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Islamic State

Center on Irregular Warfare & Armed Groups

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CENTER ON IRREGULAR WARFARE AND ARMED GROUPS READING LIST 2018

Islamic State IS / ISIS / ISIL / DAESH

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PART 1: THE ISLAMIC STATE

MAPS

Map of Iraq and Syria: Central Location for the Islamic State



Iraq. Bing Maps. Microsoft. July 31, 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.bing.com/maps/#Y3A9MzMzMzgwODUzZjQ4Ljk1Njk3OCZsdmw9NSZzdHk9YiZxPULyYXE=>

INSIDE LOOK/COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW:

OVERVIEW

"ISIS." Counter Extremism Project. February, 2018.

<https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/3>.

The Counter Extremism Project is one of the leading organizations that provides comprehensive analysis on the state of extremism and militarized armed groups across the globe. This report, provides an overview of the Islamic State, analyzes its places of operation, leadership, recruitment strategies, and violent activities. The report also outlines how foreign nations perceive and interact with the group transnationally.

"The Islamic State (Full Length)." *Vice News* video, 42:31. December 26, 2014.

<https://news.vice.com/video/the-islamic-state-full-length>

This *Vice News* video provides an inside look on the goals and ideals of IS. A reporter is shown by an IS member the front lines of the fighting between the Syrian army and IS. The video goes further by providing additional information with a focus on IS's growth, propaganda, and indoctrination of children to create the next generation of IS. An additional section shows the use of the "Hisbah" to enforce morality codes in the areas under the control of IS.

Barrett, Richard. "The Islamic State" *The Soufan Group*. November, 2014.

<http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/TSG-The-Islamic-State-Nov14.pdf>

This report by the Soufan Group provides an extensive look into the internal workings of IS. A general summary of the group is provided followed by a description of their growth and development. The group's ideology and overall objectives are presented followed by a rundown of its structure, military, administrative, financial, and media operations. The conclusion of this piece ponders how long it will be before the repressive and restrictive nature of IS causes the areas under its control to rise up. A major concern of this is how much damage will IS have done by then.

Lister, Charles. "Profiling the Islamic State" *Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper* 13. Brookings Institute. November, 2014.

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Research/Files/Reports/2014/11/profiling%20islamic%20state%20lister/en_web_lister.pdf

This report provides a detailed overview of IS from its origins to its presence as of 2014 and provides analyses on its objectives and issues regarding the use of foreign fighters. The section titled "The Islamic State Today" provides information on the group's policies military strategies, and governance of controlled areas. The section regarding foreign

fighters starts on page 34 of the report and flows into the policy recommendations for countering ISIS. The recommendations include stopping IS's revenue flows, disrupting manpower and resources, targeting of their leadership, and stabilizing Iraq and Syria.

MULTI-FACETED ORGANIZATION

Fromson, James., and Steven Simon. "ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now." *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 57 no. 3 (May 19, 2015): 7-56.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2015.1046222>

This source describes IS as having four different manifestations. The group is a guerilla army, a Sunni political movement, an extremist Islamist group and an oppressive regional administrator. Each of these four aspects is described in detail and the author concludes with suggesting that aggressive containment is the only effective currently available option for countering IS.

Weiss, Michael., and Hassan Hassan. *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*. New York: Regan Arts, 2015.

This book starts by describing the growth and development of IS and highlights their use of propaganda, executions and use of foreign recruits to expand their presence in the Middle East. It further goes on to profile key members and tell their history before joining the group and what role they had in the evolution of IS. The authors discuss the impact of what is described as "political and military maneuvering" by U.S., Iran, Iraq, and Syria and how it impacted the expansion of IS.

IDEOLOGY OF IS

Reuter, Christopher. "'I'm not a Butcher': An Interview with Islamic State's Architect of Death." *Spiegel Online International*, July 16, 2015.
<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/a-conversation-with-an-isis-suicide-bomber-logistician-a-1043485.html>

Der Spiegel conducted an interview with incarcerated Islamic State suicide bombing coordinator, Abu Abdullah. Abdullah explained his motivations and his role in the process of the bombings. His job was to create the bombs and direct the bombers to the targets. His motivations were simply that he needed to kill the infidels and drive them out of Iraq.

Bunzel, Cole. "From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State." *Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World: Analysis Paper 19* (March, 2015):1-45. Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings.
<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2015/03/ideology-of-islamic-state-bunzel/the-ideology-of-the-islamic-state.pdf>

Cole Bunzel, in his research article begins by examining the ideologies of the group and its particular brand of Jihadi-Salafism (al-Salafiyya al-Jihadiyya). The history of IS's formation and development is detailed along with its split from AQ and the making of itself into a new entity. Bunzel then looks at the establishment of the caliphate by IS and the implications surrounding this.

"ULTRA-VIOLENCE" AS STRATEGY/POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Jones, David Martin., and M.L.R. Smith. "The Strategy of Savagery: Explaining the Islamic State." *War on the Rocks*, February 24, 2015. <http://warontherocks.com/2015/02/the-strategy-of-savagery-explaining-the-islamic-state/>

The author evaluates the flawed perspective of some analysts regarding the members of IS, and the strategic purpose behind the televised executions and atrocities conducted by IS members. The author states that the presentation of IS terrorists as having grievances against Western policy, morals, and being the victims of Islamophobia or personality disorders are detrimental to counterterrorism. Treating jihadism as the result of personality traits does not offer a concrete platform to build a solid defense. The use of "ultra-violence" or savage tactics and executions is a deliberate strategy targeting Western sensibilities. The jihadist's strategy of placing more value and symbolism on death and martyrdom provides a sanctified rationale that celebrates all aspects of death.

ISLAMIC STATE – ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION:

Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)

DEVELOPMENT AND DECLINE OF AQI

Biddle, Stephen, Jeffrey A. Friedman, and Jacob N. Shapiro. "Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007?" *International Security* 37, No. 1 (Cambridge: MIT Press Journals, 2012). 7-40. http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/ISEC_a_00087

This article evaluates competing hypotheses regarding the relative importance of the surge and the Anbar Awakening in reducing Iraq's violence and. Without one another, the surge and the Anbar Awakening were critical components that provided the military capabilities as well as support from the local population to achieve the counterinsurgency objectives of the U.S. The authors propose thorough evidence and analyses to support how two major arguments - sectarian segregation caused by infighting and the role of the Awakening to dilute al-Qaeda in Iraq - helped reduce violence in 2007. Without the Awakening and the Sons of Iraq, the article concludes, the surge would have been inefficient in managing levels of violence.

Kirdar, M.J. "Al Qaeda in Iraq." *Homeland Security & Counterterrorism Program Transnational Threats Project*. Case Study 1. Center for Strategic & International Studies. June, 2011.

http://csis.org/files/publication/110614_Kirdar_AlQaedalraq_Web.pdf

This case study covers the formation and development of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), the predecessor to ISI, which would become ISIS, then ISIL and finally IS. AQI, led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi fought alongside other AQ groups and the Taliban against the U.S. in Afghanistan and then would transfer back Iraq to play a central role in the 2003-2007 insurgency. The brutal tactics of AQI led to a decline in its popularity amongst Iraqis and the death of Zarqawi in 2006 led to a weakened and diminished group.

ABU MUSAB AL-ZARQAWI

Hafez, Mohammed. *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2007.

This book covers the use of suicide bombings as a weapon of insurgencies and terror organizations. Using open source information and interviews with U.S. service members, the author compares the different ideology, origins and characteristics of factions that were involved in the insurgency from 2003-2006 including Zarqawi's followers and Jihadi Salafis. The appendix includes, a list of all the Sunni insurgent groups in Iraq from 2003-2006, the names and nationalities of known suicide bombers, AQ's evolution in Iraq, and Zarqawi's associates.

Weaver, Mary Anne. "The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi." *Atlantic*, June 8, 2006. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/>

This article provides a detailed account of Zarqawi's transition from a violent gang member to a jihadi fighting in Afghanistan and finally into the leader of AQI. Originally named Ahmad Fadhil Nazzal al-Halaylah, Zarqawi changed his name before going to fight in Iraq. Zarqawi was not particularly religious until after a six year stint in prison and a second trip to Afghanistan in 2001. After this he adhered to extremist views and would form his own group that would engage in a campaign of brutal attacks and suicide bombings. Zarqawi would rise in the ranks but his unpopular tactics resulted in him being demoted within the organization before he was killed.

Evolution and Growth of IS

THE ROLE OF BUCCA PRISON AND ABU BAKR AL-BAGHDADI

Chulov, Martin. "Isis: the Inside Story." *Guardian*, December 11, 2014.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/11/-sp-isis-the-inside-story>

This article describes the role of Bucca prison and its impact on the growth of IS. Sunni militant members and AQ members were able to coordinate and plan in a way they never would have been able to outside of the prison. Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, upon release from Bucca, used his connections from there to join in the fighting against Shia

Muslims in Iraq. The death of Zarqawi and his successor, Abu Omar, allowed al-Baghdadi, as described by a former acquaintance as “the most bloodthirsty of all,” to take charge.

THE ROLE OF MALIKI’S POLICIES ON THE CREATION OF IS

Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Violence in Iraq.” *Middle East Forum*. Fall 2012.
<http://www.meforum.org/3375/iraq-violence>

This article analyzes the levels of violence in Iraq under Maliki’s heavy-handed policies. The disregard for the rule of law, use of the Iraqi Security Forces for sectarian purposes, political impasse among the government’s various factions, and inability to root al-Qaeda in Iraq from its strongholds presented ripe conditions for cyclical patterns of violence to spread through Iraq shortly after the U.S. withdrawal in 2011.

SUNNI UPRISING/REVOLUTION AND ITS ROLE IN THE CREATION OF ISIS

“The Rise of ISIS.” *Frontline*, PBS video, 53:40. October 28, 2014.
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/rise-of-isis/>

This video shows the role of internal divisions within the Iraqi government post U.S. withdrawal. A strong and violent crackdown on local Sunni Muslims and former Baathists by the Maliki government based on fears of a Sunni attempt to seize control of the government. AQI was still operating outside of the city, though decimated, the surviving members were experienced fighters. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, after a stint in a U.S. prison was now leading AQI and utilized the Syrian conflict in order grow, train, and recruit Sunni Muslims who were looking to strike at Shia governments of Syria and Iraq. The Sunni uprising in Iraq in response to government crackdowns allowed AQI, now seen as IS, to take root and seize power.

AQI RESURGENCE AND THE CREATION OF IS

This is a collection of articles from Institute for the Study of War by Jessica Lewis concerning AQI and how it morphed into the Islamic State.

Lewis, Jessica D. “Al-Qaeda in Iraq Resurgent.” *Institute for the Study of War*.
<http://www.understandingwar.org/report/al-qaeda-iraq-resurgent>

This report details the revival of al-Qaeda in Iraq in 2012-2013 after its initial degradation throughout much of 2007-2008. Vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) attacks remained the signature type of attack after the U.S. withdrawal in 2011. Safe-havens and recruiting grounds in Syria, as well as the replenishment of AQI’s veteran manpower through multiple prison breaks across Iraq. The article analyzes AQI’s “Breaking the Walls” campaign which sought to establish governance across Iraq and Syria while aiming to retake territory it had formally controlled.

----- “Al-Qaeda in Iraq Resurgent, Part II.” *Institute for the Study of War*.
<http://www.understandingwar.org/report/al-qaeda-iraq-resurgent-part-ii>

This report supplements Part I by focusing on the geography, volume, interval, and selected targets which characterized al-Qaeda in Iraq’s waves of violence and prison attacks. It proceeds to detail the evolution of AQI’s military organization over the 2012-2013 time period. AQI’s VBIED capabilities are assessed in the context of operational planning and how this re-organizes AQI as a military organization as opposed to a leader-centric terrorist organization.

----- “AQI’s ‘Soldier’s Harvest’ Campaign.” *Institute for the Study of War*. 9 October 2013.
<http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/aqis-soldiers-harvest-campaign>

This report examines the campaign launched by al-Qaeda in Iraq in late 2013 to control key terrain in Iraq while targeting any Sunnis who work for the government. By analyzing the contest for control between AQI and the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), this report documents the intimidation and displacement of Iraqi soldiers and government officials by AQI.

POST-SURGE REVIVAL OF IS

A collection of articles by Craig Whiteside of the United States Naval War College at Naval Post Graduate School evaluating the revival of AQI as The Islamic State in Iraq

“Behind The Revival of the Islamic State in Iraq, Interview with Naval War College Prof Craig Whiteside.” *Musings on Iraq*. June 22, 2015.
<http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/2015/06/behind-revival-of-islamic-state-in-iraq.html>

This interview analyzes pivotal aspects which led to the revival of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), including jailhouse radicalization, former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki’s autocratic politics, and the disputed role of former Baathists among the ranks of Islamic State’s leadership. The interview proceeds to detail the tactics employed by Islamic State to regain control over areas it had been expelled from during the surge and offers an assessment of contemporary U.S. and Iraqi counterinsurgency and counterterrorism strategies.

Whiteside, Craig. “War, Interrupted, Part I: The Roots of the Jihadist Resurgence in Iraq.” *War on the Rocks*. November 5, 2014. <http://warontherocks.com/2014/11/war-interrupted-part-i-the-roots-of-the-jihadist-resurgence-in-iraq/>

This article argues that Islamic State utilized the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 as a pretext for its resurgence which established a robust political coalition. Islamic State’s carefully crafted military campaigns dedicated to defeating America’s Sunni allies and

undermining the capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces paved the way for three strategic objectives: 1) establishing sanctuaries in their former core areas after eliminating the Awakening members, 2) recruiting experienced fighters that could contribute immediately, and 3) a slow rollback of ISF to allow IS to expand its governing functions on behalf of the Sunnis of Iraq.

----- "War, Interrupted, Part II: From Prisoners to Rulers." *War on the Rocks*. November 6, 2014. <http://warontherocks.com/2014/11/war-interrupted-part-ii-from-prisoners-to-rulers/>

This article continues from Part I by examining Islamic State's coordinated campaign to target the Iraq's criminal justice system with assassination squads targeting judges, prosecutors, investigators, prison staff, and witnesses, while also targeting crime labs, detention facilities, and courtrooms. In addition to waves of prison breaks, IS also featured the targeting of checkpoints manned by Iraqi Security Forces in its propaganda videos to showcase the central government's weaknesses. This article offers a closer examination of events on the ground which are prohibiting national reconciliation or the establishment of a new "Awakening Council" from coming to fruition.

EVOLUTION AND EXPANSION

Sowell, Kirk "The Islamic State's Eastern Frontier: Ramadi and Fallujah as Theaters of Sectarian Conflict." *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 9 no. 4 (August, 2015): 130-141. Terrorism Research Initiative.

<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/449>

This article discusses the role of sectarian conflict in Ramadi and Fallujah and how IS has used it to its advantage. The mishandling of the Sunni population by the Iraqi government gave IS the instability it needed to grow in Iraq and served as a recruitment tool. Many Sunnis and Sunni "tribal shaykhs" do not fall in line with IS ideology or end goals but seen a necessary military alliance with IS as a way to combat what is seen as an Iranian controlled government and militia forces. While IS does not have the numbers to occupy and hold these areas, it can use them as staging areas for attack with the support of the aforementioned parts of the population.

Cockburn, Patrick. *The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution*. New York: Verso, 2015.

This book provides a detailed look at the environment that led to the creation and expansion of the IS. The war in Syria and any form of western involvement/aid was utilized to build the group through recruitment, training, and seizing of weapons and materials meant for anti-Assad militias. This chaotic field and the Sunni uprising in Iraq would open the door for IS to seize control in a fractured area. The author claims that

the underestimation of IS in its early stages by U.S. and coalition forces helped to contribute to the expansion of the group.

Price, Brian., Dan Milton, and Nelly Lahoud. "The Group That Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State." *Combating Terrorism Center*. 2014. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-group-that-calls-itself-a-state-understanding-the-evolution-and-challenges-of-the-islamic-state>

This report from the CTC provides a thorough look at the Islamic State. It serves to show the origins and formation of the group and identify its operational strengths and weaknesses. It also compares IS to other militant/extremist groups that the U.S. has fought against and concludes with an examination of the strategic challenges and opportunities faced by countries engaged in counterterrorism efforts against IS.

IS CONNECTIONS TO SADDAM'S BAAATH PARTY AND AQI

Orton, Kyle. "Saddam's Former Loyalists are Leading ISIS-as True Believers." *National Review*, July 20, 2015. <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/421370/saddams-former-loyalists-are-leading-isis-true-believers-kyle-orton>

Some reports argue that the Islamic State is a front for a resurgent Baathist party; however, the former Baathists involved had already shifted to a more radical belief system before joining IS. In 1993, Saddam Hussein conducted a campaign of promoting Salafism in order to counter the encroaching Muslim Brotherhood. As the "Saddamist-Salafism" took hold and spread, it gathered a greater following within the Baath party. When Saddam's regime collapsed, many of its members had already moved on to accept new Salafi-based ideologies that would mesh well with the IS ideology.

Tønnessen, Truls H. Heirs of Zarqawi or Saddam? The relationship between al-Qaida in Iraq and the Islamic State." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no.4 (April, 2015):48-60. Terrorism Research Initiative. <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/443/874>

This author examines the level of residual connections between IS and its predecessor, AQI. The study is based off of information regarding the backgrounds and roles of the top leaders of AQI/IS over the past decade while examining their connections to the Baath party. While the Islamic State is the successor to AQI, the AQ connected Jabhat al-Nusra, share connections with several of the same groups that gave the start to AQI. However, IS, after the fall of AQI, seems to be made up of mainly the Iraqi faction of AQI with ties to several former Baathist party members or were Baathist themselves.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH REGIONAL GROUPS/STATES

Simonelli, Corina. "The Evolution of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL): Relationships 2004-2014." National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. June, 2014.

http://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_EvolutionofISILRelationships_FactSheet_June2014.pdf

This document shows the relationships between IS and various militias and terrorist groups and local countries. It shows who they are fighting and who they collaborate with, and which groups changed from supporting them to fighting them.

ISLAMIC STATE – DECLINE:

OVERVIEW

"Islamic State and the Crisis in Iraq and Syria in Maps." *BBC News*, January 10, 2018. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27838034>.

This article explores the evolving conflict with ISIS in Iraq and Syria through interactive imagery and maps. The visuals demonstrate the territory taken and lost, concentration and number of coalition strikes against ISIS, and various other infographics that paint a holistic picture of the Islamic State and their operations.

Lockie, Alex. "ISIS Fighters, Once Bent on Martyrdom, Surrender en Masse from Last Iraqi Stronghold." *Business Insider*, October 9, 2017. <http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-fighters-surrender-en-mass-iraq-2017-10>.

In direct contrast to the retaking of Mosul, when U.S. backed coalition forces and Iranian backed militias recaptured Hawijah, they met with little resistance and large-scale surrender of ISIS fighters. In previous events, ISIS members were more interested in last stands and suicide attacks whereas they were supposedly seeking to surrender to Kurdish forces because they would be more likely to take prisoners than other groups. After the fall of Hawijah, ISIS only maintains a small area of land in Iraq.

Mooney, Michael J. "Iraq the Islamic State, and War Termination." *Small Wars Journal*, September 5, 2017. <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/iraq-the-islamic-state-and-war-termination>.

CIWAG Senior Associate Col Michael J. Mooney offered direction and guidance on Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi's statements regarding his policy goals following the defeat of ISIS. Col Mooney focused on in particular the need to track down all the scattered elements of ISIS to prevent them from repeating the scenario of when AQI dispersed and then reappeared as ISIS. Just as important is the need to make fundamental changes within Iraq that address the reasons as to why extremist groups have found such fertile ground there.

Mooney, Mike. "Calusewitz Takes Down the Caliphate: The Center of Gravity in the Destruction

of the State of the Islamic State." *Small Wars Journal*, January 14, 2014.
<http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/clausewitz-takes-down-the-caliphate-the-center-of-gravity-in-the-destruction-of-the-state-o>.

CIWAG Senior Associate, Col. Mike Mooney's latest on ISIS examines the military strategy that has crippled ISIS as viewed by Clausewitz's center of gravity and other principles from his book *On War*. To bring down ISIS, it would take more than a liberation of the territory held by the group, it would also require a liberation from their "military, political, economic, and ideological centers of gravity."

EXTERNAL OPERATIONS

Ridgewell, Henry. "Huge Decline in ISIS Propaganda Mirrors Losses on Battlefield." *VOA News*, December 1, 2017. <https://www.voanews.com/a/isis-propaganda-declies-mirrors-losses-on-battlefield/4144838.html>.

As ISIS loses more territory and fighters, the tone and content of its media campaigns have shifted. The videos are produced much less frequently and contain only small groups of ISIS members and very few vehicles. The focus has shifted from glamorizing ISIS held areas to calling for attacks in Western countries.

Winter, Charlie. "Is Islamic State losing control of its 'virtual caliphate'?" *BBC News*, November 9, 2017. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-41845285?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=New%20Campaign&utm_term=%2ASituation%20Report.

CIWAG case study author, Charlie Winter, published a recent article on changing use of media by ISIS. Since it came to power, ISIS has utilized media and imagery to push propaganda and to portray territory under its control as idyllic. As ISIS faces more defeats and continues to fracture into scattered insurgencies the rate and content of its publications has shifted. At the height of its control in 2015, ISIS was releasing over 200 videos and photos a week in addition to magazines and radio programs. Now there are fewer than 20 items released total and they focus solely on combat.

REVITALIZATION EFFORTS

Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed, Jacob Zenn, and Nathaniel Barr. "Islamic State 2021: Possible Futures in North and West Africa." Foundation for Defense of Democracies. February 2017. http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/022017_DGR_ISIL_Report.pdf.

This report from the Foundation for Defense of Democracies looks to the future of ISIS in Africa as it continues to lose ground in the Middle East. "It is possible that ISIS' global decline could also paradoxically help the group in North and West Africa, as state and non-state actors shift resources from battling ISIS to other seemingly more urgent issues,

giving the group the breathing room it needs to regenerate. A forecast of ISIS activity in Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, the Lake Chad region, Mali, and Senegal is presented.”

"ISIS Announces Forced Enlistment Amid Leadership Losses in Deir ez-Zor." *Rudaw*, March 8, 2017. <http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/030820172>.

As ISIS continues to lose territory and members in the face of SDF and coalition forces, they issued a demand for all men between 20 and 30 in ISIS held territory to report to “mobilization offices” in less than a week. Coalition forces have enacted a heavy toll on ISIS leadership, recently killing several explosive and chemical weapon specialists, a chemical weapons plant and the leader of the Albanian foreign fighters.

POST-IS POWER VACUUM

Seftel, Bennett. "Al Qaeda Spinoffs Rise from Syrian Ashes." *Cipher Brief*, October 12, 2017. <https://www.thecipherbrief.com/article/middle-east/al-qaeda-spinoffs-rise-syrian-ashes>.

As ISIS is nearing its defeat in Syria, Al Qaeda affiliated groups are moving in to fill the vacuum. Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) which consists of what was originally Jabhat al-Nusra then Jabhat Fateh el-Sham and four smaller Syrian jihadi groups has entrenched itself in Idlib province and consolidated its power. Militants from other groups have been joining this growing organization, attracted to its anti-Assad and anti-Shia stance. Despite its current regional focus, the group has threatened to target the U.S. once it topples Assad.

LEADERSHIP/KEY PERSONNEL:

ABU BAKR AL-BAGHDADI

Callimachi, Rukmini. "ISIS Releases Recording Said to Be of Its Leader." *New York Times*, September 28, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/28/world/middleeast/islamic-state-baghdadi.html>.

The Islamic State issues a new propaganda recording featuring al-Baghdadi. It has been almost a year since the last time al-Baghdadi released any statements. He claims that the West is living in terror due to the actions of IS. This recording may have been issues to counter statements by Russian forces and the Syrian Human Rights Observatory claiming that al-Baghdadi may have been killed in a Russian airstrike on IS leaders. During the time of these statements, U.S. officials remained skeptical of their validity.

Ingram, Haroro J., and Craig Whiteside. “Don’t Kill The Caliph! The Islamic State and the Pitfalls

of Leadership Decapitation." *War on the Rocks*. June 2, 2016.

<http://warontherocks.com/2016/06/dont-kill-the-caliph-the-islamic-state-and-the-pitfalls-of-leadership-decapitation/>

Striking ISIS from the top-down may inspire a new charismatic leader and resurgence or cause a splintering that results in dangerous factions without any operational control. However, degrading the group with ISIS' leadership intact would severely impact the ideology behind their caliphate project.

Di Giovanni, Janine. "Who is ISIS Leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi?" *Newsweek*, December 8, 2014.

<http://www.newsweek.com/2014/12/19/who-isis-leader-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-290081.html>

This article starts by relaying the statement of an attendee of the Mosque where Baghdadi made a rare public appearance. Abu Ali, claimed that there was complete and total control of the appearance, from the recording, to forcing all attendees to swear allegiance, and not allowing them to leave the Mosque until at least 30 minutes after he had left. The article provides a background and personality analysis on al-Baghdadi, originally named Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri. Firsthand accounts collected by neighbors described him as being reserved, very traditional, and could be seen frequently carrying religious books around instead of going to the café with other men. He pursued a religious education and founded an insurgent group titled Jamaat Jaish Ahl al Sunnah wal Jamma in 2004 in response to the U.S. presence in Iraq. He was captured and sent to Camp Bucca where he used his time there to form a network of other militants. Upon his release he became involved with al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and then form the group into the Islamic State in Iraq.

SOUTHEAST ASIAN LEADERSHIP

Chan, Francis. "Efforts Under Way to Verify Chatter About Death of Indonesian ISIS Leader Linked to Marina Bay Plot." *Straits Times*, October 16, 2017.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/efforts-underway-to-verify-chatter-about-the-death-of-indonesian-isis-leader-linked-to>.

A multi-agency effort is underway to verify the veracity of the claims that Bahrun Naim, the ISIS affiliated terrorist who was the orchestrator of the 2016 attack in Jakarta, was killed in Syria. Naim's lawyer stated that he received word of his death and several analysts had seen it communicated on several platforms that terror groups often use, but officials are waiting for visual or DNA proof from local authorities before issuing an official confirmation of Naim's death.

"IS Southeast Asia Chief Killed in Philippines." *Agence France-Presse*, October 16, 2017.

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2017/10/16/is-southeast-asia-chief-killed-in-philippines.html>.

Isnlon Hapilon, emir of IS in Southeast Asia, and Omar Maute, one of the two leading Maute brothers of the Maute group were killed by Philippine government forces during operations to retake Marawi. The size and scope of the attack caused concern that the city would be used as a base of operations for ISIS in the area. Hapilon had a \$5 million bounty on him and DNA testing is being conducted to completely confirm his death.

Iaccino, Ludovica. "Who is Isnlon Hapilon? The Charismatic ISIS Emir at Heart of Philippines' Marawi Siege." *International Business Times*, June 13, 2017.

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/who-isnlon-hapilon-charismatic-isis-emir-heart-philippines-marawi-siege-1626101>.

Isnlon Hapilon joined Abu Sayyaf sometime in the late 1990's. He climbed the ranks through his involvement in abduction for ransom of civilians and military members including the 2001 abduction of 20 civilians from a private resort. In 2014, he and his followers split from the main Abu Sayyaf Group and pledged to ISIS.

ADDITIONAL LEADERSHIP

Lister, Charles. "Islamic State Senior Leadership: Who's Who." *Brookings*. October 20, 2014.

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Research/Files/Reports/2014/11/profiling%20islamic%20state%20lister/en_whos_who.pdf

This collection of IS leadership (as of October 2014) provides an image if available, a brief description of the person their role in IS and their status if known.

ISLAMIC STATE – MILITARY OPERATIONS:

OVERVIEW

Knights, Michael. "ISIL's Political-Military Power in Iraq." *CTC Sentinel*. August 27, 2014.

<https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/isils-political-military-power-in-iraq>

This article describes the attacks and multi-year offensive undertaken by IS in Iraq. The article details the difficulties in attaining accurate information due to the collapse of the federal security forces in Iraq. Based on the information available, the author states that IS was able to achieve its level of military success not due to its abilities as a fighting force but to a weak and unprepared local security force which did not react well to the surprise and mobility of ISIS attacks.

OFFENSIVES & BATTLES

"Syria Situation Report: October 10-24, 2017." Institute for the Study of War. October 26, 2017.

<http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/syria-situation-report-october-10-24-2017>.

This situation report from the *Institute for the Study of War* shows recent actions conducted by ISIS, regime forces, Russian forces, Turkish forces and the coalition backed SDF. The liberation of Raqqa was a major blow to ISIS and at the same time there were several coordinated actions against Kurdish forces in the wake of the independence referendum fallout

"A Visual Guide to the Crisis in Iraq and Syria," *New York Times*, July 27, 2015.

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/06/12/world/middleeast/the-iraq-isis-conflict-in-maps-photos-and-video.html?ref=middleeast>

This collection of maps and stories from the *New York Times* tracks the IS offensive from its early beginnings as AQI all the way up to July of 2015. Each entry provides a brief description of the attack along with a map documenting it or other chart or graphic. Some of the entries provide links to the full article related to the particular event or attack.

TAL AFAR - IRAQ

"Tal Afar Battle: Iraqi Forces 'Breach IS Defences to Reach City Centre'." *BBC News*, August 25, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-41054044>.

Tal Afar, one of ISIS' last areas of control in Iraq is becoming closer to being recaptured by Iraqi military and militia forces, including the largely Shia ,Popular Mobilisation (Hashd al-Shaabi) force. Estimates claim there are 2,000 ISIS members left in Tal Afar though there are concerns for the safety of the potential 40,000 civilians still living there as the campaign continues.

"Iraq Army Launches Aerial Offensive Against IS-Controlled Tal Afar." *Deutsche Welle*, August 15, 2017. <http://www.dw.com/en/iraq-army-launches-aerial-offensive-against-is-controlled-tal-afar/a-40092412>.

Iraqi forces in preparation for the offensive to retake Tal Afar, have been conducting airstrikes against ISIS fortifications and buildings. Ground forces are already in position to move into the city once they airstrikes are complete. There are concerns regarding instability for Tal Afar even after ISIS is ousted. The city was a focal point of sectarian violence in the past and local Sunnis are concerned that they will be forced out by the Shia forces advancing with the army.

RAQQA – SYRIA

"U.S. Backed Forces Say IS Outsled from Syria's Raqqa." *VOA News*, October 18, 2017. <https://www.voanews.com/a/islamic-state-raqqa-/4073621.html>.

The coalition of Syrian Democratic Forces claimed to have retaken Raqqa and seized ISIS's last two strongholds, a hospital being used as a command center and a stadium. Raqqa served as the capital of ISIS in the region and as their chief base of planning and

operations. Deir el-Zour is still facing fighting along with areas south of the Euphrates river valley.

MARAWI SIEGE - PHILIPPINES

"The House Behind the Philippine Rebel Siege of Marawi." *Reuters*, October 30, 2017. <https://reuters.com/video/2017/10/30/the-house-behind-the-philippine-rebel-si?videoid=372842695>.

A look into the building where Isnilon Hapilon and his followers planned the attack on Marawi shows how well prepared they were. When security forces first tried to capture him before the siege, Hapilon escaped through a hole blasted in the back of the house and then gathered his followers for the attack on Marawi. Locals claim to have had no idea there were extremists living nearby and claimed they would have turned him in if they knew. With Isnilon and Omar Maute's deaths, the inhabitants of Marawi hope to begin the long process of rebuilding.

Dancel, Raul. "Timeline of Crisis in Philippine Southern City of Marawi." *Straits Times*, October 16, 2017. <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/timeline-of-crisis-in-philippine-southern-city-of-marawi>.

A timeline detailing the development and expected conclusion of the Marawi Siege shows the rapid consolidation capabilities of the IS affiliated groups in Southeast Asia. The almost five month long siege began after a failed attempt to capture the militant leader Isnilon Hapilon.

Goldman, Russell. "The Latest Unrest in the Southern Philippines, Explained." *New York Times*, May 25, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/25/world/asia/philippines-martial-law-marawi-mindanao.html>

The southern city of Marawi was besieged and occupied by militants linked to ISIS. The Maute group and Abu Sayyaf launched an attack on the city after the failed attempt by Philippine security forces to capture Abu Sayyaf's leader, Isnilon Hapilon. The city has been damaged by the groups and several hostages have been taken.

"Fighting Reignites near Marawi Mosque." *ABS-CBN*, August 25, 2016. <http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/08/25/17/fighting-reignites-near-marawi-mosque>

The Grand Mosque of Marawi was used as the main base of operations by the Maute group. Security forces carefully recaptured the mosque to avoid damaging it yet within a day, fighting renewed as Maute forces moved back into nearby buildings. Marawi has been under the control of ISIS affiliated militants since May 23 and the death toll has climbed over 770.

MISCELLANEOUS RECENT ATTACKS

Mukhashaf, Mohammad. "At Least Six Killed in Yemen Suicide Bombing Claimed by Islamic State." *Reuters*, November 14, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security/at-least-six-killed-in-yemen-suicide-bombing-claimed-by-islamic-state-idUSKBN1DE0LP>.

A suicide car bombing in the port city of Aden in southern Yemen that was claimed by ISIS resulted in the deaths of six people. The attack was launched on a base being used by Yemen's security forces that are allied with the Saudi-led coalition. The ongoing war between Saudi-backed forces and the Iranian-backed Houthis has resulted in over 10,000 casualties and created opportunities for groups like ISIS to establish themselves in Yemen.

Walsh, Declan, and Nour Youssef. "Militants Kill 305 at Sufi Mosque in Egypt's Deadliest Terrorist Attack." *New York Times*, November 24, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/24/world/middleeast/mosque-attack-egypt.html?mtrref=undefined&gwh=A244723CA8BDB72606595D84D0102749&gwt=pa> Y.

A bomb was detonated inside a Sufi mosque in the North Sinai region of Egypt and 25-30 gunmen waited outside to shoot any worshipers who escaped the explosion. There were at least 305 people killed with over 120 injured. No group has taken credit for the attack, however, the ISIS affiliated force, Ansar Beit al-Maqdis has been active in the region and has conducted other serious attacks including the destruction of a Russian passenger plane in 2015. For additional information on why Sufi's are often targeted by ISIS and groups like it see the following: [The Terrorist Attack against Sufi Muslims in Egypt, Explained](#).

Gul, Ayaz. "Suicide Bomber Kills 8 in Eastern Afghanistan." *VOA News*, November 23, 2017. <https://www.voanews.com/a/suicide-bomber-kills-8-in-eastern-afghanistan/4131558.html>.

A suicide bombing in Jalalabad, claimed by ISIS resulted in the deaths of eight people and wounded an additional sixteen. The bombing follows in the wake of ISIS members operating out of the Achin district beheaded fifteen of their own for wanting to leave the group and accept a government peace offer. An additional attack was conducted near Kabul on a Georgian military convoy resulted in three Georgian soldiers being wounded.

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

"Islamic State Weapons in Iraq and Syria: Analysis of weapons and ammunition captured from Islamic State forces in Iraq and Syria." *Dispatch from the Field*. Conflict Armament Research, September, 2014. http://conflictarm.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Dispatch_IS_Iraq_Syria_Weapons.pdf

This report shows various weapons captured from IS. The majority of the weapons captures are small arms included Ak-47's, Chinese-made LMG's, various pistols, a Croatian-made sniper rifle and several U.S.-made M-16 rifles. In addition to small arms, two M79 HEAT anti-tank rockets were captured from IS by the YPG in June of 2014.

COMMAND STRUCTURE/METRICS AND TRACKING

Bilger, Alex. "ISIS Annual Reports Reveal a Metrics-Driven Military Command." *Backgrounder*. Institute for the Study of War, May 22, 2014.

http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ISWBackgrounder_ISIS_Annual_Reports_0.pdf

This report provides a look into how IS measures its goals by conducting an organizing tracking system of its attacks. Using an annual report, IS tracks the number, kind, and success rate of attacks and the operating area of each one as well tracking prisoner escapes, establishment of checkpoints, cities taken and all of the sub-metrics associated with those. The annual report indicates that IS has an organized military command as far as operations in Iraq are concerned.

TACTICS AND METHODS

GENERAL TACTICS USED

Georgy, Micahel. "After Mosul, ISIS Digs In For Guerrilla Warfare." *Reuters*, July 20, 2017.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-insurgency/after-mosul-islamic-state-digs-in-for-guerrilla-warfare-idUSKBN1A50ML>.

As ISIS lost control of Mosul, sizeable portions of the group were reported to have fled to the Hamrin mountains. These remote areas provide shelter and a layer of natural defenses that are difficult to penetrate. While the main strongholds are being liberated, a length guerilla war is likely.

"Tracing the Supply of Components Used in Islamic State IEDs." *Conflict Armament Research*. February, 2016.

http://www.conflictarm.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Tracing_The_Supply_of_Components_Used_in_Islamic_State_IEDs.pdf

This report examines more than 700 components spanning 51 companies and 20 countries used by ISIL forces to manufacture IEDs, identifying their provenance and tracing their supply chains of custody. The evidence was compiled from a 20-month investigation in Iraq and Syria.

Anderson, Gary. "Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and the Theory and Practice of Jihad." *Small Wars Journal*. August 12, 2014.

<http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-and-the-theory-and-practice-of-jihad>

This article delivers an extensive view on al-Baghdadi's leadership but more so on the tactics used by IS. IS is a mobile, fast moving army that knows its capabilities and normally does not commit itself to a fight that it cannot win. The article examines the IS's psychological warfare and use of broadcasted executions are evaluated along with the role of using foreign fighters and new recruits as fodder in order to preserve the group's experienced forces. Despite the fast moving success of ISIS, there are weaknesses. The author states that IS can be its own undoing if it overreaches

SHOCK TROOPS

Colquhoun, Cameron. "Tip of the Spear? Meet ISIS' Special Operations Unit, Katibat al-Battar." *Bellingcat*. February 16, 2016.

<https://www.bellingcat.com/news/mena/2016/02/16/tip-of-the-spear-meet-isis-special-operations-unit-katibat-al-battar/>

A little-known group of battle-hardened and highly capable Libyans are the common factor behind many of the major terrorist attacks in Europe and North Africa since 2014, including the attack on the Bataclan concert hall in Paris.

"A Secret to IS Success: Shock Troops Who Fight to the Death." *New York Times*, July 8, 2015.

http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/07/08/world/middleeast/ap-ml-inside-the-caliphate-tactics.html?_r=3&referrer

IS has developed and utilized a group of "special forces", known as Inghemasiyoun, which are shock troops used to create chaos before the main invasion party. The shock troops often follow the suicide bombers, who soften up entry points into a city. The regional commanders then use the shock troops' skills in creative ways, including using sandstorms to infiltrate an area. After these shock troops have pushed into an area, and have fought as far as they can go they detonate explosives belts allowing for additional forces to advance during the chaos.

INFILTRATION AND EXPANSION

Fairfield, Hannah, Tim Wallace and Derek Watkins. "How ISIS Expands." *New York Times*, May,

2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/05/21/world/middleeast/how-isis-expands.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&module=first-column-region®ion=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&smid=pl-share>

The central goal of IS is expansion. The group continues to take over key cities in Iraq and Syria with the aim of building a broad colonial empire across many countries. A year after announcing its expansion goals, it is operating or has cells in more than a dozen countries. This series of graphics provides visual representations of IS advancement and describes a three part method of expanding their territory. This expansion process

consists of Controlling and Governing area in which IS already has a significant presence, infiltration of communities through intimidation of local leaders, and also absorbing other groups through pledges of loyalty or *bayat*.

Whiteside, Craig. "ISIL's Small Ball Warfare: An Effective Way to Get Back into a Ballgame." *War on the Rocks*, April 29, 2015. <http://warontherocks.com/2015/04/isils-small-ball-warfare-an-effective-way-to-get-back-into-a-ballgame/>

The author, using the article originally published by *Der Spiegel* that contained the personal papers of IS member Haji Bakr, evaluates and examines the IS's expansionary tactics. IS organized small groups to infiltrate villages and extort, threaten and assassinate elders in order to exert influence over communities. During the awakening, Sahwa forces were integral in forcing IS out and into a marginal condition. However, IS was able to rebuild, and conducted attacks on Sahwa groups in particular. The town of Jurf is used as an example, in which from 2008 - 2013, 53 of the 133 total attacks targeted the Sahwa. The tactics that were discussed in the Haji Baker papers in 2012 were likely an evolution of the tactics that had previously been used in Jurf. This style of protracted, targeted attacks allows IS to remove the pro-government network in key areas and replace it with its own "government" and coerce the support from the locals.

USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS

Kuntz, Katrin. "Islamic State's Child Soldiers: First Come the Sweets, Then the Beheadings." *Spiegel Online*

International. July 29, 2016. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-how-the-is-trains-child-soldiers-a-1103941.html>

First-hand accounts of how ISIS uses children to further its objective of creating a caliphate. The children's task was to spread ISIS ideology in the long term, and to infiltrate society so deeply and lastingly that supporters would continue to exist, even if territory was lost.

Olidort, Jacob. "Inside the Caliphate's Classroom: Textbooks, Guidance Literature, and Indoctrination Methods of the Islamic State." *Washington Institute for Near East Policy*. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/teaching-terror-the-islamic-states-textbooks-guidance-literature-and-indoct>

Video and reporter's summary of an address at a Policy Forum at The Washington Institute by an expert of Salafism ideology and an expert of educational efforts across the world. The speakers address ISIS' need to educate those living in its areas of control in order to indoctrinate and raise a "jihadi generation".

INNOVATION

Rassler, Don. "Remotely Piloted Innovation: Terrorism, Drones, and Supportive Technology." *Combating Terrorism Center*. October 20, 2016.

<https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/remotely-piloted-innovation-terrorism-drones-and-supportive-technology>

In early October 2016, the Islamic State killed two Kurdish soldiers with an explosive device hidden inside of a drone. Much has been made of the threat of terror use of drones, but little empirical and historical work has been done to support our understanding of this phenomenon and its evolution. This report seeks to address this gap by providing a review of cases in which terrorist entities have either shown a substantive interest in drones or have used them.

Knoll, David L. "How ISIS Endures By Innovating." *Foreign Affairs*. September 30, 2016. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-09-30/how-isis-endures-innovating>

ISIS' novel techniques have been central to the group's success, from up-armored suicide vehicle improvised explosive devices (SVBIEDs) that penetrates well-defended targets to ISIS' brutality that keeps the media focused on the group. ISIS has both the resources - in terms of money, military materiel, access to space, and time - and the group attributes, such as an adaptive organizational structure and skilled, diverse human capital that enable it to adopt innovative tactics.

Schechner, Sam., and Benoit Faucon. "New Tricks Make ISIS, Once Easily Tracked, A Sophisticated Opponent." *Wall Street Journal*. September 11, 2016. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/new-tricks-make-isis-once-easily-tracked-a-sophisticated-opponent-1473613106>

ISIS' communications, once easily tracked by authorities, have evolved into a mix of encrypted chat-app messages, face-to-face meetings, written notes, and stretches of silence and misdirection. These techniques help protect attackers from Western intelligence agencies by leaving few electronic clues in a sea of intercepted data.

ATTACKS ABROAD: INSPIRED VS. DIRECTED

Watts, Clint. "Two-and-a-Half Years After ISIS' Rise: Global Jihad Spreads and Morphs." *Foreign Policy Research Institute*. September 27, 2016. <http://www.fpri.org/2016/09/2-12-years-isis-rise-global-jihad-spreads-morphs/>

A chart depicts the fractures of contemporary jihadist groups and their leanings towards al Qaeda and ISIS.

UNITED STATES

Ax, Joseph. "Wolf Dens, Not Lone Wolves, the Norm in U.S. Islamic State Plots." *Reuters*, June 14, 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-islamic-state-crime-insight-idUSKCN0Z015A>

A review of nearly 90 IS court cases brought by the Department of Justice since 2014 found that three-quarters of those charged were alleged to be part of a group of anywhere from two to more than 10 co-conspirators who met in person to discuss their plans. Even in those cases that did not involve in-person meetings, defendants were usually in contact with other sympathizers, via text message, email, or networking websites. Fewer than 10 cases involved someone accused of acting alone. The “lone wolf” image obscures the extent to which individuals become radicalized through personal association with like-minded people, in what might be termed “wolf dens.”

Callimachi, Rukmini. “Was Orlando Shooter Really Acting for ISIS? For ISIS, It’s All the Same.” *New York Times*, June 12, 2016.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/13/us/orlando-omar-mateen-isis.html>

The attack in an Orlando nightclub that killed at least 49 people and wounded 53 highlights the blurring of the lines between ISIS-inspired and –directed attacks abroad. The influencing of distant attackers to pledge allegiance to ISIS and then carry out mass murder has become a core part of the group’s propaganda.

PRESENCE OUTSIDE OF ISIS CORE

Leigh, Karen., Jason French, and Jovi Juan. “Islamic State and Its Affiliates.” *Wall Street Journal*. <http://graphics.wsj.com/islamic-state-and-its-affiliates/>

Several video compilations of the various ISIS-affiliated groups ranging from West Africa to the Caucasus region highlight the widespread area of support to the group.

Watts, Clint. “When the Caliphate Crumbles: The Future of the Islamic State’s Affiliates.” *War on the Rocks*. June 13, 2016. <http://warontherocks.com/2016/06/when-the-caliphate-crumbles-the-future-of-the-islamic-states-affiliates/>

ISIS’ strongest affiliates in North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula face stiff competition from local rivals and rising counterterrorism pressure. The group’s endurance beyond Iraq and Syria depends more on self-financing than on any other factor.

NORTH AFRICA

Chapin, Ellen. “Beyond the Caliphate: Morocco.” *CTC Sentinel*, October 2017.

<https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2018/01/CTC-Morocco.pdf>.

The next issue of the Combating Terrorism Center’s look at the spread of ISIS focuses on Morocco. ISIS itself has not launched any direct attacks, but 33 plotted attacks had been linked to the group or inspired by it. Most of the planners of these attacks were operating remotely from Syria and Iraq. Based on the report’s findings and the trends of the attacks, Morocco risks suffering a similar series of attacks that Europe recently has.

Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed., Jacob Zenn, and Nathaniel Barr. “Islamic State 2021: Possible

Futures in North and West Africa." *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*. February 2017.

http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/022017_DGR_ISIL_Report.pdf

It is possible that ISIS' global decline could also paradoxically help the group in North and West Africa, as state and non-state actors shift resources from battling ISIS to other seemingly more urgent issues, giving the group the breathing room it needs to regenerate. A forecast of ISIS activity in Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, the Lake Chad region, Mali, and Senegal is presented.

INDIA

Roul, Animesh. "How the Islamic State Gained Ground in India Using Indigenous Militant Networks." *Jamestown Foundation*. April 29, 2016.

http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=45376&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=26&cHash=bed05adb57d4e88010f151f7f5d3cb5d

Leaders of India's various militant groups pledged allegiance to ISIS in hope that they could unite with one another against the Indian government. The militant groups have employed several ISIS tactics, such as online recruitment, that have allowed for greater influence among individuals.

TURKEY

Stein, Aaron. "The Islamic State in Turkey: A Deep Dive into a Dark Place." *War on the Rocks*. April 6, 2016. <http://warontherocks.com/2016/04/the-islamic-state-in-turkey-a-deep-dive-into-a-dark-place>

While European ISIS fighters have received considerable attention, Turkey faces risks from its nationals transiting to and from Syria. The ISIS cell's network, operations, and a profile of its recruits in Turkey are spotlighted.

Kadercan, Burak. "How ISIS is Ripping Turkey Apart." *National Interest*. June 30, 2016.

<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-isis-ripping-turkey-apart-16793>

ISIS will continue to exploit Turkey's critical vulnerabilities of political strife and ethnic tensions in the country's southeast. By not claiming responsibility for all attacks, ISIS makes it possible for Ankara and the Kurds to blame one another, a dynamic contributing to ethnic tensions across the country.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

For More Information on ISIS in the region, please see the CIWAG Southeast Asia reading list.

Edwards, Will. "ISIS' Reach Extends to Southeast Asia." *Cipher Brief*, August 20, 2017.

<https://www.thecipherbrief.com/article/asia/isis-reach-latches-southeast-asia>.

The ongoing siege of the Philippine city of Marawi, occupied by the ISIS affiliated Maute and Abu Sayyaf groups, has called attention to the growing threat of ISIS affiliated groups in Southeast Asia. Recently, a plot by ISIS-affiliated Jemaah Ansharut Daulah in Indonesia attempted to conduct a chemical explosive attack in Jakarta was foiled and showcased the encrypted messaging services groups are using to coordinate attacks. A cooperative task force of Malaysian, Philippine, and Indonesian forces will start operations against these groups.

Ness, Marielle. "Beyond the Caliphate: Southeast Asia." *CTC*. June 2, 2017.

<https://www.ctc.usma.edu/programs-resources/beyond-the-caliphate-2>

West Point's Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) series, *Beyond the Caliphate*, provides a comprehensive look at ISIS affiliated groups operating beyond the central ISIS areas in the Middle East. This entry looks at the militant groups operating out of Southeast Asia that have pledged to ISIS, including the Maute group that recently invaded and seized Marawi.

PHILIPPINES

For More Information on ISIS in the Philippines, please see the CIWAG Southeast Asia reading list.

"The Philippines: Extremism & Counter-Extremism." Counter Extremism Project. February 2018.

<https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/philippines>.

This report from the Counter Extremism Project is an in-depth overview of extremist groups and counterinsurgency operations within the Philippines. Since the turn of the century, the Philippines have been in constant strife with Communist Rebel separatist groups and Islamic extremist groups that have participated in bombings, kidnappings, organized criminal activity, and guerilla tactics against government forces. In the last few years, since the rise of the Islamic State and globalization of extremist ideologies, the Philippine government has been forced to face an emboldened and stronger insurgency presence that has captivated much of Southeast Asia.

"Military Sees ISIS-inspired Turaife Group as Major Threat." *Phil Star*, December 15, 2017.

<https://beta.philstar.com/headlines/2017/12/15/1768672/military-sees-isis-inspired-turaife-group-major-threat>.

Esmail Abdulmalik, who goes by the name Abu Turaife, could be selected to take over as the lead ISIS commander in the Philippines. After the defeat of the Maute group and the death of Isnilon Hapilon, the self-styled Turaife group, though few in number, has already been suspected of planning several bombings and has the potential to become a serious threat in the region.

Sarmiento, Bong S. "Islamic State Lurks in Philippine Shadows." *Asia Times*, November 7, 2017. <http://www.atimes.com/article/islamic-state-lurks-philippine-shadows/>.

Despite the siege of Marawi being over and the deaths of former Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon and Omar Maute of the Maute Group, there is still a serious militant threat in the Philippines. Amin Baco, a bomb-maker who is affiliated with Jemaah Islamiyah, is believed to be next in line to take over for Isnilon Hapilon and Puruji Indama, another Abu Sayyaf leader, is believed to be planning new attacks. There are at least four ISIS affiliated groups operating in the Philippines, though several are numerically diminished after losses in Marawi, they still pose a serious threat.

Kugelman, Michael. "Filipino ISIS 'Not a Rag-Tag Group of Rebels.'" *Cipher Brief*, October 5, 2017. https://www.thecipherbrief.com/article/asia/filipino-isis-not-rag-tag-group-rebels?utm_source=Join+the+Community+Subscribers&utm_campaign=2fecf5ef03-TCB+October+5+2017&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_02cbee778d-2fecf5ef03-122455129

The actions and tactics of the ISIS affiliated groups caught the Philippine government by surprise due to their different tactics and technological advancements compared to other regional insurgent groups. Normal counterterrorism efforts dealt with groups using small arms and operating out of remote bases in the jungles and rural areas. Urban warfare against a highly organized group that uses drones for reconnaissance and encrypted messaging apps to coordinate attacks was a departure from past operations. The responding actions by the military against the group may serve as propaganda for recruits and analysts believe that ISIS backed groups have found a fertile area to grow in the Philippines and will be a problem for some time.

Winter, Charlie. "Has the Islamic State Abandoned Its Provincial Model in the Philippines?" *War on the Rocks*. July 22, 2016. <http://warontherocks.com/2016/07/has-the-islamic-state-abandoned-its-provincial-model-in-the-philippines/>

In an ISIS propaganda video entitled "Structure of the Khilafah," the group zooms in on the technicalities behind ISIS' provinces, yet fails to mention any of the areas where ISIS claims to be present but hasn't established provincial affiliates, like Somalia, Indonesia, Tunisia, and the Philippines. Its expansion methodology seems to have changed: no longer is a simply loyalty announcement enough to prompt the caliphal leadership to upgrade an overseas organization from fan group to formalized province.

BANGLADESH

Roul, Animesh. "How Bangladesh Became Fertile Ground for al-Qa'ida and the Islamic State." *CTC Sentinel* 9, No. 5. May 25, 2016. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/how-bangladesh-became-fertile-ground-for-al-qaida-and-the-islamic-state>

Despite government denials, both al-Qa'ida and the Islamic State has taken advantage of an upsurge in Islamist militancy in Bangladesh over anger at the execution of Islamist political leaders in 2013, and both hope to expand their footprint there by building alliances with local groups. Bangladeshi police suspect the Bangladeshi wing of al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), which has claimed a series of attacks on secular bloggers, is liaising with top leadership of the terrorist network in Pakistan. An increasingly assertive, local chapter of the Islamic State has launched attacks on foreigners and sectarian targets in a bid to build its support base in the country.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER ARMED GROUPS

AL-QAEDA

Monnier, Oliver. "Islamic State, al-Qaeda Support Fuels Attacks in West Africa." *Bloomberg Politics*, February 5, 2018.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-02-05/islamic-state-al-qaeda-support-fuels-attacks-in-west-africa>.

ISIS and al-Qaeda are cooperating in Western Africa to support local militant groups carrying out attacks against government forces in Mali, Nigeria, and along the southern Sahara. Islamic militant groups in Mali are using sophisticated tactics and advanced explosive devices that requires expertise that the groups previously didn't have.

Zenn, Jacob. "The Al-Qaeda Accelerant in Boko Haram's Rise." U.S. Naval War College Center On Irregular Warfare and Armed Groups. June 2017.

<https://usnwc.edu/Publications/Reports-and-Studies/CIWAG-Case-Studies>.

Jacob Zenn's case study, maps Boko Haram's many factions, loyalties, splinterings, and re-formations. Zenn supplies deep insight into the seams and gaps that exist, and how strategic and tactical motivations have propelled an armed group to regional importance. He also dissects how the group's evolution has taken place under the watchful eye, and often directing hand, of both al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham and highlights its starring role in a new international rivalry: the uncivil war between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.

Gaffey, Conor. "U.S. PEACE CORPS EVACUATED AS AL-QAEDA, ISIS THREAT GROWS IN BURKINA FASO." *Newsweek*, September 5, 2017. <http://www.newsweek.com/peace-corps-burkina-faso-al-qaeda-isis-659462>.

The U.S. Peace Corps recently evacuated its volunteers in Burkina Faso due to growing security threats. Recent attacks in the capital and the growing presence of Al-Qaeda affiliated groups and an ISIS affiliated group have put the safety of the volunteers at risk. Several AQ associated groups merged under the leadership of former Ansar Dine leader, Lyad Ag Ghaly and former AQ adherent, Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi has taken charge of the local ISIS affiliate. With the recent attacks and concentration of several

groups, Marc Christian Kabore, the President of Burkina Faso, acknowledged that the country is facing a long-term fight against terrorism.

Malik, Shiv; Ali Younes, Spencer Ackerman and Mustafa Khalili. "How ISIS crippled al-Qaida." *Guardian*, June 10, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/10/how-isis-crippled-al-qaida>

The inside story of the coup that has brought the world's most feared terrorist network to the brink of collapse. IS has not simply eclipsed AQ on the battlefields of Syria and Iraq, and in the competition for funding and new recruits. According to a series of exclusive interviews with senior jihadi ideologues, IS has successfully launched "a coup" against AQ to destroy it from within. As a consequence, they now admit, AQ – as an idea and an organization – is now on the verge of collapse.

AL-SHABAAB

Warner, Jason, and Caleb Weiss. "A Legitimate Challenger? Assessing the Rivalry between al-Shabaab and the Islamic State in Somalia." *CTC Sentinel* 10, no. 10 (November 2017). <https://ctc.usma.edu/a-legitimate-challenger-assessing-the-rivalry-between-al-shabaab-and-the-islamic-state-in-somalia/>.

A faction of al-Shabaab operating out of Puntland in northeastern Somalia split from the traditionally AQ aligned group in 2015 and pledged to ISIS. Al-Shabaab has worked to purge any internal sympathies for ISIS from its ranks and has attacked the ISIS affiliated faction. This report evaluates the growing faction and sees if it poses a significant threat to al-Shabaab and the region.

SOUTHEAST ASIAN ISLAMIST GROUPS

"Islamic State Philippines (ISP, ISISP)-Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)." *TRAC*, 2016. <https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/islamic-state-philippines-isp-abu-sayyaf-group-asg>

Four different groups have pledged their allegiance to ISIS in the Philippines. Isnilon Hapilon's Basilan based faction of Abu Sayaff Group (ASG), a faction of the Bansamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), the Maute Group, and the Ansarul Kilafah Philippines. This piece provides a brief distinction between the ASG faction that support ISIS and the faction that supports AQ and provide several videos on the groups allegiance to IS along with a list of arrested members, past leaders, areas of operations and photos of the group. The Ansarul Kilafah is a group that splintered off from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) when the main group entered into a peace deal with the government and BIFF was the armed wing that split during the peace process as well.

ORGANIZED CRIME

Nadeau, Barbie Latza. "The Italian Mob Is Peddling Pills to ISIS." *Daily Beast*, February 3, 2018. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-italian-mob-is-peddling-pills-to-isis>.

Italy's Calabrian mafia is selling opioids such as tramadol to extremist groups Boko Haram and ISIS. Tramadol when mixed with caffeine is an amphetamine, erasing fear, pain, and fatigue on the battlefield. The Italian port of Gioia Tauro is where over \$1 million of trafficked materials is moved daily. It is estimated that 80 percent of cocaine from Columbia in Europe is trafficked by the mafia.

CONTROLLED COMMUNICATIONS

Harris, Shane and Shachtman, Noah. "ISIS Keeps Getting Better at Dodging U.S. Spies." *Daily Beast*. November 14, 2014. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/11/13/isis-keeps-getting-better-at-dodging-u-s-spies.html>

This article describes the difficulties the U.S. faces in tracking IS members and movements and the steps taken by IS to keep their communications from being intercepted. Without having actual intelligence operatives on the ground in the area, the U.S. is forced to rely on whatever communications they can intercept and aerial surveillance. IS enforces a strict code of discipline amongst its members in order to get them to follow certain procedures for their communications including encryption, disabling any form of geotagging, and only utilizing approved messaging services that delete messages after they are received.

ISLAMIC STATE – INFORMATION OPERATIONS:

PROPAGANDA

Winter, Charlie. "Totalitarian Insurgency: Evaluating the Islamic State's In-Theater Propaganda Operations." *Center on Irregular Warfare and Armed Groups Case Studies*, April 2017. <http://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/ciwag-case-studies/15/>.

Charlie Winter examines the in-theater propaganda strategies of the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). Although much attention has rightly been paid to their online recruiting and social media campaigns, their in-theater strategies are equally compelling and strategically targeted. As ISIS and al-Qaeda continue to inspire and sponsor new franchises around the globe, the issue of how to control access to counter-narratives becomes more urgent; this first look at in-theater strategies provides the basis for further research and investigation into the competition for ideas and influence.

Milton, Daniel. "Communication Breakdown: Unraveling the Islamic State's Media Efforts." *Combating Terrorism Center*. October 2016. https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/ISMedia_Online.pdf

This report breaks down the Islamic State's media activities through a two-fold approach. First, it examines a small number of declassified documents captured from the group's predecessors to provide a baseline understanding its present-day media operations. Second, through an examination of over 9,000 Islamic State official media

products, this report offers detailed insight into what the group is saying and what a study of its propaganda can tell us about its strengths, weaknesses, and struggles.

Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed., Nathaniel Barr, and Bridget Moreng. "The Islamic State's Global Propaganda Strategy." *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague*. March 31, 2016. <https://icct.nl/publication/the-islamic-states-global-propaganda-strategy/>

This research paper aims to analyze in depth the global propaganda strategy of ISIS by looking at the methods through which this grand strategy is carried out as well as the objectives that ISIS wants to achieve through it. Included are ISIS' growth model; narratives and themes used by the group; the deployment of these narratives; direct engagement strategy; and policy options to counter ISIS' global propaganda efforts.

Winter, Charlie. "The Virtual 'Caliphate': Understanding ISIL's Propaganda Strategy." *Quilliam Foundation*. July, 2015. <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/the-virtual-caliphate-understanding-islamic-states-propaganda-strategy.pdf>

This report is a detailed study that analyzes how IS has revolutionized jihadist propaganda. It lays out six themes used by the group: brutality, mercy, victimhood, war, belonging, and utopianism. The report also discusses how IS propaganda is carefully designed to excite followers and outrage most Westerners.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Katz, Rita. "Follow ISIS on Twitter: A Special Report on the Use of Social Media by Jihadists." *INSITE on Terrorism & Extremism* (blog), June 26, 2014. <http://news.siteintelgroup.com/blog/index.php/entry/192-follow-isis-on-twitter-a-special-report-on-the-use-of-social-media-by-jihadists>

IS has become adept at utilizing social media, especially Twitter, in order to spread propaganda, recruit new followers, and conduct psychological warfare. In addition to a plethora of unofficial accounts, IS has several dedicated accounts and an entire media wing called Al-Furqan. The readily available and easy to use platform of social media has greatly allowed the terror group and others like it to spread their message and garner support.

SPREADING THE APOCALYPTICAL MESSAGE THROUGH AN INFORMATION FLOOD

Berger, J.M. "The Metronome of Apocalyptic Time: Social Media as Carrier Wave for Millenarian Contagion." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (August, 2015): 61-71. Terrorism Research Initiative. <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/444/875>

This Islamic State firmly believes in not only the creation of a perfect society, but in the creation of the perfect society to bring on the end of the world and the final battle

between Muslims and all non-Muslims. In order to create a heightened sense of urgency that this day is rapidly approaching (and in turn garner more recruits) IS uses social media at a rapid pace. While IS uses all available social media platforms, Twitter so far has been their most utilized one. They flood the internet with countless tweets espousing their message and usually before or after any event or attack, their rhetoric increases rapidly. An individual who follows IS on Twitter or other social media platforms is exposed to countless pieces of propaganda over and over again from a not only the user they follow but all of their followers/contacts. This immersion tactic is paired with social contagion, and temporal compression in order to spread their apocalyptic message in a countdown-like manner and pushed already immersed users to hurry up and join while there is still time.

DEPTH OF CONTENT

Zelin, Aaron Y. "Picture or It Didn't Happen: A Snapshot of the Islamic State's Official Media Output." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (August, 2015):85-97. Terrorism Research Initiative. <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/445/876>

The article covers a study that was conducted consisting of tracking, examining and analyzing a week's worth of IS official media releases. Normally, mainstream media only will report on any execution videos or major threats that are released but there is a much wider range of content that is actually released. The majority of social media output covers military activities, trainings and attacks, governance, preaching, moral policing and morality, and a variety of other themes. The study also revealed that they tend to rely on imagery more than lengthy text posts. A multitude of quick pictures with captions can carry an inundating message to their followers and potential recruits.

MEDIA PRODUCTIONS

MESSAGING STRATEGY

Winter, Charlie. "Islamic State Propaganda: Key Elements of the Group's Messaging." *Terrorism Monitor* 13, no. 12 (June 12, 2015.) Jamestown Foundation. http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=44030&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=228&cHash=ee301073a70496485bd622db9e2326dd#.VYAfRfIVikp

Following IS's lightning-fast expansion in the Middle East and beyond, rarely a day passes without it securing a place in the headlines. This is the inevitable outcome of the group's well-honed messaging strategy, which skillfully uses social media to project propaganda globally. By dissecting and examining the various strands of the group's propaganda, narrative and brand, this article deals with the message itself, focusing on how the "Islamic State" has gained its international traction.

VIDEO AND MEDIA STYLE/PRODUCTION

Rose, Steve. "The Isis Propaganda War: a Hi-Tech Media Jihad." *Guardian*, October 7, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/07/isis-media-machine-propaganda-war>

IS propaganda videos are often produced at professional-level quality and borrow from popular movies, TV shows, news programs, video games and even internet memes. They have altered style of their media productions in an attempt to appeal to a wider and younger audience. However, their media productions, attempting to intimidate or inspire, have backfired on them by bringing actions against them after a release of an execution video. The various programs designed to combat IS propaganda are discussed with a focus on the U.S. State Department's Twitter program of [Think Again Turn Away](#).

INFORMATION WARFARE

Winter, Charlie. "Media Jihad: The Islamic State's Doctrine for Information Warfare." *International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence*. February 13, 2017. http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Media-jihad_web.pdf

This research paper presents new, empirical insight into how ISIS transformed its strategic trajectory in the weeks after its capture of Mosul in 2014. Comprising the translation and analysis of a 55-page document compiled and published by ISIS in 2016, it offers a unique window into the mindset of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's propagandists.

Ingram, Haroro J. "Three Traits of the Islamic State's Information Warfare." *RUSI Journal* 159, no. 6 (2014): 4-11. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2014.990810>

The author of this piece analyses the three traits of IS's media propaganda. The traits identified from analyses of primary sources are: "the use of a multidimensional, multi-platform approach that simultaneously targets 'friends and foes' to enhance the reach, relevance and resonance of its message; the synchronization of narrative and action to maximize operational and strategic 'effects' in the field; and the centrality of the Islamic State 'brand' to its entire campaign."

-----"The Strategic Logic of Islamic State Information Operations." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* (2015):1-24. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2015.1059799>

This study utilizes both English and Arabic communiqués produced by IS media units and individual *wilayat* information officers to analyze IS's information operations. The main goal of their IO is to gather support by simultaneously trying to appeal to people's desire for security, stability and a livelihood and also preach its political and military actions. Supporting this, they conduct a constant campaign of denigrating any groups that speak out against it or are contrary to its belief system. The tactics are described as "baiting," messages intended to provoke disproportionate responses and then use the responses against them. One example provided was that when they were critiqued for burning alive the Jordanian pilot, IS said in response that children were burned alive and buried by airstrikes so therefore their actions were "just" and the "crusaders" were the real enemy. IS then goes on to promote itself as the champion of Sunni Muslims and justify its actions by rationalizing and comparing it to the actions conducted by its opponents.

HEARTS AND MINDS

Zelin, Aaron. "The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Has a Consumer Protection Office." *Atlantic*. June 13, 2014. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/06/the-isis-guide-to-building-an-islamic-state/372769/>

This article describes how IS seeks to control every aspect of life in the areas that it has captured. These are often promoted by the group as ways for the inhabitants to live a better life. This is however part of a greater strategy of governance by IS, where they also have social services religious lectures, billboard campaigns, and a functioning sharia courts system. They also have a consumer protection office, fix roads, restore electricity, and establish food kitchens and orphanages. It is important to the group's propaganda and recruitment efforts that it presents the image of being a functioning state to divert attention away from its normal campaign of terror.

DABIQ- THE ISLAMIC STATE'S MAGAZINE

Ryan, Michael W. S. "Hot Issue: Dabiq: What Islamic State's New Magazine Tells us about Their Strategic Direction, Recruitment Patterns and Guerrilla Doctrine." *Terrorism Monitor*, Jamestown Foundation. August 1, 2014. http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42702&Hash=0efbd71af77fb92c064b9403dc8ea838%22%20%5Cl%20%22.U-JY7FYkhZg

This article covers the official magazine of IS titled *Dabiq*. This magazine is published in several languages, including English, and is designed to chronicle the IS, focusing on its military operations, demonizing its enemies, justifying its existence and utilizing Islamic literature. The name *Dabiq* comes from the name of an area north of Aleppo which is featured in the events of the *Malahim* (apocalypse) where the final battle against the "Crusaders" will take place. The magazine goes beyond propaganda and provides records of tribal meetings and advice on information for foreigners who wish to join IS.

RECRUITMENT & FOREIGN FIGHTERS:

ORIGINS OF FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Del Nero, Serena, Marco Mezzadra, Claudia Pazzaglia, Allesandro Riva, and Allesandro Zotta. "On Their Way: The Journey of Foreign Fighters." Density Design Labs. 2017. <https://www.informationisbeautifulawards.com/showcase/2323>.

This graphical representation of the origins and total amount of ISIS foreign fighters also shows the amount of returnees per country of origin. Tunisia, Turkey, France, Germany and the U.K had the most returnees.

Witte, Griff., Sudarsan Raghavan, and James McAuley. "Flow of Foreign Fighters Plummet as Islamic State Loses Its Edge." *Washington Post*, September 9, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/flow-of-foreign-fighters-plummet-as-isis-loses-its-edge/2016/09/09/ed3e0dda-751b-11e6-9781-49e591781754_story.html

From a peak of 2,000 foreign recruits crossing the Turkey-Syria border each month, ISIL and other extremist groups operating in Syria are down to as few as 50, according to U.S. intelligence assessments. The diminished flows raise questions about whether the terrorism threat is actually easing or just morphing into a more dangerous new phase.

Fritz, Jason. "Island in the Foreign Fighter Stream: Trinidad's Extremism Problem." *War on the Rocks*. May 4, 2016. <http://warontherocks.com/2016/05/islands-in-the-foreign-fighter-stream-trinidads-extremism-problem/>

Trinidad and Tobago is ranked in the top 15 per capita supplier of foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq, by far the greatest supplier in the Western Hemisphere. An examination of the socioeconomic conditions mobilizing Trinidadians highlights the challenges in addressing the eastern Caribbean as a hub for radicalization.

"The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the EU – Profiles, Threats & Policies." *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague*. April 1, 2016. <https://icct.nl/publication/report-the-foreign-fighters-phenomenon-in-the-eu-profiles-threats-policies/>

The gap in knowledge of the EU's foreign fighter phenomenon is addressed by analyzing not only the numbers and characteristics of foreign fighters across the EU, but also how the Union and Member States assess the threat of foreign fighters as well as their policy responses regarding security, preventive, and legislative measures. The report also outlines a series of policy options aimed both at the EU and its Member States.

"Foreign Fighters Flow to Syria," *Washington Post*, October 11, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/foreign-fighters-flow-to-syria/2014/10/11/3d2549fa-5195-11e4-8c24-487e92bc997b_graphic.html

This news article features a highly detailed graphic showing the number and locations of foreign fighters (as of October 2014) who have travelled to Syria to fight for IS. The highest numbers have come from Saudi Arabia and Northern Africa but Russia, the U.K. and Belgium have seen significant numbers travel as well.

RECRUITING TACTICS

Bouzar, Dounia, and Carol Rollie Flynn. "ISIS Recruiting: It's Not (Just) Ideological." Foreign Policy Research Institute. September 5, 2017 https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/09/isis-recruiting-not-just-ideological/?utm_source=FPRI+E-Mails&utm_campaign=e7221a904d-In+the+Spotlight+-+Flynn+Bouzar+09082017&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_e8d0f13be2-e7221a904d-179135617.

The different methods utilized by ISIS online recruiters are particular designed and directed towards individuals that exhibit certain behaviors. These behaviors make them

more susceptible different messages in a “targeted advertising” approach to radicalization. The researchers identify and present the seven different narratives used by ISIS recruiters and who they typically target with them.

Rosenblatt, Nate. “All Jihad is Local: What ISIS’ Files Tell Us About Its Fighters.” *New America*. July 2016. <https://na-production.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/ISIS-Files.pdf>

A collection of infographics visualizes the personal information of 3,500 foreign fighters to identify their subnational origins and the rough typologies of who they are.

Mohd Sani, Moh Azizuddin. "ISIS Recruitment of Malaysian Youth: Challenge and Response." Middle East Institute. May 3, 2016. <http://www.mei.edu/content/map/isis-recruitment-malaysian-youth-challenge-and-response>.

In 2015 and 2016 the Malaysia arrested more than 160 people suspected of having ties to ISIS. With the rapid global growth of the Islamic State since 2013, the Malaysian government—a state with a Muslim majority population—has become increasingly vigilant about removing extremist propaganda and launching public education campaigns aimed at preventing radicalization. ISIS’ main target is the disenchanted impressionable youth of Malaysia. As with many other countries, ISIS had seen success recruiting young Muslims through social media campaigns and community outreach. The daunting challenge for the Malaysian Police and regional counter-terrorism outfits is preventing ISIS from indoctrinating citizens before they have further conflict.

Dodwell, Brian., Daniel Milton, and Don Rassler. “The Caliphate’s Global Workforce: An Inside Look at the Islamic State’s Foreign Fighter Paper Trail.” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*. April 18, 2016. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-caliphates-global-workforce-an-inside-look-at-the-islamic-states-foreign-fighter-paper-trail>

This report contains an analysis of over 4,000 unique Islamic State personnel records. It is the largest collection of primary source documentation from the Islamic State to date. These documents were acquired from an Islamic State defector and provide a look into the organization’s workforce. The report reveals information about foreign fighters’ citizenship, points of entry into Syria, personal information, previous occupations, education levels, religious preference and knowledge level, fighting role in the group, and previous jihadist experience.

Gates, Scott., and Sukanya Podder. “Social Media, Recruitment, Allegiance and the Islamic State.” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (August, 2015):107-116. Terrorism Research Center. <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/446/877>

The Islamic State actively recruits foreign fighters and they in turn make up a significant part of IS (20,000 foreign fighters based on recent reports). Different recruitment techniques are utilized with social media and online recruitment strategies. The media

wing of IS is adept at creating a message that appeals to younger generations and taps into and preys upon their insecurities and desire for a belonging and identity. The foreign fighters and local fighters have different patterns and motivations for joining IS and while normally this would cause some strife within the organization, they are able to manage the mix of recruits so far.

AMERICAN FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander, Seamus Hughes, and Bennet Clifford. "The Travelers: American Jihadists in Syria and Iraq." George Washington University Program on Extremism. February 2018.

<https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/extremism.gwu.edu/files/TravelersAmericanJihadistsinSyriaandIraq.pdf>.

This study from GWU is a comprehensive analysis of Americans who became foreign fighters for militant groups in Syria and Iraq since 2011. The report identifies 64 Americans and uncovers their motivations, methods, travel patterns, and demographics.

PRIOR EUROPEAN NETWORKS

Holman, Timothy. "Belgian and French Foreign Fighters in Iraq 2003-2005: A Comparative Case Study. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 38:8, 607-609, DOI:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/1057610X.2015.1038105.605-609>.

This excerpt examines the origins of the 19th Network in Paris, France and the Kari Network in Brussels, Belgium during the early years of the Iraq War. The primary activity of the 19th Network, which included Cherif Kouachi of the 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, was foreign fighter related. The article discusses the Kari Network's involvement in illicit financing to send individuals to Iraq and bring them back to Belgium.

CURRENT EUROPEAN NETWORKS

Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed and Nathaniel Barr. "Recent Attacks Illuminate the Islamic State's Europe Attack Network." *Jamestown Foundation*. April 27, 2016.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=45362&no_cache=1

ISIS' successes are a result of the structure of its shadowy external operations branch, the Amn al-Kharji, responsible for selecting and training operatives for attacks outside of ISIS' core territory.

Faiola, Anthony., and Souad Mekhennet. "Tracing the Path of Four Terrorists Sent to Europe by the Islamic State." *Washington Post*. April 22, 2016.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/how-europes-migrant-crisis-became-an-opportunity-for-isis/2016/04/21/ec8a7231-062d-4185-bb27-cc7295d35415_story.html

Posing as war-weary Syrians in October 2015, four men embedded with nearly 200 migrants arrived on the Greek island of Leros. Two of them would participate in the Paris attacks. Their story offers a cautionary tale for a continent facing its worst security threat since the end of the Cold War.

BELGIUM

Van Vlierden, Guy. "The Zerkani Network: Belgium's Most Dangerous Jihadist Group." *Jamestown Foundation*. April 12, 2016.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=45305&no_cache=1

Belgium's Zerkani network, led by an enigmatic Moroccan, has sent at least 59 recruits to Syria and Iraq, with several returning to commit the deadly Paris and Brussels attacks. Its modus operandi differs greatly from that of Shariah4Belgium, the infamous group fueling the high number of Belgian jihadists, yet connections between the networks are undoubtedly present.

GERMANY

Heil, Georg. "The Berlin Attack and the 'Abu Walaa' Islamic State Recruitment Network." *CTC Sentinel*. February 22, 2017. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-berlin-attack-and-the-abu-walaa-islamic-state-recruitment-network>

The Berlin truck attack in December 2016 exposed the danger posed by a radical network that Anis Amri belonged to in northwestern Germany. The network, led by Iraqi preacher Abu Walaa, is believed to have recruited dozens to travel to join ISIS, communicated extensively with operatives in Syria and Iraq, and encouraged attacks on German soil.

Staudenmaier, Rebecca. "Berlin to bring back children of German 'Islamic State' fighters — report." *Deutsche Welle*, November 23, 2017. <http://www.dw.com/en/berlin-to-bring-back-children-of-german-islamic-state-fighters-report/a-41501060>.

Germany is negotiating with the Iraqi government for the release of mothers and their children who have German citizenship from a detention center outside Mosul. There are believed to be 1,300 women and children in this detention center including children who were born in ISIS held territory. German security services are not concerned with the return of younger children since they will be more traumatized than radicalized, older children however are more likely to have been indoctrinated and could pose a threat.

EXTERNAL OPERATIONS

Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander., and Seamus Hughes. "The Threat to the United States from

the Islamic State's Virtual Entrepreneurs." *CTC Sentinel*. March 9, 2017.
<https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-threat-to-the-united-states-from-the-islamic-states-virtual-entrepreneurs>

Among the most recent evolutions of jihadist terrorist tactics in the West has been the rise of the virtual entrepreneur. In the U.S., there are 14 known cases of terrorist-related activity involving 19 U.S.-based individuals where the involvement of an ISIS virtual entrepreneur has been documented. This outsourcing of terrorism has been a game change in ISIS efforts to attack the West.

Callimachi, Rukmini. "Not 'Lone Wolves' After All: How ISIS Guides World's Terror Plots From Afar." *New York Times*. February 4, 2017.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/04/world/asia/isis-messaging-app-terror-plot.html>

While the trail of many ISIS plots led back to planners living in Syria, the very nature of the group's method of remote plotting means there is little dependence on its maintaining a safe haven there or in Iraq. Close examination of both successful and unsuccessful plots carried out in ISIS' name over the past three years indicates that such enabled attacks are making up a growing share of the operations of the group.

FORMERS AND DEFACTORS

Callimachi, Rukmini. "How a Secretive Branch of ISIS Built a Global Network of Killers." *New York Times*, August 3, 2016.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/04/world/middleeast/isis-german-recruit-interview.html? r=0>

From his prison cell, a German foreign fighter explains how ISIS recruited him to return to Germany to prepare attacks. This revelation sheds light on how ISIS grew its brand of global jihad and perpetrated attacks across Europe.

Giglio, Mike., and Muzer al-Awad. "How to Lose Your Mind to ISIS and Then Fight to Get It Back." *Buzzfeed*. April 13, 2016. <https://www.buzzfeed.com/mikegiglio/how-to-lose-your-mind-to-isis-and-then-fight-to-get-it-back>

It's far easier to join ISIS than to leave. Members of a hidden community of ISIS defectors recount how they were pulled into a grip of extremism – and then struggle to escape.

Weiss, Michael. "I Was an ISIS Jihadist – Until They Arrested and Tortured Me." *Daily Beast*. July 22, 2016. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/07/22/i-was-an-isis-jihadist-until-they-arrested-and-tortured-me.html>

The detailed accounts of an ISIS defector describe his time inside the world's most notorious terrorist organization. His account is a useful insight into how the organization has grown from a shrewd guerrilla insurgency into a totalitarian quasi-state.

RADICALIZATION PROCESS

Hughes, Seamus. "To Stop ISIS Recruitment, Focus Offline." *Lawfare*. August 7, 2016. <https://www.lawfareblog.com/stop-isis-recruitment-focus-offline>

This article argues that even though ISIL has perfected the use of the Internet to radicalize and recruit followers, it is still necessary to stop in-person contact to stop terrorist recruitment.

Bisserbe, Noemie. "European Prisons Fueling Spread of Islamic Radicalism." *Wall Street Journal*. July 31, 2016. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/european-prisons-fueling-spread-of-islamic-radicalism-1470001491>

The rise of ISIS caught Europe's prison systems off guard. Many inmates use jail time to forge ties with petty criminals from the predominantly Muslim suburbs that ring European cities, grooming them for attacks at home or abroad. Prison officials are faced with a difficult choice of absorbing hardened militants into the general prison population or concentrating them in special wards.

Shane, Scott. "The Enduring Influence of Anwar Al-Awlaki in the Age of the Islamic State." *CTC Sentinel* 9 No. 7. July 27, 2016. https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CTC-SENTINEL_Vol9Iss73.pdf

Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al Awlaki's influence continues to live on in the ISIL era. Despite his long association with al Qaeda, al Awlaki has been embraced by ISIL, and he continues to inspire terrorism from beyond the grave.

RETURNING FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Meko, Time. "Now that the Islamic State has Fallen in Iraq and Syria, Where are all its Fighters Going?" *Washington Post*, February 22, 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/world/isis-returning-fighters/>.

As the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria dwindles to its last remaining strongholds, nearly 40,000 of its foreign fighters are leaving the region. This article illustrates where their fighters are migrating to, and what problems these fighters might cause as they return to society.

Rayner, Gordan. "Half of British Islamic State Fighters are Unaccounted for." *Brisbane Times*, January 6, 2018. <https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/world/half-of-british-islamic-state-fighters-are-unaccounted-for-20180106-h0eehx.html>.

As ISIS loses territory and control in Iraq and Syria, around half of the estimated 850 British jihadists who went to the Middle East are unaccounted for. Fifteen to 20 percent are presumed killed in the fighting, and others are suspected of fleeing to Turkey and other neighboring states as ISIS continues to crumble.

Perraudin, Frances. "Briton Jailed for 10 Years for Joining Islamic State." *The Guardian*, December 8, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/08/briton-mohammed-abdallah-jailed-for-10-years-for-joining-islamic-state>.

Mohammed Abdullah was convicted of being a member of a terrorist organization and receiving funds and weapons for the group. He has been sentenced to ten years in prison though he claims to have only traveled to Syria to deliver money to the poor and that someone else must have pledged him to ISIS. Abdullah has a history of fighting in militant groups, having left England previously to fight with the Tripoli Brigade in Libya against Gaddafi in 2011.

Uzielli, Julian, Samira Mohyeddin, and Anne Penman. "What Should Canada Do With Foreign Fighters Who Return Home?" CBC Radio. November 27, 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-november-27-2017-1.4418695/what-should-canada-do-with-foreign-fighters-who-return-home-1.4418722>.

As ISIS loses its territory in the Middle East, foreign fighters have been returning to their respective countries of origin and each country has different policies in place on how to deal with this. Canada is in the process of deciding what to do with the 60 confirmed returned foreign fighters. Concern over the scope of monitoring every person who has returned is balanced against focusing on preventing internal radicalization of Canadians who never left, claiming that returnees were more apt to be disillusioned and less likely to conduct an attack.

ISLAMIC STATE – FINANCIAL OPERATIONS:

OVERVIEW OF IS FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

Ismay, John, Thomas Gibbons-Neff, and C.J. Chivers. "How ISIS Produced Its Cruel Arsenal on an Industrial Scale." *New York Times*, December 10, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/10/world/middleeast/isis-bombs.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region>.

ISIS was frequently innovative in regards to the manufacture of its own weapons and explosives. As ISIS was pushed out of its holdings in Iraq and Syria, coalition forces found a highly organized, industrial level of production of explosives and rockets. The terror group had created its own explosive formulae, modifying existing ones to make them easier to detonate. The devices ranged from improvised chemical warheads, to

landmines and IED's, rockets and explosive packed space heaters designed to target civilians.

"Cash To Chaos: Dismantling ISIS' Financial Infrastructure." *House Homeland Security Committee Majority Staff Report*. October, 2016. <https://homeland.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Dismantling-ISIS-Financial-Infrastructure.pdf>

Despite territorial losses, ISIL maintains revenue streams from a portfolio of illicit activities. This report highlights ISIL's financial infrastructure from areas including black market oil and gas; black market commodities; antiquities; extortion, taxation, and robbery; kidnapping; Gulf State support; and emerging fundraising tactics.

Hansen-Lewis, Jamie, and Jacob N. Shapiro. "Understanding the Daesh Economy." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (August, 2015):142-155. Terrorism Research Initiative. <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/450/881>

This article evaluates the sustainability of IS's economy. While the terrorist group manages to bring in a large amount of revenue each year, the article shows that it is not sustainable over a long period of time. The majority of IS income, besides the oil sales is dependent on extortion, ransom money, and forced taxation. The group touts in its propaganda videos its infrastructure and social services, yet the reality of the situation is reflected in the poor health of the inhabitants under its rule. The economy itself has little potential to grow, and it entirely based off of limited sources of funding that will provide a big boost in the near future, but will run out over time. The authors conclude that containment seems a viable strategy for combatting IS because it was run out of funds and resources and fall apart from within.

Esposito, William., Lenhard, April, Doyle, Harrison. "Funding ISIS: The Business of Terror." *Journal of Counterterrorism & Homeland Security* 20, no. 4 (2014): 14-17. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=99956290&site=ehost-live>

This journal article describes the finances of IS and the methods and tactics used to acquire them. It describes and evaluates the different sources used to fund the terrorist organization and also looks at how IS grew from a small militant group to a bigger threat than AQ.

OIL AS A PRIMARY SOURCE OF FUNDS

Prepared by Minority Staff for Ranking Member Lisa Murkowski. "A Dark Pool in the Mideast: The Problem of ISIS Oil Sales." *U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources*. September 24, 2014. http://www.energy.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=005f682a-cc3f-4bd2-91b6-d68e0527439d

This research shows that oil is the biggest source of revenue for IS and that the total amount of production and revenue is not fully tracked even by IS itself. It is believed that ISIS controls 60% of Syria's oil production and their total revenue can be up to \$100 million per month. Depriving IS of its access to oil would be a major detriment to the group.

CRIME, EXTORTION, KIDNAPPING AND SMUGGLING AS FUNDING SOURCES

Seftel, Bennett. "With Coiffers Draining, ISIS May Seek Donations & Step Up Crime." *Cipher Brief*, October 27, 2017. <https://www.thecipherbrief.com/article/middle-east/coiffers-draining-isis-may-seeK-donations-step-crime>.

As ISIS loses more territory, its access to oil, protection money/taxes, stolen antiquities and other forms of revenue are rapidly dwindling. While ISIS can still bring in close to \$4 million a month in oil sales they have greatly expanded their sales of illicit goods to make up for areas of lost revenue. The recently created Terrorist Financing Targeting Center has worked to sanction several members of ISIS and its affiliates that manage the terror group's financing.

Shelley, Louise. "Blood Money: How ISIS Makes Bank." *Foreign Affairs*. Council on Foreign Relations. November 30, 2014. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/142403/louise-shelley/blood-money>

This article identifies and describes the additional funding sources besides oil that IS uses. The usual terror finance acquisition tactics of smuggling, kidnapping, theft, and extortion are utilized. The sale of smuggled cigarette and cell phones provides steady revenue but also the illegal sale of stolen antiquities and taxes upon any non-IS sales of antiquities. Members sell their passports before leaving Turkey to enter Syria and donations from other sources also attribute to IS's coiffers.

ISLAMIC STATE BANKING

Levitt, Matthew. "The Islamic State's Backdoor Banking." *Policywatch* 2390, Washington Institute for

Near East Policy. March 24, 2015. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-islamic-states-backdoor-banking>

This article describes the difficulties in attacking the banking of IS due to their non-conventional means of transferring money. One such scheme involves donors purchasing pre-paid cards and showing the card numbers off over Skype so that IS can utilize them. In addition, the existing banking branches that are under IS control are being allow to operate with other banks by the Assad regime. Banks in Iraq have stopped all transaction with IS-held banks, yet it is not enough.

ISLAMIC STATE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS AND FINANCIAL VULNERABILITY

Shatz, Howard J. "To Defeat the Islamic State, Follow the Money." *Politico Magazine*. September 10, 2014. <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/09/to-defeat-isil-follow-the-money-110825.html#ixzz3O99FEiil>

In addition to military action and covert counterterrorism efforts, this article claims that the most effective action against IS to cut off their cash-flow. IS acquires its money from a variety of sources but the smuggling and illegal sale of oil is believed to be the highest source of their income. IS maintains payroll and financial records and tracks its expenses and monthly payments to its members and their dependents. The report points out that payment to the individual and their family will still be paid if they are captured or killed. There are also administrative costs, public works, and general daily upkeep. The recommendation is attacking mobile oil refineries and tanker trucks, and capturing and killing enough members so that IS runs out of money.

ANALYSES OF EXISTING FINANCIAL INTERDICTION OPERATIONS AND PROGRAMS

Trindle, Jamila. "The US-Led Push to Bankrupt the Islamic State Isn't Working." *Foreign Policy*. December 24, 2014. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/12/24/the-u-s-led-push-to-bankrupt-the-islamic-state-isnt-working/>

The concept of attacking IS's monetary stream was aided by the international group, the Financial Action task Force (FATC). However after some research it appears that this action would not be as easy as it seems. Due to the fact that they are dealing with an organized economy and a group with set standards it is more difficult that tackling a criminal organization where a weak spot might be more readily apparent. Air strikes have served to impact the regular revenue of IS and restrictions on donations through legal means to terrorist organizations. A set proven strategy has not been put into place and the FATF itself has no means to enforce sanctions or any form of noncompliance.

ISLAMIC STATE –GOVERNANCE/STRUCTURE:

ISLAMIC STATE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

Shapiro, Jacob N., and Danielle F. Jung. "The terrorist bureaucracy: Inside the files of the Islamic State in Iraq." *Boston Globe*, December 14, 2014. <http://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2014/12/14/the-terrorist-bureaucracy-inside-files-islamic-state-iraq/QtRMOARRYows0D18faA2FP/story.html>

The administrative side of IS described in this article. Whereas often times, terrorist organizations are solely dedicated to planning the next attacks, IS is remarked upon due to its attempt at imitating a state with a system of government complete with records, financials and even spreadsheets listing the qualifications of its members.

For more information on IS record keeping and an extensive collection of primary sources, see the collaboration paper between the Combatting Terrorism Center and the Empirical Studies of Conflict Project at Princeton:

Jung, Danielle F., Jacob N. Shapiro, Jon Wallace, and Pat Ryan. "Managing a Transnational Insurgency: The Islamic State of Iraq's 'Paper Trail,' 2005-2010." *Occasional Paper Series*, Combatting Terrorism Center. December 16, 2014.

<https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/managing-a-transnational-insurgency-the-islamic-state-of-iraqs-paper-trail-2005-2010>

EVOLUTION OF ISLAMIC STATE ADMINISTRATION

Al-Tamimi, Aymenn. "A Caliphate Under Strain: The Documentary Evidence." *CTC Sentinel* 9, No. 4. (April, 2016.) <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/a-caliphate-under-strain-the-documentary-evidence>

Internal Islamic State documents shed new light on how the group has come under strain as it is degraded by coalition air strikes and loses territory. The internal records make clear these pressures have been felt in the group's military, financial, and administrative domains, forcing it to take measures to react and adapt.

Dettmer, Jamie. "Documents Show Degree of IS Control Over Life in Its Territories." *Voice of America*. January 24, 2016. <http://www.voanews.com/a/documents-show-degree-of-islamic-state-control-over-life-territory/3160301.html>

Official ISIS administrative documents provide a fascinating and frequently horrifying glimpse into the self-proclaimed caliphate, revealing the group's anxieties, obsessions, and harshness, with an emphasis on restricting information access and dissemination to inhabitants.

Al-Tamini, Aymenn. "The Evolution in Islamic State Administration: The Documentary Evidence." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (August, 2015):117-129. Terrorism Research Initiative.

<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/447/878>

This paper covers the administration of the Islamic State from its origins in Iraq in 2006, to 2015. A collection of primary sources are utilized to show the depth of the sophistication of the group's government structure. The author states that as long as IS can hold onto its strongholds, there is a good chance that it can survive even under an enhanced containment strategy.

ISLAMIC STATE GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

Caris, Charles C., and Samuel Reynolds. "ISIS Governance in Syria." *Middle East Security Report*, 22. Institute for the Study of War, July 2014.

http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ISIS_Governance.pdf

This report breaks down the structure of the IS government and how it divides itself into specific categories. These can be seen as administrative and service-oriented. The administrative side manages religious outreach, courts, education, public relations. The service side manages humanitarian aid, food, water, and general infrastructure. The report further goes on to describe in detail each individual department and its function.

COMPARTMENTALIZATION

Thompson, Nick., and Shubert, Atika. "The Anatomy of ISIS: How the 'Islamic State' is Run, from Oil to Beheadings," *CNN*, January 14, 2015.

<http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/18/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq-hierarchy/>

This article provides a brief description on how different aspects of IS are broken up into different compartments for management. A flowchart is provided that gives an overview of all the different departments and their roles.

PROVINCIAL MANAGEMENT

Zelin, Aaron Y. "The Islamic State's Archipelago of Provinces." *The Washington Institute*, November 14, 2014. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-islamic-states-archipelago-of-provinces#When:17:52:49Z#ixzz3O99lsC5M>

This piece describes how IS manages its various territories where it has carved out a presence outside of Iraq and Syria and have maintained control of the captured area. Areas such as Libya and Sinai and any other locations of similar status are seen as *wilayat* or provinces and are assigned a provincial governor known as a *wulat*. The *wilayat* once established are run in a similar manner to IS controlled areas.

COUNTERTERRORISM OPERATIONS

BRITISH

"The First 100 Days of the UK's Campaign Against the Islamic State (30 Sep 2014-8 Jan 2015)." Centre for the Response to Radicalisation and Terrorism, briefing. *Henry Jackson Society*. January 22, 2015. <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/The-First-100-Days.pdf>

This detailed report provides a summary of the U.K. campaign against IS and then a series of charts showing the type of strike, equipment used, location and target.

UNITED STATES

AIR STRIKES

Joscelyn, Thomas. "US Strikes Islamic State Camp in Libyan Desert." *Long War Journal*. September 24, 2017. <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/09/us-launched-6-airstrikes-on-islamic-state-camp-in-libyan-desert.php>.

The Islamic State, after losing its operating base of the port city of Sirte, established several desert camps in Libya and is making an active effort to rebuild and consolidate. A series of raids and attacks were launched by the IS groups in Libya in August and September against military checkpoints and Libyan security forces. Following in the wake of these attacks, U.S. forces launched six airstrikes on IS camps in Libya, killing 17 and destroying three vehicles.

“Islamic State crisis: Air Strikes target Syria stronghold.” *BBC*, July 5, 2015.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33401251>

The U.S.-led coalition against IS has begun to deliver ordinance against IS's self-declared capital, Raqqa. The strikes came as Kurdish YPG fighters and Syrian government troops have managed to cut off IS's northern supply routes to Raqqa province. The strikes were delivered with the purpose of crippling the group's ability to move military hardware throughout Syria and into Iraq.

TARGETING OF LEADERSHIP

Mullen, Jethro., and Dana Ford. “ISIS ‘Emir of Suicide Bombers’ Killed in Coalition Airstrike, U.S. Says.” *CNN* July 3, 2015. <http://www.cnn.com/2015/07/02/middleeast/isis-leader-killed/>

Tariq al-Harzi, who was in charge of overseeing efforts to move weapons and bring foreign fighters into Syria and Iraq in addition to organizing and directing suicide bombings, was killed by a U.S. airstrike in Syria. His brother, Ali Awni al-Harzi, who was a suspect in the attack on the U.S. embassy in Libya was also killed in an airstrike in June of 2015.

Weisgerber, Marcus., and Kevin Baron. “U.S. Special Ops Troops Kill ISIS Leader in Syria Raid.” *Defense One*, May 16, 2015. <http://www.defenseone.com/threats/2015/05/us-special-ops-troops-kill-isis-leader-syria-raid/113008/>

U.S. Special Operations troops killed Abu Sayaff, the IS head of financial operations and illegal oil sale, during a covert raid in eastern Syria Friday night, according to American officials. The raid appears to be the first publicly revealed offensive U.S. military operation on Syrian soil in the coalition fight against IS.

ONSITE INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

Lynch, Colum., and Seán D. Naylor. “Successful U.S. Raid Into Syria Could Lead to More Missions There.” *Foreign Policy*. May 16, 2015. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/05/16/successful-u-s-raid-into-syria-could-lead-to-more-missions-there/>

This article shows the impact of the raid that killed Abu Sayaff but also the other side of Special Forces raids against IS. Not only do they serve to eliminate a threat or a specific target but they also provide for the collection of a treasure trove of primary source

intelligence taken from hard drives, cell phones and other formats as well. This tactic/policy is described by Joint Special Operations Command as Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, Analyze, Disseminate or "F3EAD" which will be utilized to find additional targets and exploit any weaknesses found.

ARMING REGIONAL GROUPS

Wong, Kristina. "Pentagon Plans to Directly Arm Sunni Fighters vs. ISIS." *The Hill*, May 27, 2015. <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/243271-pentagon-has-plans-to-provide-weapons-to-sunni-fighters>

The Pentagon has plans to provide military equipment to Sunni tribal fighters, a defense spokeswoman said on Wednesday, a shift from its current policy to provide the equipment only through the central government in Baghdad. *The Hill*, May 27.

COUNTERING PROPAGANDA

Schmitt, Eric. "U.S. Intensifies Effort to Blunt ISIS's Message." *New York Times*, February 16, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/17/world/middleeast/us-intensifies-effort-to-blunt-isis-message.html?mwrsm=Email>

A small State Department agency will be revamped and expanded to coordinate existing attempts to counter IS's propaganda machine. [The Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications](#) will pursue a counter narrative to IS through partnerships across interagency, public-private, and prominent Muslim scholars.

EVALUATION OF CT TACTICS

Joscelyn, Thomas. "Analysis: ISIS hasn't been Defeated." *Long War Journal*, February 22, 2018. <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/02/analysis-isis-hasnt-been-defeated.php>.

The Pentagon's latest National Defense Strategy shifts its focus from irregular warfare and nonstate actors towards the emerging possibility of inter-state conflict. A shift in strategy and focus will not be easy, militant groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda still operate throughout the Middle East and North Africa, and continue to pose a credible threat to the security interests of the international community.

Cronin, Audrey Kurth. "ISIS is Not a Terrorist Group: Why Counterterrorism Won't Stop the Latest Jihadist Threat." *Foreign Affairs*, (March/April, 2015) <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2015-02-16/isis-not-terrorist-group>

This article argues that the Islamic State is not a standard terrorist group due to its size, structure, and goals. It has a 30,000-strong standing army, and holds and governs its captured territory. Despite efforts to freeze all of IS's assets and transactions, the group continues to make money through illegal sale of oil and taxes, donations, and other

sources. All of these internal sources of revenue have prevented the U.S. from effectively cutting off its revenue. IS is not a completely homegrown organization. It pulls in around 1,000 new recruits a month from all over the world, with the majority of them being younger. With IS's size, scope, and plans for a long-term establishment, traditional CT methods will be unable to eliminate them. Regular conventional warfare (which would not be supported by the American Public) would be unlikely to result in a final victory against IS. Containment remains the best strategy.

REGIONAL/MIDDLE EAST

TURKEY

Teoman, Elizabeth. "Turkey's Silent Al Qaeda Partner in Syria." Institute for the Study of War. November 2, 2017.

<http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/turkey%E2%80%99s-silent-al-qaeda-partner-syria>.

Turkish military and special forces have begun staging forces for potential operations against Kurdish YPG forces in the in the Afrin Canton in the greater Idlib Province. An agreement was reached with the AQ affiliated Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham to allow for Turkish forces to position there, despite their deployment being presented as containing AQ and ISIS forces. Russia stationed military observers in the Afrin Canton with the goal of preventing a Turkish attack and with the hopes of strengthening ties between Russia and the YPG.

Malsin, Jared. "Turkey on a 'Collision Course' With the U.S. After Striking Kurdish Militias." *Time*, April 27, 2017. <http://time.com/4757298/turkey-united-states-militias-kurdish-ypg/>.

Turkish airstrikes targeting U.S.-backed Kurds in Iraq and Syria have put Turkey and the U.S. at odds, as foreign powers now look towards post-ISIS Syria. The U.S. has worked closely with Kurdish militant groups in the fight against ISIS. Turkey regards the fighters as a terrorist organization that threaten to Turkish security and national interests.

Kadercan, Burak. "What's Eating Turkey? Ankara and the Islamic State." *War on the Rocks*, July 30, 2015. <http://warontherocks.com/2015/07/whats-eating-turkey-ankara-and-the-islamic-state/>

This article examines the political difficulties that Turkey has in fully dedicating itself against IS. While Turkey has conducted targeted strikes against IS, and allowed Incirlik Air Base to be used for coalition strikes, it remains hesitant to commit. Despite the support of the coalition forces, there has been some concern over Turkey's support and aid to anti-Assad groups. Domestic politics tend to be a focal point in Turkey's decision making, especially with its targeting of Kurdish groups as well as IS. Turkish and Kurdish nationalism fuels this division, while the Islamic State exploits it. While it is vital to

destroy IS, Turkey is worried that a weakened or destroyed IS will lead to an emboldened PKK.

Sly, Liz., and Erin Cunningham. "Turkey Strikes Islamic State Targets in Syria for the First Time." *Washington Post*, July 24, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/turkey-strikes-islamic-state-targets-in-syria-for-the-first-time/2015/07/24/c68b0377-8785-4306-bc7e-ffe4b866d9ab_story.html

Turkish jets started bombing runs against IS targets following a deadly explosion in a border town. The country's foreign ministry described IS as its "primary national security threat" and granted U.S. aircraft permission to use its airbases. However, following the strikes against IS, Turkey conducted raids against Kurdish militants showing a wider range of Turkey's security concerns.

RUSSIA

Baev, Pavel K. "Russia Stumbles in the Fog of Syrian War." Brookings. February 21, 2018. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/02/21/russia-stumbles-in-the-fog-of-syrian-war/>.

Russian strategy in Syria to preserve Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has taken setback after setback, as Russian forces on the ground continue to take casualties and its proxies fail to make headway. Much of their political failure stems from their firm support for the Assad regime, with ISIS no longer the threat it once was, the international community now turns towards the other armed groups in the region and the Assad regime, putting Russia in a difficult position. Independent Russian security contractors aligned with the Assad regime have created political strife that Putin has yet to address in earnest, and without the support of the international community, Russia's investment in Syria may fall flat.

Grygiel, Jakub, and Jake Miraldi. Comment on "MWI Podcast: Russia, Global Security, and Limited War." *Modern War Institute* (audio blog), August 30, 2017. <https://mwi.usma.edu/mwi-podcast-russia-global-security-limited-war-dr-jakub-grygiel/>.

Dr. Jakub Grygiel, of John Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, evaluates the concept of "limited war" and how it is utilized in modern military strategy. A particular emphasis is placed on Russia based on its actions in Ukraine and Syria.

"Making Sense of Russia's Involvement in Syria." Middle East Policy Council. <http://www.mepc.org/commentary/making-sense-russias-involvement-syria>.

President Bashar al-Assad's future may lie in the hands of Russia, as their most powerful ally continues to intervene on the Assad regime's behalf. Without the support of Russia, U.S. coalition forces would likely remove the contentious president from power should a suitable internationally recognized replacement present itself. As ISIS and other insurgent groups are removed from the region, the future of Syria remains uncertain. No doubt, without a regional consensus and international agreement, conflict in Syria will continue.

KURDISH

"Syrian Kurdish forces capture key ISIL-held town." *Al-Jazeera*, July 16, 2015.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/06/syrian-kurdish-units-close-tal-abyad-150615155954847.html>

In an important victory against IS that cut off the group from the key supply route to Raqqa province, Syrian Kurdish fighters have claimed control of the strategic town of Tal Abyad. A monitoring group said some fighting in the town continued after the initial offensive. The offensive, which also resulted in the displacement over 16,000 people, was backed by U.S.-led airstrikes.

ASSAD REGIME FORCES

Smyth, Phillip. "Assad Strikes Back." *Foreign Policy*. May 27, 2015.

<http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/05/27/assads-foreign-fighters-dont-come-cheap-iran-hezbollah-shiite-fighters/>

The Syrian regime is gearing up for a counteroffensive that relies on Iran's money and Shiite foreign fighters from as far away as Central Asia to push back against the Islamic State. Using cash and coercion, Assad has launched new efforts to bolster troop levels and engender further loyalty. Last week, the Syrian regime announced its hope for a \$1 billion credit line from Tehran to continue the fight. More importantly, Iranian-backed foreign-fighter recruitment and deployment have increased dramatically.

TRIBAL AND SAHWA FORCES

Cigar, Dr. Norman. *Tribal Militias: An Effective Tool to Counter Al-Qaida and its Affiliates?* Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA: United States Army War College Press, 2014. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1230>

This article provides the history of the Sunni Awakening as a push back against AQ after it tried to alter/remove the local tribal cultures and economies. As a result, the tribes during the Shawa (Awakening) moved towards U.S. support. The tribes had been previously formed into their Shawa groups, a tribal militia supported by the local government and the U.S. When the government was done with them after their role in combatting AQ, they pushed them aside and wanted to take their weapons away. As poverty and sectarian issues divided the government and the Shawa militias, IS was able to take hold. IS either directly intimidated the Shawa members, or threatened and

attacked their families, appealed to their Sunni connections or offered a better option than a Shia backed government and militias that they were at odds with. On the other side, the Shia tribes felt that they were alone in their fight against IS. The article argues for the importance of having a “National Guard” of both Sunni and Shia and provides policy recommendations for when the U.S. is a tribal militia’s patron.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Yeo, Mike. "Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines Target ISIS in Trilateral Air Patrols." *Defense News*, October 13, 2017. <https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2017/10/13/malaysia-indonesia-and-philippines-target-isis-in-trilateral-air-patrols/>.

The three nations have begun trilateral naval air patrols over the Sulu Sea. With ISIS seeking to build a greater presence in the area, the air patrols are designed to track ISIS militants as they use the Sulu Sea to travel between the three countries. Patrols will rotate each month by country and are expected to extend beyond January 2018.

ANALYSIS:

POST-MOSUL AND RAQQA

“Fighting ISIS: The Road to and Beyond Raqqa.” *International Crisis Group*. April 28, 2017. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/syria/b053-fighting-isis-road-and-beyond-raqqa>

The U.S. campaign against ISIS in northern Syria both benefits from and is complicated by its partnership with an affiliate of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), a group fighting against its NATO ally Turkey. The challenges will grow as the war on ISIS moves further east.

RESPONSE TO IS EXECUTION VIDEOS

Miller, Aaron David. “4 Takeaways From the Fight Against ISIS After the Death of Jordan’s Pilot.” *Middle East Program*, Woodrow Wilson Center. February 3, 2015. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/4-takeaways-the-fight-against-isis-after-the-death-jordan%E2%80%99s-pilot>

This article looks at four distinct aspects of the circumstances surrounding the death of the Jordanian pilot, Muath al-Kasabeh. IS was able to use the televised threats to garner attention and make others react to it along with showing a willingness to engage in brutal acts regardless of any regional fallout. The airstrikes in response to hostage taking may end up pushing IS to find a new way to garner resources or increased its relevance. One possibility is that they may switch towards organized attacks on Western targets.

ASSESSMENT OF ANTI-IS EFFORTS

Lister, Charles. "A Long Way from Success: Assessing the War on the Islamic State." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no.4 (August, 2015):3-13. Terrorism Research Initiative.

<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/439/870>

It is difficult to accurately measure significant gains against the Islamic State based on the current strategy. No solid strategic advances have been made, and IS still remains a capable armed group with the abilities to seize new territory and defend against attackers. The author calls for a re-evaluation of the current anti-IS strategy and the "core analytical understandings driving counter-actions." While IS espouses an apocalyptic Salafi-jihadi ideology, they also push a wider narrative as the champions of the oppressed and disenfranchised Sunni Muslim. This gives them a wider basis for recruitment and appeal that their normal ideology does not have. Measuring success by land reclaimed and assets destroyed is not an effective mechanism for success. IS has shown that it is a flexible organization, capable of adapting to different tactics and evading defeat. This article also calls for an increased focus on Syria, as the majority of the airstrikes have been relocated to Iraq. Syria has shown itself to be a major staging point for IS and needs to be addressed. The author concludes that while conducting any counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations are difficult, multifaceted operations, IS has clear weaknesses in their strategic thinking that can be exploited.

ARGUMENT FOR GROUND FORCES

Ottaway, Marina. "We Bomb ISIL: Then What? *Viewpoints* 63 (2014) 1-7. Woodrow Wilson

Center. https://www.scribd.com/fullscreen/244617385?access_key=key-nQuSSQE1XF0rhF7WskVZ&allow_share=true&escape=false&show_recommendations=false&view_mode=scroll

The impact of airstrikes is analyzed mainly through the lack of follow up by a ground attack. Territory cannot be recaptured nor can IS be pushed out of an area by airstrikes alone. They can serve as a containment strategy and can be effective if ground forces utilize the attacks to push back a weakened enemy. However, the Iraqi military and the Free Syrian Army are disorganized and along with the Kurdish and the Shia militias all have their own personal goals in pushing back IS. A coordinated U.S. air and ground attack would be effective but the political situation surrounding it prevents such action.

IS THREAT TO WESTERN COUNTRIES

Hegghammer, Thomas., and Petter Nesser. "Assessing the Islamic State's Commitment to Attacking the West." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (August, 2015):14-30. Terrorism Research Initiative.

<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/440/871>

This article examines the threats made and the attacks carried out by IS in the West and Australia from January 2011-June 2015. A series of charts are providing showing the

links between plots, organizations and attacks. Upon evaluation, the article shows that IS has a decentralization attack approach that relies more on having sympathizers conduct individual or small group attacks. Returning foreign fighters have not played a major factor in these attacks yet. However, with the continual expansion and resources of IS, it is important to remain alert for additional attacks and different methods and types of attacks.

ISRAELI MILITARY PERSPECTIVE ON IS

Herzog, Brig. Gen. Michael. "Jihad on the Horizon: The ISIL Threat from an Israeli Perspective." *Expert View*, Britain Israel Communications & Research Centre (BICOM). March, 2015. <http://static.bicom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/150217-Isil-IV.pdf>

Israeli Brigadier General, Michael Herzog provides an analysis of IS and the threat it poses to the West, Israel, and the ideological similarities between Hamas and IS. The threat IS poses to the West comes from its ability to tap into a wide virtual network of extremists willing to conduct attacks in their current country. IS is not a priority threat to Israel at this time but they are preparing and watching their advances into neighboring countries. The biggest threats to Israel remains Hamas, Iran and Hezbollah. His recommendations are to: Boost the military campaign, address the nature of the Islamist factor, do not give Iran a free pass to operate and expand in the region, support liberal pro-Western actors such as the Kurds and Jordan, and encourage ties based on shared interests between Israel and Sunni powers.

USING THE ISLAMIC STATE'S INFORMATION AGAINST THEM

Price, Bryan., Dan Milton, and Muhammad al-'Ubaydi,. "The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant: More than Just a June Surprise." *CTC Sentinel*, June 30, 2014. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-islamic-state-in-iraq-and-the-levant-more-than-just-a-june-surprise>

This report begins by focusing on the fact that IS has been a work in progress since 2002 and that its offense in June of 2014 should not have come as a surprise. The author examines IS published information and documentation through Twitter and IS's annual report. IS not only publishes an annual report of their attacks but will tweet information regarding their attacks in the days following. Utilizing this information, patterns, tactics, costs of operations, and the extent of their logistics network.

RESTORATION OF NATIONALISM AS A CT TACTIC.

Harrison, Ross. "Newsflash: Time is Running Out to Defeat ISIS." *National Interest*, August 21, 2015. <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/newsflash-time-running-out-defeat-isis-13650>

Harrison argues that IS trying to destroy the nationalism of individual countries in order to further its own goals. Once the traditional unifying factors and identities are gone, it will be easier for them to implement their own ideology. Ross argues that U.S. needs to

recreate borders to enforce traditional nationalism, work with Saudi Arabia and Iran and high level clerics to refute IS's ideology and use the more moderate groups as a bulwark against the more extreme ones.

THE NEED FOR INCREASING UNDERSTANDING OF IS IN ORDER TO BETTER COMBAT IT

Kadercan, Burak. "3 Huge (And Dangerous) Myths about ISIS." *National Interest*, August 30, 2015. <http://www.nationalinterest.org/feature/3-huge-dangereous-myths-about-isis-13740>

The article states that the security community does not have a set, concrete method for dealing with IS. There are a variety of ideas regarding what the "true nature" of the Islamic State is and how best to counter it. The author argues that since IS operates on a "territorial flexibility" that the loss of or gaining of land does not greatly impact the groups legitimacy. While IS tries to expand, it is dependent upon sectarian strife and thus tends to limit itself to Sunni-Majority areas. Feeding off of and amplifying the sectarian strife allows IS to maintain support from Sunnis under its rule that are more concerned with Shiite-dominated forces. The Islamic State has lost several battles and engagements and pushes a narrative of a "capable underdog" in which martyrdom is relished and the sheer act of fighting against overwhelming odds is lauded.

COMPARISON TO OTHER JIHADI PROTO-STATES

Lia, Brynjar. "Understanding Jihadi Proto-States." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (August, 2015):31-41. Terrorism Research Initiative, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/441/872>

With the rise of the Islamic State, and its proclamation that it is indeed an actual state, it is important to compare IS to other past and present "jihadi proto-states" in order to better understand it. The comparison allows for a better look at the common features, of these types of states and a better look into understanding their aggressive tactics. The author states that each of these proto-states has four common characteristics: they are intensely ideological, internationalist, territorially expansive, and irredentist. The governments tend to be harsh and repressive and often are established to combat rival Islamists and depend on the support of external constituencies.

IS DELEGITIMIZING REGIONAL STATES

Rubin, Lawrence. "Why the Islamic State won't become a Normal State." *Monkey Cage* (Blog), *Washington Post*, July 9, 2015. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/07/09/why-the-islamic-state-wont-become-a-normal-state/>

The author argues that the Islamic State is also an ideological and idea-centric threat to the Middle-East. The concept of IS being an actual state is evaluated. If IS became a legitimate and recognized state internationally, it would not bend to international pressure to normalize itself, and would still be a destabilizing influence in the region.

Sunni Arab states would not want their citizens leaving to join IS and the constant recruitment and other actions by IS do not recognize the political legitimacy of other states or international institutions. The threat of IS's ideology attacking the legitimacy of other state's practice of Islam, in turn attacks the legitimacy of the state itself.

WOMEN RECRUITS AND THE ISLAMIC STATE

"Women and Children Fighting Alongside Islamic State Militants in Marawi." *Asian Correspondent*, September 5, 2017. <https://asiancorrespondent.com/2017/09/women-children-fighting-alongside-islamic-state-militants-marawi/-YWdcU37b6psDB5tf.97>

The Philippine military began what it announced as a final push into Marawi to force out the Maute Group and Abu Sayaff members who have besieged the city since May. The military reports not only encountering snipers and the expected IED's and traps but also being shot at by women and children. Lt Gen. Carlito Galvez, of the Philippine forces in western Mindanao claimed that the city should be secure soon but expects the fighting to become over more intense as the militant groups become desperate.

Jacinto, Leela. "The Young Women Behind France's 'Terrorist Commando' Network." *France 24*. September 15, 2016. <http://www.france24.com/en/20160914-france-terrorism-women-jihad-paris-gas-cylinder-islamic-state-terrorist-commando>

The arrest of four Frenchwomen linked to a failed Paris terror plot has exposed the increasing role women are playing in conducting attacks as ISIL comes under increasing pressure. Profiles of the four women detail their paths to radicalization and affiliations with other known jihadists.

"Women and the Longevity of the Islamic State." *Soufan Group*. February 12, 2016. <http://soufangroup.com/tsg-intelbrief-women-and-the-longevity-of-the-islamic-state/>

Women are essential to ISIL's vision of a utopian society. In the face of territorial losses, the group hopes to ensure its longevity, in part through a continued flow of female recruits to produce offspring for jihadists to groom.

Saltman, Erin Marie., and Melanie Smith. "'Till Martyrdom Do Us Part': Gender and the ISIS Phenomenon." *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*. http://www.strategicdialogue.org/Till_Martyrdom_Do_Us_Part_Gender_and_the_ISIS_Phenomenon.pdf

This paper examines how and why women are recruited into IS, the role they play and what can be done to counter this. The first section of this paper examines the "push" and "pull" factors that drive women to join IS and the female-specific propaganda utilized. This propaganda presents that while women are poorly treated in Western countries that they will be "valued" as mothers of future jihadis and the protectors of

Islam. The next section of the paper provides four distinct profiles of recruited female IS members and concludes with the reality of what women face in IS held territory. The last section of the paper presents different ideas on how to prevent radicalization, and de-radicalize those already affected.

Youssef, Nancy A., and Shane Harris. "The Women Who Secretly Keep ISIL Running" *Daily Beast*, July 5, 2015. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/07/05/the-women-who-secretly-keep-isis-running.html>

Umm Sayyaf, the widow of ISIL's chief financier, Abu Sayyaf, has offered U.S. defense personnel (after her capture) an unprecedented look into the inner workings of the group. She describes a women's network within the caliphate whose duties include "recruitment, retention, intelligence, and enforcing sexual slavery.

IN DEPTH-VIEW/INSIDE LOOK

SIMILARITY TO OTHER INSURGENCY/TERRORIST GROUPS

Huang, Reyko. "The Islamic State as an Ordinary Insurgency." *Monkey Cage (Blog)*, *Washington Post*, May, 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/05/14/how-the-islamic-state-compares-with-other-armed-non-state-groups/>

The author compares the actions of the Islamic State to other terrorist and insurgent groups. Different examples are cited in which other groups, committing similar atrocities were not covered to the same degree as the Islamic State in the media. The author argues that this is mainly due to the fact that IS makes everything so visible. Anyone can see the activities posted online, whereas previous groups only received exposure from news coverage and history texts.

BLOGS ANALYZING IS AND OTHER MILITANT GROUPS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

This is a series of regularly updated blogs from different sources that analyze various aspects of different jihadist groups and look at different CT and CVE tactics.

Wing, Joel. "Musings on Iraq." (Blog). September 14, 2015 (most recent update) <http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/>

Blog written by Joel Wing, who has written for the Jamestown Foundation, CNN, Christian Science Monitor, the Center for Strategic and International Studies and several others. It focuses on as the title says- news, politics, economics and society in Iraq. Several postings have cataloged the type, number of, and casualties of attacks in Iraq by year, month, and week.

Zelin, Aaron Y. "Jihadology." (Blog) September 10, 2015. (Most recent update) <http://jihadology.net/>

A collection of videos, magazines, and other publications from the Islamic State that are collected and posted by Aaron Y. Zelin who is a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/experts/view/aaron-y.-zelin>

“Experts Weigh In” *Markaz Middle East Politics & Policy* (Blog) Brookings. July 13, 2015 (most recent update). <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/series/experts-weigh-in>

The Brookings blog titled, “Experts Weigh In” provides multi-entry series concerning countering IS propaganda, tactics and evaluating current CT strategy.

OFFICIAL REMARKS:

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS

"Trump Administration on ISIS, Al Qaeda." Wilson Center. October 23, 2017.

<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/trump-administration-isis-al-qaeda>.

This report by the Wilson Center outlines the Trump Administrations stance on ISIS and the conflict in the Middle East. The article contains a series of statements from President Trump, CIA Director Mike Pompeo, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Defense Secretary James Mattis, National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster, and Secretary of Homeland Security John F. Kelly, and General Joseph Votel. The Wilson center breaks down the statements and provides a comprehensive analysis of the Trump Administration’s posture on Syira, ISIS, and al-Qaeda.

Obama, Barack. “Remarks on Proposed Legislation Submitted to the Congress to Authorize the Use of Military Force Against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization.” *Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents* (February 11, 2015):1-3. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mth&AN=100972046&site=ehost-live>

This speech given by President Obama describes the proposed legislation that will authorize the use of military force against IS. He also discusses the level of cooperation amongst international forces against IS and addresses the reports of sinking morale amongst IS fighters.

“Transcription of Obama’s Remarks on the Fight against ISIS.” *New York Times*, September 10, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/11/world/middleeast/obamas-remarks-on-the-fight-against-isis.html? r=0>

The transcript of President Obama’s remarks on fighting IS describe the success of previous campaigns against terrorism. He then moves to describe a separation between Islam and IS and proceeds to mention their attacks and brutal tactics. President Obama then tells about the U.S. airstrikes and that the mission against IS will be a combined

operation amongst many coalition nations and will just be the responsibility of the U.S. alone.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PRESS BRIEFINGS

“Department of Defense Press Briefing by Rear Adm. Kirby in the Pentagon Briefing Room.”

News Transcript, U.S. Department of Defense. January 6, 2015.

<http://www.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=5561>

Rear Adm. John Kirby discusses the progress of the U.S. campaign against IS, halting their momentum and the future of U.S. involvement in the area. He also covers recruiting of foreign fighters by IS and what is being done for the Yazidis.

Department of Defense Press Briefing by Lt. Gen. Terry in the Pentagon Briefing Room. News Transcript, U.S. Department of Defense December 18, 2014.

<http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=5559>

This press briefing by Lt. Gen. James Terry discussing the establishment of Combined Joint task Force Operations Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) and how it’s a 40 nation coalition designed to degrade and destroy IS. In addition, Lt. Gen. Terry speaks on using the term Daesh going forward instead of IS due to the term being utilized the regional vernacular for IS and that it loosely translates to “crush underneath the foot.”

“Department of Defense Press Briefing by Secretary Hagel and General Dempsey in the Pentagon Briefing Room.” News Transcript, U.S. Department of Defense. August 21, 2014. <http://www.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=5491>

In this press briefing Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel begins by speaking on the murder of James Foley and the continued airstrike campaign against IS. He continues to describe the continued threat that IS will pose and that the U.S. is pursuing long-term campaign. The briefing is turned over to General Martin Dempsey who mentions that importance of having a stable Iraqi government as part of defeating IS. They both then answer questions regarding military operations, the attempted hostage rescue, support of the Kurdish Peshmerga and reiteration that this will be a long campaign.

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

The Growing Strategic Threat of ISIS: Congressional testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, (2015) (Statement of James F. Jeffrey of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq.) From the Washington Institute.

<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/assessing-the-strategic-threat-from-isis>

The transcript of Ambassador James Jeffrey regarding the threat of IS to the Middle East and surrounding areas. He identifies that IS is not just another violent radical Islamic extremist group but its seemingly global appeal in regards to recruitment, “nihilist

worship of violence, control over much territory and six or more million people, conventional as well as nonconventional military capabilities, and appeal as a caliphate all render it unique and very difficult to combat.” He continues to point out that the weakness of the Middle East state system does not allow for a wait and see style campaign and that operations should be accelerated. He concludes by discussing the importance of political developments in the Middle East when considering fighting IS and how Iran cannot be allowed to gain a greater foothold in the region.

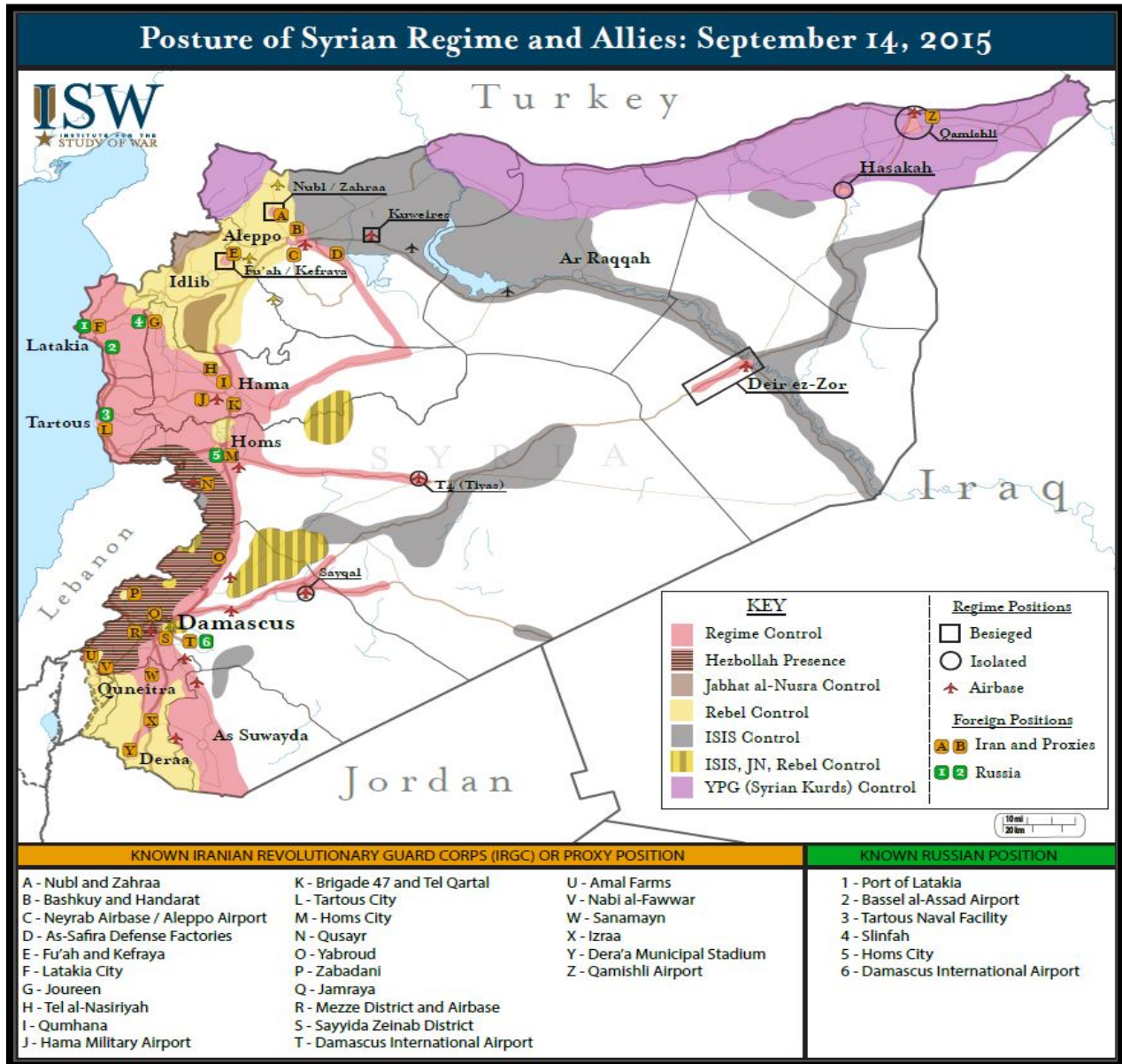
Countering ISIL’s Financing. Congressional testimony before the House Committee on Financial Services. (2014) (Statement of Patrick B. Johnston of the Rand Corporation.) From the Rand Corporation, November 13, 2014.
http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT400/CT419/RAND_CT419.pdf

In his testimony before the Committee on Financial Services, Patrick Johnston points out the sources of IS’s wealth, and how it grew over the years. The most likely areas of spending consist of expanding territorial control in Syria and into Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and Gaza, and building an infrastructure and asserting its governance over already captured areas. It is recommended that in order to greatly impact IS’s finances, the U.S. and coalition forces need to cut off IS’s access to oil, ransom money, foreign donors, and extortion payments. However, due to the clandestine nature of these transactions and limited cooperation from Turkey and regional partners who could identify the banks and donors, stopping these revenue sources will be difficult. At the end of the testimony, Johnston provides three policy recommendations: 1. Continue to conduct airstrikes against oil assets and other financial targets; 2. Develop more effective financial intelligence collection and analysis capabilities regarding IS’s financial networks; and 3. Continue supporting the deployment of U.S. advisors to Iraqi Security Forces.

PART II: ARMED GROUPS BY REGION

ARMED GROUPS IN THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR, 2011 -

MAPS



From the Institute for the Study of War: http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Regime%20-%20Iranian%20Posture%20Last%20one.pdf?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=New%20Campaign&utm_term=%2ASituation%20Report

IMPORTANT POINTS

- Over six years of civil war in Syria have left more than 400,000 dead with millions of refugees pouring into neighboring countries and across Europe.
- As anti-government rebel groups coalesce into larger coalitions, the Syrian civil war offers a ripe opportunity for Iran, Russia, and the Gulf states to exert geopolitical influence.
- These selection of articles detail the pro-regime forces and its militias, elements of the moderate and Islamist oppositions, the Kurds, and the Islamic State (IS / ISIL / DAESH).

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

BAATH PARTY

Belhadj, S. "The Decline of Syria's Baath Party." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, December 5, 2012. <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=50258&lang=en>

This article outlines the command structures of Syria's Baath party at the state, provincial, and district levels. It argues that the party has been steadily losing its grip on power since the uprising began. The author attributes the decline to "the progressive alienation of the party's cadres as violence intensified, as well as the increased involvement of the state's security services in directing the party, [which] defeated the Baath's efforts to spearhead a political counteroffensive and regain popular support for the regime."

ALAWITES AND THE RISE TO POWER

Barnard, A., and Hwaida Saad. "No Easy Route if Assad Opts to go, or to Stay, in Syria." *The New York Times*. December 24, 2012.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/25/world/middleeast/no-easy-route-if-bashar-al-assad-opts-to-go-or-stay.html>

A brief look at the people and ideologies that have influenced Bashar al-Assad's presidency and the role psychology will play in whether or not he agrees to cede power. Gives particular attention to his father's personal legacy, pan-Arabism, and Alawite fears of retribution should the country's Sunni majority gain power. Reports that top military generals may prevent Assad from leaving or accepting any compromise solution with rebel forces. The report includes a graphic on Assad's "inner circle."

"The 'Secretive Sect' in charge of Syria." *BBC*, May 17, 2012.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18084964>

This article provides a profile of Syria's Alawite population. It serves to outline their religious beliefs, their ascendancy to the top ranks of the state apparatus, and the role of Alawite-Sunni tensions in the ongoing civil war. For a more detailed look at Alawite doctrine and social history, see the article by Pipes, also listed in this section.

Pipes, D. "The Alawi Capture of Power in Syria." *Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no. 4 (October, 1989): 429-450. <http://www.istor.org/stable/4283331>

A background is provided on the Alawites and their role in Syrian society, giving particular attention to their relationship with the country's Sunni majority. The author argues that the sect's rise to power "resulted from an unplanned but sectarian transformation of public life in Syria....internal divisions caused non-Ba'th civilian Sunnis to lose power. This provided an opening that Ba'thist officers of Alawi origins exploited." The 2011 uprising was predicted nearly two decades in advance: "It appears inevitable that the Alawis - still a small and despised minority, for all their present power - will eventually lose their control over Syria. When this happens, it is likely that conflicts along communal lines will bring them down, with the critical battle taking place between the Alawi rulers and the Sunni majority. In this sense, the Alawis' fall - be it through assassinations of top figures, a palace coup or a regional revolt- is likely to resemble their rise."

THE 2011 UPRISING

Hinnebusch, R. "Syria: From 'Authoritarian Upgrading' to Revolution? *International Affairs* 88(1), (Jan. 20, 2012):95-113.

The article states that Bashar al-Assad's early program of 'reform' was really a solidification of his father's authoritarian regime, an effort to win over marginalized elites by implementing crony capitalist policies. The solidification of Bashar's policies are seen as leading to the 2011 uprising, framing the latter as a function of "the overconcentration of power and patronage in the ruling clan....the spread of electronic media [that] allowed political mobilization to take place as the party's incorporative capacity weakened and...the absence of an alternative integration of youth into jobs that would give them a stake in the status quo...."

ARMED GROUPS: INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW OF ARMED GROUPS AND STATES IN SYRIA

Laub, Zachary. "Who's Who in Syria's Civil War." Council on Foreign Relations. April 28, 2017. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/whos-who-syrias-civil-war>.

The report from the Council on Foreign Relations attempts to demystify the complex sides fighting in the Syrian civil war. The article goes into detail in breaking down the various elements fighting on each side of the war, and describes their motivations for doing so, and who makes up each group.

"Syria crisis: Where Key Countries Stand." *BBC News*, October 30, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-23849587>.

This article from BBC provides an overview of the major international players that have become involved in the Syrian war. BBC presents this guide to Syria during a time when the nations are meeting in Vienna to determine an international plan for dealing with the conflict.

Lund, Aron. "The Non-State Militant Landscape in Syria." *Combating Terrorism Center*. August 27, 2013. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-non-state-militant-landscape-in-syria>

Provides an in-depth overview of anti-Assad rebel groups; hardline Islamist factions; Syrian Kurds and the PKK; and Syrian and foreign pro-government militias.

PRO-GOVERNMENT FORCES:

OVERVIEW

Lund, Aron. "Who Are the Pro-Assad Militias?" *Syria in Crisis*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. March 2, 2015. <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=59215>

This report follows the journey of 2 journalists embedded with Assad's army. They point out that the support Assad has among various armed groups and militias goes far beyond the Shabiha (paid pro-Assad Alawites). Apart from the Shabiha, this report points out that the Assad regime began to arm and give money to various unemployed loyalists starting in 2011. It also provides the names of various pro-Assad militias: The National Defense Forces, The Baath Battalion, The Jerusalem Brigade, The Syrian Resistance, The Syrian Social Nationalist Party, and The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command.

"Syria: Pro-Government Paramilitary Forces." *The Carter Center*. November 5, 2013. https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict_resolution/syria-conflict/Pro-GovernmentParamilitaryForces.pdf

This report provides information on the various pro-government militias operating in Syria. It points out that the most prominent of these militias operate under an umbrella group: National Defense Forces. It points out how the NDF can complicate the already complicated scenario in a country riddled with a myriad of militant groups. It also draws much of its support base from various minorities who join due to the belief that the minorities are under direct threat from Sunni forces, making it sectarian. The NDF have become increasingly important as the government forces are facing defeats.

SYRIAN ARMED FORCES - SYRIAN ARAB ARMY

STRATEGY

Kozak, Christopher. "Pro-Assad Coalition Set to Escalate in Southern Syria." *Institute for the*

Study of War, January 31, 2018.

<http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/warning-update-pro-assad-coalition-set-escalate-southern-syria>.

This graphic from the ISW demonstrates the complex situation in southern Syria. The visual shows that the Syrian coalition including Russia and Iran is preparing to launch combat operations in violation of the de-escalation zone and ceasefire agreement. Officials fear that further violence in southern Syria may leave al-Qaeda an opportunity to consolidate their strength.

Kozak, Christopher. “‘An Army in All Corners’: Assad’s Campaign Strategy in Syria.” *Middle East Security Report*, No. 26. Institute for the Study of War. April 2015.

<http://understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/An%20Army%20in%20All%20Corners%20by%20Chris%20Kozak%201.pdf>

This report points out that the U.S. policy towards Syria is that Bashar al Assad is the best option for Syria. It points out that Assad is still a central actor in the war; however, the Syrian Arab Army is not ready to gain a decisive victory in 2015. It points out that the SAA continues to deal with issues of attrition and political unreliability. This is forcing the Assad regime to rely more on Hezbollah and other Iranian backed Shia militias.

SETBACKS/DEFEATS

“Al-Qaida-Led Rebels Seize Airport From Syrian Military.” *Voice of America*. September 9, 2015.

<http://www.voanews.com/content/al-qaida-led-rebels-seize-airport-from-syrian-military/2953576.html>

This news article points out that al-Qaeda and other rebel groups defeated the Syrian Army and captured an important air base in Idlib.

Blanford, Nicholas. “Admitting Military ‘Fatigue,’ Assad Pulls back, Redeploys Syrian Forces. *Al Jazeera America*. June 27, 2015. <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/7/27/with-armys-fatigue-assad-pulls-forces-back.html>

This article points out how Bashar al Assad admitted that his “all corners” war strategy is not working in the fight against rebels. It points out that desertion and casualties reduced the Syrian Army’s size from 300,000 to 80,000/100,000. The article also provides other information on the Army’s condition.

Bender, Jeremy. “Here are all of the Problems with the Reeling Syrian Army.” *Business Insider*. May 1, 2015. <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-syrian-military-is-on-the-verge-of-collapse-2015-4>

This article points out various problems with the Syrian Army in its fight against Assad. It discusses how rebel gains to the south of Damascus are demoralizing the Syrian Army. It has also divided the Army and has increased Assad's reliance on foreign forces.

COOPERATION WITH KURDISH FORCES

"Kurds, Syrian army battle ISIS in Syria's Hasaka: monitor." *Al Monitor*. June 27, 2015.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/06/27/Kurds-Syrian-army-battle-ISIS-in-Syria-s-Hasaka-monitor.html>

This article describes fighting in June 2015 in northern Syria, for the town of Hasaka. It points out that local Kurdish forces and the Syrian Army worked together to fight ISIL in this area.

LIMITED STRIKES AGAINST IS

Vinograd, Cassandra and Cheik Omar, Ammar. "Syria, ISIS Have Been 'Ignoring' Each Other on Battlefield, Data Suggests." *NBC News*, December 11, 2014.

<http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/syria-isis-have-been-ignoring-each-other-battlefield-data-suggests-n264551>

This article points out how the Syrian Army and ISIL seem to be ignoring each other on the battlefield. As of December, 2014 it seems that both parties were more focused on fighting smaller groups instead of directly and intensely fighting each other. In late November only 6% of Assad airstrikes struck ISIL targets.

COLLABORATION WITH RUSSIA

Williams, Dan. "Russia Sending Advanced Air Defenses To Syria." *Reuters*, September 11, 2015.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-arms/russia-sending-advanced-air-defenses-to-syria-sources-idUSKCN0RB1Q020150911>.

Russia is in the process of sending an advanced anti-aircraft missile system to President Bashar Al Assad's forces. Some parts of the system are already said to be positioned at an airfield in Latakia. It is also believed that Russian troops will be operating this air defense system.

Crawford, Jamie. "U.S. Warns Russia on Military Buildup in Syria." *CNN*, September 10, 2015.

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/09/09/politics/russia-syria-military-buildup-kerry-lavrov/>

Responding to reports that Russian military forces are participating in the Syrian civil war, on President Assad's side, the U.S. strongly condemned the Russian involvement. This article points out that Russian forces are providing training to the Syrian Army on the use of various military systems Russia has given to Assad's forces.

NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE

Abdel Aziz, Ghaith. "With Assad's Troops Stretched, Fighters Join NDF for Salary and Stability." *Syria Deeply*. October 8, 2014.

<http://www.syriadeeply.org/articles/2014/10/6205/assads-troops-stretched-fighters-join-ndf-salary-stability/>

The NDF is a good option for fighters that are looking for a steady salary. This article points out that some fighters join the NDF after leaving the Syrian Army. It also provides a host of other information on the dynamics surrounding the NDF.

Solomon, Erika. "Insight: Battered by war, Syrian army creates its own replacement." *Reuters*, April 21, 2013.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/21/us-syria-crisis-paramilitary-insight-idUSBRE93K02R20130421>

This article points out how joining locally based paramilitary groups that still gain a share of Assad's victories is seen as a better alternative to joining the Army. These militias have become more and more prominent as sectarian lines divided the Army. The irregular loyalists, such as the National Defense Forces, are seen as a more effective force as they are generally made up of minorities.

THE JERUSALEM BRIGADE

Dark, Edward. "Pro-regime Sunni fighters in Aleppo defy sectarian narrative." *Syria Pulse*. Al Monitor. March 14, 2014.

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/03/syria-aleppo-sunni-quds-baath-brigades.html#>

This article briefly discusses the Al Quds (Jerusalem Brigade). It describes the group as being made up of Sunni Palestinian refugees who are pro-regime. It also discusses other Sunni pro-regime groups, such as the Baath Battalions.

BAATH BATTALIONS

Lund, Aron. "The Baath Battalions Move Into Damascus." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. January 13, 2014.

<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54167>

This article points out that the Baath Battalion, created by the Syrian Baath Party, have been appearing at more government checkpoints. The purpose of the Baath Battalions, it seems, is to support the Syrian Army. The article also says that they have been recruiting more in order to step up their presence in Damascus. Fighters generally wear the Baath Party logo. The article also provides other information on the Baath Battalions, including information on their roots in the Syrian Army.

Dark, Edward. "Syrian Baath Militia Commander goes Rags-to-Riches." *Syria Pulse*. Al Monitor, November 20, 2013.

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/baath-party-brigade-syria-war-aleppo.html#>

This article discusses the commander of the Baath Battalions, Nidal. It points out how the commander was a typical underpaid civil servant until he was appointed as commander of the Baath Battalions. It says the Baath Battalions were set up in Aleppo after rebels stormed the city in 2013. The force is made up of all Baath volunteers. They received their training from the Republican Guard.

ARAB NATIONALIST GUARD

Harbi, Rana. "Arab Nationalists take up Arms in the Battle for Syria." *Al-Akhbar English*. May 5, 2014.

<http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/arab-nationalists-take-arms-battle-syria>

This article provides information on the Arab Nationalist Guard (ANG). It describes them as being from a movement linked to pan Arabism created by Abdel Nasser.

MUQAWAMAT AL-SURIYAH (THE SYRIAN RESISTANCE)

"The Syrian Resistance." *Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium*.

<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/syrian-resistance-tsr>

TRAC provides some basic information on the Syrian Resistance group. It says the group is composed mostly of Alawite and Shia. It also provides the name of the group's leader: Mihrac Ural.

SHIA FORCES

IRAN'S USE OF PROXY FORCES IN SYRIA

Smyth, Phillip. "The Shiite Jihad in Syria and Its Regional Effects." *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*. Policy Focus 138 (February 2015).

<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-shiite-jihad-in-syria-and-its-regional-effects>

This report offers a detailed analysis of Iran-backed Shiite proxy groups fighting on behalf of Bashar al-Assad in the Syrian civil war, including their recruitment techniques, weapons used, and the narrative of pan-Shiite jihad. While often stated that these groups seek to defend Shiite holy sites from Sunni opponents, the author argues that the militias' deployments reflected a "highly organized geostrategic and ideological effort" by Iran to extend its influence across the Middle East and support its ally in Syria.

HEZBOLLAH

ROLE OF HEZBOLLAH IN THE SYRIAN CONFLICT

Levitt, Matthew. "Waking Up the Neighbors: How Regional Intervention Is Transforming Hezbollah." *Washington Institute for Near East Policy*. July 23, 2015.

<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/waking-up-the-neighbors-how-regional-intervention-is-transforming-hezbollah>

This article presents the tactical and structural changes occurring as a result of Hezbollah's involvement in Syria. The group added two new commands- one on the Lebanon-Syria border and another within Syria proper- and has moved a number of fighters from southern Lebanon to fight in support of Assad. In addition to sending trainers to both Iraq and Yemen, Hezbollah's regional involvement details a significant shift from supporting the Assad regime to participating in "an existential battle for the future of the region."

De Luce, Dan. "Syrian War Takes Rising Toll on Hezbollah." *Foreign Policy*. July 9, 2015.

<http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/07/09/syrian-war-takes-rising-toll-on-hezbollah/>

This article illustrates the devastating effects the Syrian civil war is having on Hezbollah's ranks. Estimates show that while Hezbollah maintains a formidable force of 6,000-8,000 fighting alongside Assad, an estimated 700-1,000 of its fighters had been killed. This engagement may quickly become Hezbollah's most deadly conflict as casualty figures approach figures from the 1985-2000 war with Israel in southern Lebanon. Tehran is ultimately faced with two choices: continue using Hezbollah to support Assad despite the group's losses or scale back its support to preserve Hezbollah's domestic Lebanese support and ensure its military preparedness for a potential conflict with Israel.

Sullivan, Marisa. "Hezbollah in Syria." *Middle East Security Report*. No.19. Understanding War. April 2014.

<http://www.understandingwar.org/report/hezbollah-syria>

This report states that Hezbollah's increasing involvement in Syria is one of the most important aspects of the country's conflict. Although Hezbollah is secretive regarding activities in Syria, it is believed that in 2013 its role changed from an advisory capacity to participating in direct military operations against Assad's enemies. Hezbollah has a lot to lose if Assad falls, including safe havens and supply routes for Iranian weapons shipments. Hezbollah greatly complements the Assad regime with its urban warfare training and serves as a light infantry division.

Heras, Nicholas. "What is Hezbollah's Role in the Syrian Crisis." *Jamestown Foundation*, November 2, 2012.

[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=40055&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=8b8c27af7d2782ec2f41aaa0af35f4b6](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=40055&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=8b8c27af7d2782ec2f41aaa0af35f4b6)

Describes Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian conflict (Nasrallah has publicly expressed support for Assad and Hezbollah loyalists are fighting alongside the regime's forces, though the group claims they're only there to protect Lebanese civilians), often in conjunction with Iranian Quds Force units. Also reports that the civil war is exacerbating tensions in Lebanon, with Hezbollah's political rivals actively supporting the rebel movement. Worthwhile piece; article is packed with information.

CHANGING STRUCTURE OF HEZBOLLAH

Byman, Daniel., and Bilal Y. Saab. "Hezbollah in a Time of Transition." *The Brookings Institution*. November 2014. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/11/hezbollah-in-time-of-transition-byman-saab>

This report examines Hezbollah's role in domestic and regional politics since its military campaign to support the Syrian regime in the ongoing civil war. The strategic calculation to enter the conflict on the side of Bashar al-Assad damages Hezbollah's position and brings its domestic Lebanese Shia support base into question. It is costly for Hezbollah to maintain the status quo, as supporting Assad diverts resources from Lebanon proper, fails to address the risks of conflict spilling over into Lebanon, strains ongoing domestic political tensions, and enflames Sunni jihadist narratives to attack Shiite communities. The article depicts a contemporary Hezbollah that is "overtaxed militarily and on the defensive politically," fundamentally changing the nature of the insurgent group.

JAYSH AL-SHABI

OVERVIEW OF JAYSH AL-SHABI

Fulton, Will., Joseph Holliday, and Sam Wyr. "Iranian Strategy in Syria." *Institute for the Study of War and Critical Threats*. (May 2013). <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/IranianStrategyinSyria-1MAY.pdf>

From Pg. 19 onward, this report by the *Institute for the Study of War* provides information on Iran's support for Syrian paramilitaries, Hezbollah, and Iraqi Shia militias fighting for Assad. The Jaysh al-Shabi is identified as a militia Iran has been actively setting up since 2012 to fight on its behalf in Syria (Shia & Alawite Syrian recruits). These proxies are vital in keeping supply lines open to reach Hezbollah, in case Assad falls. The report goes into great detail about the involvement of Hezbollah, which can provide training and support to Iranian proxies like Jaysh al-Shabi. Some Iraqi Shia militias that fought U.S. troops in the Iraq war are also being re-oriented to support the Assad regime in Syria. Similar to Hezbollah and al-Shabi, they can help maintain an open supply line between Lebanon and Syria for Iranian weapons. The Abu al-Fadl al-Abbas Brigade is one of the largest conglomerations of Iraqi and Syrian Shia fighters.

IRAN'S USE OF PROXY FORCES IN SYRIA

DeYoung, Karen and Warrick, Joby. "Iran and Hezbollah build militia networks in Syria, officials say." *The Guardian*, February 12, 2013.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/feb/12/iran-hezbollah-milita-networks-syria>

This article contains information on the activities of Iran's sponsored groups' in Syria. However, it also discusses the Jaysh al-Shabi group. It points out that Jaysh al Shabi is receiving training and money from Hezbollah and Iran. The group is thought to be an Iran-Hezbollah joint venture in Syria receiving millions of dollars of funding from Iran.

Doran, Michael., and Salman Sheikh. "Arm the Syrian Rebels. Now." *Brookings*. February 8, 2013. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2013/02/08-arm-syria-rebels-doran-shaikh>

This article is mostly an opinion piece on supporting Syrian rebels. However, it very briefly mentions the Jaysh al Shabi and describes it as a paramilitary force controlled by the Syrian state modeled along the lines of Iran's Basij Militia.

LIWA ABU AL-FADHAL AL-ABBAS

OVERVIEW

"Liwa'a Abu Fadl al-Abbas (LAFA) - Syria." Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium.

<https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/liwa%E2%80%99-abu-fadl-al-abbas-lafa-syria>

TRAC provides an overview of the Abu Fadl al-Abbas group (LAFA). The group is composed of Syrian Shia fighters as well as many foreign fighters whose goals is to protect the Shia Sayida Zaynab Shrine as well as the Shia population south of Damascus.

"Shia Militia Arrive to Defend Shrines." *CNN*, July 2, 2014.

<http://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2014/07/02/pkg-damon-iraq-shrine-militia.cnn>

This link leads to a brief video by CNN on the Abu Fadl al-Abbas brigade.

MILITIAS AND EXTENSION OF SECTARIANISM

Mahmood, Mona and Chulov, Martin. "Syrian War Widens Sunni-Shia Schism as Foreign Jihadis join Fight for Shrines." *The Guardian*, June 4, 2013.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/04/syria-islamic-sunni-shia-shrines-volunteers>

This article discusses the Abu al-Fadl group and how it motivates foreign recruits as well as Syrians to join as part of the defense force protecting the Shia Sayida Zaynad Shrine. The group is said to have 10,000 volunteers - most of them from outside the country. It also aims to protect other Shia sites around Syria and has become the direct enemy of Al-Nusra. It provides other information on LAFA's recruiting and its objectives.

ONLINE PRESENCE

Smyth, Phillip. "What is the Liwa' a Abu Fadl al-Abbas (Lafa)?: Assessing Syria's Shia "International Brigade" Through Their Social Media Presence. *Jihadology*. May 15, 2013. <http://jihadology.net/2013/05/15/hizballah-cavalcade-what-is-the-liwaa-abu-fadl-al-abbas-lafa-assessing-syrias-shia-international-brigade-through-their-social-media-presence/>

This article published by *Jihadology* observes the way Lafa markets itself towards Shia around the world and in the region. It discusses Lafa's online presence and contains links to some of their videos. It also provides other miscellaneous information on the group's activities.

IRGC - QUDS FORCE

QUDS FORCES IN SYRIA

Saul, Jonathan., and Parisa Hafezi. "Iran Boosts Military Support in Syria to Bolster Assad." Reuters. February 21, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/21/us-syria-crisis-iran-idUSBREA1K09U20140221>

This article points out that Iran greatly increased its support to Assad in the 4th year of conflict. It says that Iran has been supplying elite troops for intelligence gathering and intensive training purposes. As part of this increase, more QUDS Force members are being deployed to Syria.

Fassihi, F. "Iran said to Send Troops to Bolster Syria." *The Wall Street Journal*, August 27, 2012. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390444230504577615393756632230.html>

The article reports an up-tick in Iranian military support for the Assad regime, including the assignment of regular soldiers and IRGC commanders to Syria. Situates the aid within the context of regional political rivalries – i.e., Iran backed earlier Arab Spring demonstrations in Sunni states, but has staunchly opposed the popular uprising in Syria, "the gateway for Iranian influence in the Arab world." Also cites a statement by an Iranian general regarding Teheran's role in Syria.

LEADERSHIP

"Iran's Military Mastermind Promises a 'Surprise' in Syria." *Business Insider/Now Lebanon*. June 2, 2015. <http://www.businessinsider.com/irans-military-mastermind-promises-a-surprise-in-syria-2015-6>

This article points out that the QUDS Force commander, Soleimani, said there will be surprising victories coming up in Syria. His comments came after he visited Syria in May

2015 and toured Latakia, where fighting has intensified. Soleimani is said to have met with the chief of staff of the Syrian Army, field commanders, and Hezbollah officials.

Black, Ian., and Saeed Kamali. "Qassem Suleimani: Commander of Quds force, Puppeteer of the Middle East." *The Guardian*. June 16, 2014.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/16/qassim-suleimani-iraq-iran-syria>

This article points out that the IRGC sees the ISIL crisis as another front. It points out that Syria is the main source of contention for the IRGC.

Filkins, Dexter. "The Shadow Commander." *The New Yorker*, September 30, 2013.

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/09/30/the-shadow-commander>

This 2013 article alleges that QUDS Forces are directing Assad's fight against Syrian rebels. Soleimani is said to have been present regularly while overseeing the assembly of various militias who would continue fighting the Sunni forces; he installed Brigadier General Hossein Hamedani as commander of these militias. Officers from QUDS also helped Assad coordinate attacks, train militias, and set up systems to monitor rebel communications. The report cites some Middle Eastern security officials as saying that the number of QUDS operatives and Iraqi Shia militiamen in Syria reached into the thousands. The primary reason behind intervention is to ensure that Syria remains open as a resources supply route for Hezbollah.

FATIMIYOUN BRIGADE

Neriah, Jacques. "Iran Deploys Afghan Shiite Brigade to Spread Its Control in Southern Syria." *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*. March 4, 2015.

<http://jcpa.org/iran-shiite-brigade-syria/>

This article points out that the leader of the Afghan Fatimiyoun Brigade, Ali Reza Tavassoli was killed in March of 2015 near Dera'a, southern Syria. It points out that family members of the brigade are offered residence in Iran as long as their relatives fight in Syria. Tavassoli was part of QUDS chief Soleimani's efforts to bring in upwards of 100,000 foreign Shia fighters to support Assad.

KURDS - SEMI PRO-REGIME

PEOPLE'S PROTECTION UNITS (YPG)

ROLE/IMPACT OF YPG IN SYRIA

"Who are the Kurds?" *BBC News*, October 31, 2017.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440>.

This article from BBC examines America's ally in Syria and Iraq, the Kurds. The article digs into where the group comes from, why they don't have a state, what has made

them so zealous in their fight against ISIS, and explores their complicated relationship with their neighbor Turkey. Finally, the article concludes by discussing the motivations of the group and their struggle for independence.

Perry, Tom. "Syrian Kurdish Militia Expands with its Territory." *Reuters*. August 14, 2015. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/08/14/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-ypg-idUKKCN0QJ1LV20150814>

This article points out that the YPG has signed up thousands of new fighters following a string of victories against ISIL in northern Syria. The group's spokesman says they are now 40,000 strong. It also provides information on the fighting over Hasakah. In 2015 alone, the YPG doubled the amount of territory it controls.

Callimachi, Rukmini. "Inside Syria: Kurds Roll back ISIS, but Alliances Are Strained." *The New York Times*, August 10, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/10/world/middleeast/syria-turkey-islamic-state-kurdish-militia-ypg.html? r=0>

This article discusses how the YPG is coordinating with U.S. air power to fight against ISIL. It also labels the YPG as America's most effective ally in Syria. It highlights new dynamics emerging out of Turkey's insistence that Kurdish militias stay away from the border area in the north.

"YPJ (Women's Protection unit)." *Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium*. <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/ypj-womens-protection-unit>

This profile by Tracking Terrorism provides information on the all-female wing of the YPJ. It points out that they are also actively participating in fighting ISIL. It also points out that male and female Kurds have been fighting side by side for decades.

COORDINATION WITH U.S.

Cafarella, Jennifer, Elizabeth Teoman, and Bradley Hanion. "Syria's "War After ISIS" Begins As Turkey Attacks America's Anti-ISIS Partner." Institute for the Study of War. January 20, 2018. <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/syria%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%9Cwar-after-isis%E2%80%9D-begins-turkey-attacks-america%E2%80%99s-anti-isis-partner>

Turkey followed their shelling of Kurdish-controlled Afrin with a bombing campaign targeting U.S. backed Kurds in northern Syria in an attempt to expand the buffer zone between the Kurds and Turkey. The U.S.'s recent declaration that it would continue to maintain a relationship and provide support to the Kurdish group created a rift in U.S.-Turkish relations. Turkey considers the U.S. backed Kurdish fighters to be a terrorist organization.

Stephens, Michael and Aaron Stein. "The YPG: America's New Best Friend?" *Al Jazeera*. June 28, 2015. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/06/ypg-america-friend-isil-kurds-syria-150627073034776.html>

This article analyzes the relationship between U.S. forces and the YPG. It also says that YPG victories in capturing Tal Abyad and fighting near Hasakah means that they control a large portion of Syrian territory and have managed to connect the various pockets of land they control.

MILITARY ENGAGEMENTS/TACTICS

Pushing Back the Islamic State: The Battle for Rojava (Dispatch 1). Vice News. 2015. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHaaKR1HaFk>

This video provides on the ground footage on fighting in and around Hasakah, where the YPG has been involved heavily.

Night Operation Against the Islamic State: The Battle for Rojava (Dispatch 2). Vice News. 2015. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTTHkEe0c2Y>

This is another video that provides on the ground footage about fighting in and around Hasakah.

EUPHRATES VOLCANO

Al Fares, Zaid. "Frontline ISIS: Raqqa Warriors and Kurdish Kobane Heroes Create 'Volcano' Coalition to Cut off Islamic State." *International Business Times*. February 20, 2015. <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/frontline-isis-raqqa-warriors-kurdish-kobane-heroes-create-volcano-coalition-cut-off-islamic-1488815>

This article discusses the Volcano Coalition as being composed of Kurdish Kobane fighters and fighters from Raqqa. It describes the coalition as mainly operating around Kobane, near the Turkish-Syrian border. However, this grouping is not completely focused on fighting the Assad regime. Instead it is focused on engaging ISIL.

DRUZE MILITIAS - SEMI PRO REGIME

JAYSH AL-MUWAHHIDEEN

OVERVIEW OF DRUZE MILITIAS

Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. "The New Druze Militia Factions of Suwayda Province." *Syria Comment*. August 8, 2015. <http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/the-new-druze-militia-factions-of-suwayda-province/>

This article discusses the various Druze militia factions of Suwayda Province. It points out that some of these factions are greater Assad loyalists than others.

Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. "The Druze Militias of Southern Syria." November 13, 2013. <http://www.aymennjawad.org/14038/the-druze-militias-of-southern-syria>

This article points out that not much has been written about the Druze militias in Syria's civil war. This blogger points out that the Jaysh al Muwahideen are mostly defensive in nature.

CHOOSING/EVALUATING ALLIANCES

Naylor, Hugh. "In new sign of Assad's troubles, Syria's Druze turn away from president." *Washington Post*, July 20, 2015.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/in-new-sign-of-assads-troubles-syrias-druze-turn-away-from-president/2015/07/17/eaf06874-18f7-11e5-bed8-1093ee58dad0_story.html

This article points out that Druze fighters are shifting away from Assad; however, many Druze do not support the rebels as they fear they are filled with radical Sunnis. It also provides other basic information on the Druze militants.

Blanford, Nicholas. "For Syria's Druze, Survival Hinges on Choosing the Right Ally." *Al Jazeera America*. July 2, 2015. <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/7/2/druze-struggle-for-survival-in-syria.html>

The Druzes' best chance of survival is to choose the right ally. Generally, Druze fighters prefer to remain neutral in the country's conflicts; however, this civil war may force them to choose a side. The article also points out that the Druze have paid "lip service" to the Assad regime throughout the conflict but are not solidly on one side or the other.

OPPOSITION OVERVIEW:

OVERVIEW OF REBEL GROUPS

"The Opposition" *Syria Deeply*. <http://www.syriadeeply.org/background/opposition/>

Provides an overview of how the various major rebel groups such as the Free Syrian Army, Jabhat al-Nusra, and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) became involved in the fighting since the 2011 uprisings. The wide spectrum of fighting brigades among Islamists and secularists complicate the efforts to find and enforce a ceasefire deal.

"The Moderate Rebels: A Growing List of Vetted Groups Fielding BGM-71 TOW Anti-Tank

Guided Missiles.” *Hasan Mustafas*. May 8, 2015.

<https://hasanmustafas.wordpress.com/2015/05/08/the-moderate-rebels-a-complete-and-growing-list-of-vetted-groups-fielding-tow-missiles/>

This analysis outlines how Syrian factions receive BGM-71 TOW tube launched, optically-tracked, wire-guided anti-tank missiles from Arab and Western intelligence agencies. It presents an overview of dozens of rebel groups that have been supplied with TOW ATGMs.

AL- NUSRAH COMBINED GROUPS

Joscelyn, Thomas. “Al Nusrah Front, Allies Form New Coalition for Battle in Aleppo.” *The Long War Journal*. July 3, 2015. <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/07/al-nusrah-front-new-coalition-aleppo.php>

Provides a brief overview of joint ventures led by Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham in 2015. By pooling resources, jihadists have had a considerable amount of success in Syria’s north although they have met resistance from other insurgents in the south.

OPPOSITION - MODERATE COALITIONS/GROUPS:

FREE SYRIAN ARMY

OVERVIEW

“Free Syrian Army.” *Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium*.

<http://www.trackinterrorism.org/group/free-syrian-army-fsa>

This analysis outlines the FSA’s tactics, targets, and ideology as well as its leadership structure.

COLLAPSE/FAILURE OF FSA

Banco, Erin. “Four Years Later, The Free Syrian Army Has Collapsed.” *International Business Times*, March 14, 2015. <http://www.ibtimes.com/four-years-later-free-syrian-army-has-collapsed-1847116>

This article discusses the struggling Free Syrian Army. It details the failures of what was perceived to be a highly competent part of the FSA, the Al Bab.

Giglio, Mike. “U.S. Airstrikes in Syria Leave Rebel Allies to Face Extremist Backlash.”

Buzzfeed. September 24, 2014. <http://www.buzzfeed.com/mikegiglio/us-allies-in-syria-may-end-up-as-victims-of-airstrikes#.lflkLxM93>

This article investigates the 13th Division, a group included in a small CIA program to arm and train moderate rebels. Boasting a number of defectors from the Syrian regime, the moderate outlook of groups such as the 13th Division present an attractive

opportunity for Western support. However, as coalition air strikes targeted Jabhat al-Nusra positions, Western-backed rebels are “undermanned... badly outgunned... and exposed to retaliation.”

NEW SYRIAN FORCES / DIVISION 30

DIFFICULTIES WITH U.S. TRAINED FORCES

Schmitt, Eric., and Ben Hubbard. “U.S. Revamping Rebel Force Fighting ISIS in Syria.” *The New York Times*, September 6, 2015.

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/07/world/middleeast/us-to-revamp-training-program-to-fight-isis.html?_r=0

After Division 30’s tactical defeat to Jabhat al-Nusra, the U.S. shifted its policy by dropping larger numbers of fighters into safer zones as well as providing better intelligence and improving their combat skills. An overt program run by U.S. Special Forces, the Syrian Train and Equip Program (STEP) is struggling to produce a large quantity of vetted rebels. One of the biggest challenges with the program, according to the chief of staff of Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve, is the lack of “direct command and control with those forces” once they are embedded into the battlefield.

Barnard, Anne., and Eric Schmitt. “Rivals of ISIS Attack U.S.-Backed Syrian Rebel Group.” *The New York Times*. July 31, 2015.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/01/world/middleeast/nusra-front-attacks-us-backed-syrian-rebel-group.html>

This article examines how Jabhat al-Nusra attacked Division 30, leading to the U.S.-led coalition to conduct airstrikes for the first time in defense of Western-backed rebels. Coming one day after Jabhat al-Nusra’s abduction of various Division 30 members, the article details how the al-Qaeda affiliate wants to defeat the U.S.-backed group.

LIMITED EFFECTIVENESS OF DIVISION 30

Shaheen, Kareem. “US-trained Syrian Rebels Refuse to Fight al-Qaida Group after Kidnappings.”

The Guardian. August 6, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/06/syrian-rebels-nusra-front-al-qaida-kidnapping>

U.S. trained rebels who suffered kidnappings at the behest of Al Nusra have refused to fight the AQ affiliate. The article also has other information on Division 30, as well as some analysis on its rough start.

SOUTHERN FRONT

Khatib, Lina. “Syria’s Last Best Hope: The Southern Front.” *The National Interest*. July 6, 2015.

<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/syrias-last-best-hope-the-southern-front-13263>

This article describes the Southern Front as a moderate opposition making gains in the southern part of the country. It points out that empowering the Southern Front is important as the Assad regime is not targeting ISIL and is allowing it to attack the moderate opposition. This article also points out that the Southern Front is a sub coalition of FSA fighters.

Rand, Dafna H., and Nicholas Heras. "The South Will Rise Again." *Foreign Policy*. December 29, 2014. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/12/29/the-south-will-rise-again-syria-deraa-southern-front/>

This article provides a list of groups that had signed on to the Southern Front moderate coalition. It also provides various analysis regarding this coalition.

OPPOSITION - ISLAMIST COALITIONS/GROUPS

AL QAEDA - JABHAT AL-NUSRA

OVERVIEW

Casagrande, Genevieve . "Al Qaeda Clearing the Path to Dominance in Southern Syria." Institute For the Study of War. November 22, 2017. <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/al-qaeda-clearing-path-dominance-southern-syria>.

AQ is seeking to establish a greater foothold in Syria by targeting the leadership of anti-Assad opposition groups and Syrian government officials as well. Almost 50 percent of the assassinations and attempts were against U.S. backed or formerly U.S. backed groups. This map details the target types and methods utilized from August 5, 2017 to November 21, 2017.

Shaheen, Kareem. "US-trained Syrian Rebels Killed and Leaders Captured by al-Qaida Affiliate." *The Guardian*. July 31, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/31/us-trained-rebels-killed-captured-syrian-al-qaida-affiliate-nusra>

This article describes how the first group of U.S. trained and backed Syrian fighter were immediately attacked and disrupted by Al Nusra.

Corcoran, Mark. "Islamist Militant Group Al Nusra Re-Emerging as Key Rebel Faction Fighting to Overthrow Bashar al-Assad." *ABC News Australia*. May 15, 2015. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-15/jabhat-al-nusra-explainer/6473404>

This article discusses Jabhat al-Nusra's presence in northwest Syria and its competition with ISIL. Jabhat al-Nusra continues to take advantage of the international community's

focus on ISIL by seizing large quantities of weapons from rival militant groups, capturing Syrian cities, and overrunning a strategically significant military base.

“Jabhat al-Nusra” *Mapping Militant Organizations*. Stanford University. November 12, 2014.
<http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/493>

A detailed account of leadership, ideology, tactics, and relationships with other groups is provided in this piece.

“Profile: Syria’s al-Nusra Front” *BBC*. April 10, 2013.
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-18048033>

This article describes the group’s role in the Syrian civil war after al-Nusra rejected merging with the Islamic State of Iraq.

Arango, Tim., Anne Barnard, and Hwaida Saad. “Syrian Rebels Tied to Al Qaeda Play Key Role in War.” *The New York Times*, December 8, 2012.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/09/world/middleeast/syrian-rebels-tied-to-al-qaeda-play-key-role-in-war.html?hp>

Describes Jabhat al-Nusra as “one of the uprising’s most effective fighting forces” and the “lone Syrian rebel group with an explicit stamp of approval from AQ.” It also ties the group to AQI and wealthy Gulf state patrons. Reports show that the strategies and tactics of Nusra fighters reflect lessons learned from AQI’s experience in the 2000s. The U.S. plans to blacklist the group as a terrorist organization, which requires a new look at the dynamics of the larger opposition movement.

THREAT TO U.S.

Ackerman, S. “Al-Qaeda Faction in Syria Contemplates U.S. attack, IC warns.” *The Guardian*, January 29, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/29/al-qaeda-syria-nusra-front-intelligence-threat>

The Nusra Front “does have aspirations for attacks on the homeland”, James Clapper, the director of national intelligence, told the Senate intelligence committee. Clapper pointed to the deterioration of Syria during three years of violence – a situation he compared to the federally administered tribal areas (FATA) in Pakistan that became a haven after the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan for al-Qaida. Evidence also existed of training complexes and over 26,000 “extremist” fighters in Syria.

AL QAEDA - KHORASAN GROUP

Yan, Holly. “Terrorist Leader Killed in Drone Strike -- but What is the Khorasan Group?” *CNN*. July 22, 2015.
<http://www.cnn.com/2015/07/22/world/what-is-the-khorasan-group/>

This article provides a description of the Khorasan Group, a collection of al-Qaeda operatives who moved to Syria with a mission to find new ways to attack the U.S. and Europe. In comparison to other groups such as ISIL and Jabhat al-Nusra, the Khorasan Group is believed to use most of its energy plotting external attacks in the West.

Kedmey, Dan. "Worse Than ISIS? A Primer on the Khorasan Group." *Time*. September 23, 2014. <http://time.com/3421701/khorasan-al-qaeda-iraq-isis-syria/>

This article provides a brief overview of the Khorasan Group's strength, leadership, and tactics.

AHRAR AL-SHAM

OVERVIEW

"Ahrar al Sham / Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya." *Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium*. <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/ahrar-al-sham-harakat-ahrar-al-sham-al-islamiyya>

Tracking terrorism describes Ahrar Al Sham as a typical guerrilla group. It points out that Ahrar al Sham has not been involved in suicide bombings and mainly focuses its efforts against government forces. It also points out that this group coordinates and works with Jabhat Al Nusra. The link also contains some videos on the group.

AL-SHAM'S AQ TIES INHIBIT U.S. COOPERATION

Hubbard, Ben. "In Syria, Potential Ally's Islamist Ties Challenge U.S." *The New York Times*. August 25, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/26/world/middleeast/ahrar-al-sham-rebel-force-in-syrias-gray-zone-poses-challenge-to-us.html>

This article points out that Ahrar Al- Sham is one of the most powerful groups fighting Assad and has even called for engagement with the West. The article also states that beating Assad may require the U.S. to cautiously engage with groups like Ahrar Al Sham.

Ford, Robert S., and Ali El Yassir. "Yes, Talk with Syria's Ahrar al-Sham." *Middle East Institute*. July 15, 2015. <http://www.mei.edu/content/at/yes-talk-syria%E2%80%99s-ahrar-al-sham>

This opinion piece describes the Ahrar Al- Sham as the "most important" group fighting against Assad. The author also argues that the U.S. should open a dialogue with the group, even though it is closely associated with Nusra. It also says that Ahrar al Sham is a radical group that promotes Islamic law.

ANSAR AL-SHARIA

Joscelyn, Thomas. "Al Nusrah Front, Allies Form New Coalition for Battle in Aleppo." *Long War Journal*, July 3, 2015.

<http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/07/al-nusra-front-new-coalition-aleppo.php>

This entry provides information on the latest Islamists coalition coming out of Syria, the Ansar Al Sharia. This coalition includes Jabhat Al Nusra, Ahrar Al Sham, Ansar Al Din, and other likeminded Islamist groups for the Battle of Aleppo. The article also provides a brief overview of joint ventures led by Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham in 2015. By pooling resources, jihadists have had a considerable amount of success in Syria's north although they have met resistance from other insurgents in the south.

Mrou, Bassem. "Syrian Rebel Coalition Ansar al-Sharia Launches Attacks in Aleppo." *The Star*, July 3, 2015.

<http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2015/07/03/syrian-rebel-coalition-ansar-al-sharia-launches-attacks-in-aleppo.html>

This article describes further fighting carried out by the Ansar al Sharia coalition against government troops in control of Aleppo.

LEVANT FRONT

Lund, Aron. "The Levant Front: Can Aleppo's Rebels Unite?" *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. December 26, 2014.

<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=57605>

This article provides information on the Levant Front coalition. This coalition was composed of nearly all the Sunni extremist groups, except Al Qaeda and ISIL.

ISLAMIC FRONT

"Islamic Front - Syria." *Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium*.

<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/islamic-front-syria-0>

This link provides information on the Islamic Front coalition. This was an older coalition, formed in 2013, and is composed of the major rebel groups in Syria. The group included: Harakat Ahrar as-Sham, Suqur as-Sham, Liwa at-Tawhid, Jaysh al-Islam, Jabhat al-Kurdiyya, Liwa al-Haqq and Ahrar as-Sham.

HARAKAT HAZM

Ali, Abdallah. "Jabhat al-Nusra Overtakes Hazm in Aleppo Countryside." *Al Monitor*, March 3, 2015.

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2015/03/syria-aleppo-countryside-hazm-movement.html>

This article points out how Harakat Hazm was given advanced U.S. weapons such as TOW missiles. However, the group was still overrun by Jabhat al Nusra. It also points out

how international coalition airplanes did not help Hazm when Nusra stormed all of its strongholds and defeated the group.

Dettmer, Jamie. "Main U.S.-Backed Syrian Rebel Group Disbanding, Joining Islamists." *The Daily Beast*. March 1, 2015. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/03/01/main-u-s-backed-syrian-rebel-group-disbanding-joining-islamists.html>

This article points out how the Harakat Hazm was one of the U.S.' favorite groups to sponsor. However, recently the group has been disbanding after facing a string of defeats at the hands of various Islamists. More and more of its members are also linking up with ISIL.