

FORUM : SECURITY COUNCIL

ISSUE : ISIS CONTROLLING FOSSIL FUELS

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Introduction:

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, also known as ISIS or even Daesh, is a brutally violent terrorist group in today's modern world responsible for more than 26 359 terrorist attacks since 2014 including the recent murder of at least 39 sunbathing vacationers in Tunisia, and the destruction of historical artifacts.

Initially a small insurgent group in Iraq, who previously had attempted to destabilize the US military and ultimately led to a focus in Syria by 2006, ISIS is today stunningly powerful and one of the best funded terrorist organisation in the world. By 2014 ISIS had accumulated an incredible amount of wealth notably by seizing oil fields in Northern Iraq and all throughout Syria. By doing so, ISIS now receives an "income" of over one million dollars a day, amount that has already been significantly reduced by US military airstrikes on oil fields in attempts to stop the convoy of these resources. However the problem still persists as the infrastructures that are destroyed are easily rebuilt in a matter of days, and the black market that has developed only gets bigger overseeing an estimated 6 million people and trading with countries such as Syria, Turkey, Iran and even Jordan. Furthermore, the organisation only accepts cash when smuggling the resources, making it very hard to track down.

One may wonder why there are no sanctions against oil being sold by ISIS. This is due to the black market - that essentially we cannot control - in which buyers buy the item at a very advantageous discount making it impossible to sanction the countries that are purchasing oil from ISIS as they will never admit to it.

Definition of key terms:

Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS): "The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) is also known as the Islamic State, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and *ad-Dawlah al-Islamiyya fil'Araq wa-Sham* (Daesh). These names and acronyms are used interchangeably Led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS is a descendent of al-Qaeda in Iraq, one of the most brutal insurgent groups in Iraq between 2003 and 2007. After the death of its founder, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2006, it merged with eight other insurgent groups to form the Islamic State of Iraq." - according to CFR Backgrounders

Caliphate : "A caliphate is a historical Sunni Muslim institution of leadership that combined political and religious offices. The first caliph was Abu Bakr (successor to the Prophet Mohamed) in the seventh century and the last caliph was Abdul Mecid II, the Ottoman Sultan deposed in 1924. As with most religious terminology, the "caliphate" is a contested term, but a leader or caliph of most Muslims existed for thirteen centuries in one form or another. In theory, the caliphate is expected to



enforce sharia as state law and maintain unity of Muslims under one ruler. Radical Islamist groups from the non-violent Hizb ut-Tahrir to the violent Al-Qaeda or ISIS all seek to re-establish a caliphate that applies their understanding of sharia as state law” -According to Tony Blair Faith Foundation

Sunni: “Also called Sunnite. a member of one of the two great religious divisions of Islam, regarding the first four caliphs as legitimate successors of Muhammad and stressing the importance of Sunna as a basis for law.” ISIS fighters are Sunnis and the tension between the two religious groups is a powerful recruiting tool for ISIS. -According to Academic

Shia : “One of the two main branches of Islam, followed by about a tenth of Muslims, especially in Iran, that rejects the first three Sunni caliphs and regards Ali, the fourth caliph, as Muhammad's first true successor” -According to Academic

Sunna : “The traditional portion of Muslim law, based on the words and acts of Muhammad, and preserved in the traditional literature.” -According to Memidex

Background Information

In order to understand ISIS and the way they operate, it is also important to understand the link that existed between ISIS and Al-Qaeda.

Before the group renamed itself ISIS (short for Islamic State in Iraq in Syria), it was known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq. During the “surge” of 2007, US troops and allied Sunni soldiers defeated Al-Qaeda in Iraq but did not destroy the group completely. By 2011 the group had started rebuilding itself and gained many soldiers (that were previously prisoners held by the Iraqi government) that fought by their side after they were freed by the group in 2012-2013.

In the meantime they fought in Syria, where peaceful protests descended into violence in mid-2011 and 2012. Ultimately they created a foothold in Syria around August 2011, and participated in the fight against Bashar al-Assad’s regime. This helped them gain fighters (mostly syrian rebels that joined the ranks) and battlefield experience.

Tension between Al-Qaeda and ISIS started growing when al-Qaeda in Iraq rebranded as ISIS in 2013. Disagreements over Syria is what pushed their relationship to the breaking point. ISIS claimed control of the official al-Qaeda faction in Syria, Jabhat al-Nusra, and defied al-Qaeda’s orders to back off. ISIS also defied orders to kill fewer civilians in Syria. In other words, al-Qaeda in Iraq (ISIS) became so violent that al-Qaeda wanted to break ties with them.

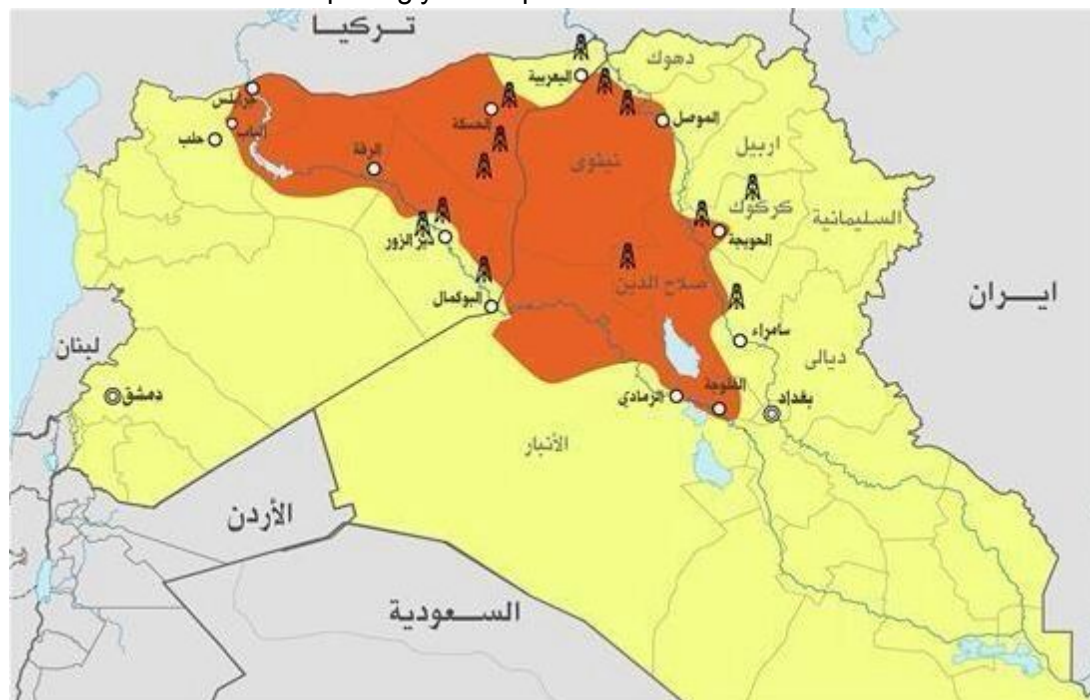
This led to their inevitable divorce in February 2014. In fact, political scientist at Haverford College Barak Mendelshon writes that their relationship "had always been more a matter of mutual interests than of shared ideology."

Some experts believe ISIS may overtake al-Qaeda as the most influential group in this area globally.

Since 2004 when they pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda and even after their divorce in 2014 ISIS’s goal remains the same : establish a hardline Sunni Islamic State.



Today, ISIS controls an important amount of territory in Iraq as well as Syria (roughly the size of Belgium). In 2006 they released a map with the limited territory they would like to control - which surprisingly overlaps with a lot of oil fields.



Territory occupied by ISIS and the oil plants they control

However other maps show ISIS's ambitions stretching all across the Middle East, and some have even include territory in North Africa.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved:

Although the conflict centers around Iraq and Syria, countries from all five continents are involved, including the United States, Australia, France, Germany, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and so forth. These countries actively fight against ISIS by participating in airstrikes, funding humanitarian missions in Iraq (example : Australia), providing Kurdish forces in Iraq with military weapons and other equipment (example: Germany), and so on.

Iran's government (a shia government) has also carried out direct military involvement, openly conducting airstrikes on ISIS targets in Iraq.

Unfortunately the UN and other NGO's cannot take concrete action as explained by the Daily Signal :

"The United Nations was created to maintain international peace and security, promote self-determination and basic human rights, and protect fundamental freedoms. Regrettably, the U.N. has produced more disappointment than success in realizing these high aspirations. A great deal of the blame for this failure is due to



divergent interests among the member states that have prevented the organization from taking decisive, timely action.

However, the U.N. can serve a valuable purpose as a forum where nations can debate shared concerns and collaborate on joint efforts to address them and some initiatives, like peacekeeping missions, are often more politically acceptable as a U.N. operation than they would be otherwise.”

Timeline of events:

(according to CNN)

2004 - Abu Musab al-Zarqawi establishes al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).

2006 - Under al-Zarqawi, al Qaeda in Iraq tries to ignite a sectarian war against the majority Shia community.

June 7, 2006 - Al-Zarqawi is killed in a U.S. strike. Abu Ayyub al-Masri, also known as Abu Hamza al-Muhajer, takes his place as leader of AQI.

October 2006 - AQI leader Abu Ayyub al-Masri announces the creation of Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), and establishes Abu Omar al-Baghdadi as its leader.

April 2010 - Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi becomes leader of ISI after Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Ayyub al-Masri are killed in a joint U.S.-Iraqi operation.

April 8, 2013 - ISI declares its absorption of an al Qaeda-backed militant group in Syria, Jabhat al-Nusra, also known as the al-Nusra Front. Al-Baghdadi says that his group will now be known as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS).

June 10, 2014 : Isis seizes control of Mosul, Iraq’s second largest city, then the day after the group takes Tikrit.

June 29, 2014 : Isis declares a caliphate across controlled areas in Syria and Iraq while calling for global allegiance. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declares himself the leader – or caliph - of the 1.8 billion Muslims all over the world.

July 3, 2014 – ISIS takes control of a major Syrian oil field, al-Omar. It is the country’s largest oil field and can produce 75,000 barrels of oil daily.

July 17, 2014 – In Syria’s Homs province, ISIS claims to have killed 270 people after storming and seizing the Shaer gas field.

August 6 2014 : Kurdish forces join the fight against Isis.

August 8, 2014 : US President Barack Obama authorises the first air strikes, which subsequently drop bombs outside the Kurdish city of Erbil, where Isis movement had sparked a mass exodus.

August 19 2014: Isis’ media arm uploads a video entitled “Message to America,” showing the beheading of the American journalist and hostage James Foley. The



masked militant, who speaks with a British accent, demands the US ceases air strikes.

September 5, 2014: The US announces the formation of a coalition to “destroy the threat posed by Isis”. The ten-nation coalition comprises of US, Britain, France, Germany, Canada, Australia, Turkey, Italy, Poland and Denmark.

March 12, 2015: Boko Haram, the Islamist militant group in northern Nigeria pledges allegiance to Isis. Isis accepts.

Previous attempts to solve issue:

This specific conflict is relatively recent, therefore not many actions have been taken directly on the “battlefield” except of course a few airstrikes on oil fields in order to slow down their progress. However, the US have been waging a campaign to destroy ISIS. Very recently Turkey has agreed to assist the US with their airstrike.

Of course many humanitarian missions have been led by different association, and some borders have been opened to Syrian refugees seeking asylum in Europe.

Possible Solutions:

The situation is radicalizing itself day after day, and although there are many feasible solutions some of them may only increase tensions, a military ground action per example. Not only is it extremely dangerous, it would also be a third Iraq invasion, and the two previous invasions’ result were mitigated.

Continuing to bomb the oil fields is an idea but it does not eliminate the threat and it would also destroy Iraq’s economy, let’s not forget that those infrastructures are also easily rebuilt.

Today Iran and US (traditional enemies), and countries all around the globe are cooperating against ISIS although their plans are still unknown.

In any case, it is important to eliminate ISIS and the threat they represent as well as protect the families in peril.

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