and Iraq must be weighed in on and treated simultaneously with distinctly internal circumstances where there is a clear relation, especially in recognition of the fact that socio-economic challenges have been ill-assuaged, and even exacerbated by Western influences on and perception of the Muslim community at large, and the relevance of US-led international intervention in Iraq and Syria.

Western influences on and perception of the Muslim community are couched in an unacknowledged sectarianism that continues to benefit ISIS as it reinforces the West as a legitimate adversary to the Muslim community. Globally - and this frustration is not limited to the Muslim community - countries have become increasingly vocal about their frustration with the dominance that the West asserts. Even more disconcerting is the blatant ethnocentrism that this dominance is couched in, so that not only is Western culture portrayed as better, but other cultures belittled. Charlie Hebdo is a good example of this status quo for the long line of disrespect it has instigated against various communities and for the purposes of this paper, the anger it sparked in the Muslim community for mocking the Islamic prophet.

Western ideals such as freedom of speech, although they have serviced global communities well in many regards, seem to be increasingly exploited by the very countries that tout them as facilitating an improved standard of life, to subjugate, belittle and degrade minorities. These circumstances secure a tangible platform for groups such as ISIS, for inadvertently awarding reinforcement to their antagonism towards the West as well as its supporters. Western governments must take greater care to create policies that institutionalize integration so that occurrences like the 'retaliation' that we witnessed with Charlie Hebdo, where Muslims felt compelled to avenge the Prophet Muhammed, are halted. This would also go to mitigating the ill-desired rise in foreign fighters, who see in the caliphate the chance at a more beneficial accommodation that far surpasses the marginal inclusion that is provided by the West, and who when they return home, may replicate the instances that were witnessed in France.

The reception of Western sectarianism by the Muslim community is ill-assuaged by US-led intervention in Iraq and Syria. While Iraqi forces have proven to be militarily inept compared to ISIS, and Syrian forces reluctant to obstruct the group, resort to Western forces, though they are not on the ground contributes to fortifying the proclivities of the Sunni Arab community in their support for ISIS. This is most notably the case in terms of the apparent lack of legitimacy of such intervention and demonstrated "causality between Western military interventionism in the Muslim world, and the rise of reactionary armed militia groups" (Hussain, 2015). On legitimacy, Hussein Solomon's ten principles of best practice in conflict resolution find relevance. Solomon (2006: 222) argues that where belligerents perceive the goal of external intervention to have to do more with the intervening state's own national interest, then such intervention loses legitimacy and is unlikely to succeed. This view materializes as well within the scope of US military intervention for the fact that beyond curbing a terrorist threat that is overtly hostile towards it, the US has clear economic interests. America's economy still rests on the oil market and the oil market is heavily shaped by occurrences in places like Iraq (Welna, 2014). It comes as no surprise then that during the 4 years that the Assad regime murdered its own people by barrel bombing and using chemical weapons against entire villages and Al-Maliki's indiscriminate killings of Sunni Arabs in Iraq, the Obama administration was not urged to intervene militarily (Hussain, 2015). The US's interest to protect the Iraqi people from danger only arose when ISIS seized Mosul (Welna, 2014), threatening "to shift the balance of power from the Kurds in the north and the

Shia-led government in Baghdad" (Hussain, 2015). Under these circumstances, the likelihood of the US defeating ISIS seems unlikely. The Iraqi and Syrian people would more likely withhold submission to the US as a countervailing force, rather investing their support into a force (ISIS) that would serve to undermine the superpower's efforts.

Regarding the rise of militia groups as a consequence of US military intervention in Iraq - particularly ISIS - this is a circumstance that America has acknowledged. President Obama admitted to the terrorist group being the unintended consequence of US invasion in 2003 that resulted in the formation of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, of which ISIS is a direct outgrowth (Obama, in Hussain, 2015). Worse still is the arming that succeeded this incident of rebel groups by the US as one of its strategies for countering ISIS; an occasion that along with many others like it, brought destruction and division in the Middle East at the hands of Western intervention (Milne, 2015). Not only does this go against legitimacy, but reinforces the analysis that ISIS will not be impeded by a force that incubated it. If history is anything to go by, and it usually is, American intervention in Iraq and Syria if it is successful, will either lay ground for another terrorist group to sprout, or for ISIS to rise up again. From the perspective that ISIS will not be impeded by the US as it incubated it, US-led intervention as it stands will only conjure up remembrance of the 2003 invasion and reinforce the fear in those that were most hard hit by its consequences, that it will repeat the mistakes of that time. Again, the US-led intervention will not find a willing submission from the Iraqi people. The recent Russian intervention in Syria will also encounter similar problems – perhaps even more so than the American intervention on account of Moscow's intervention to support a minority Alawite regime in Syria which represents 12 percent of the population against the majority Sunnis. In addition, Moscow's alliance with Shi'a Iran will only exacerbate the Sunni-Shi'a divide not only in Iraq and Syria but throughout the Middle East.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed the entity that is now referred to as the Islamic State. It has provided a background to the group along with the activities that it engages in to exact its gains, and the mechanisms through which it funds itself. The paper further discussed the current strategies that are being used to tackle the threat that the group has proven itself to be and proffered recommendations that might contribute to stopping the group. What is clear in the discussion is the revolutionary nature that ISIS is characterized by. And what is frightening is

the degree to which it has garnered support worldwide, either through supporters who wish to join it, or through illegal activities that see various individuals take advantage of the benefits of buying products through the black market.

It is hoped that just as ISIS has demonstrated its transitional capacity in the face of countervailing measures, the international community will evolve towards efforts that will produce better results. It is also hoped that greater recognition is given to the impact that foreign actors have within societies and the need for there to be measures in place that counter the negative effects of globalization. Reference is made to the matter of sectarianism that is manifest to some degree or other in most if not all countries and the fact that in the advent of greater inter-state engagement, it takes on a global character. Integration and real cooperation towards common threats then becomes a necessity, particularly for situations such as the one that the Islamic State has created.

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About the Author

*Monapo Mokose and Hussein Solomon are based in the D*epartment of Political Studies and Governance, University of the Free State, Republic of South Africa)

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