

When borders are meaningless: the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham

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Left: Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi; Right: Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi

Summary: *The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham's (ISIS) recent sweep across northern Iraq towards the capital has stunned the international community. But the group's sights are set further than Baghdad - they are set on the Levant more widely. Whilst various internal dynamics will determine the success of the group in countries such as Jordan and Lebanon, we cannot afford to assume that the 'ISIS threat' will be restrained by borders.*

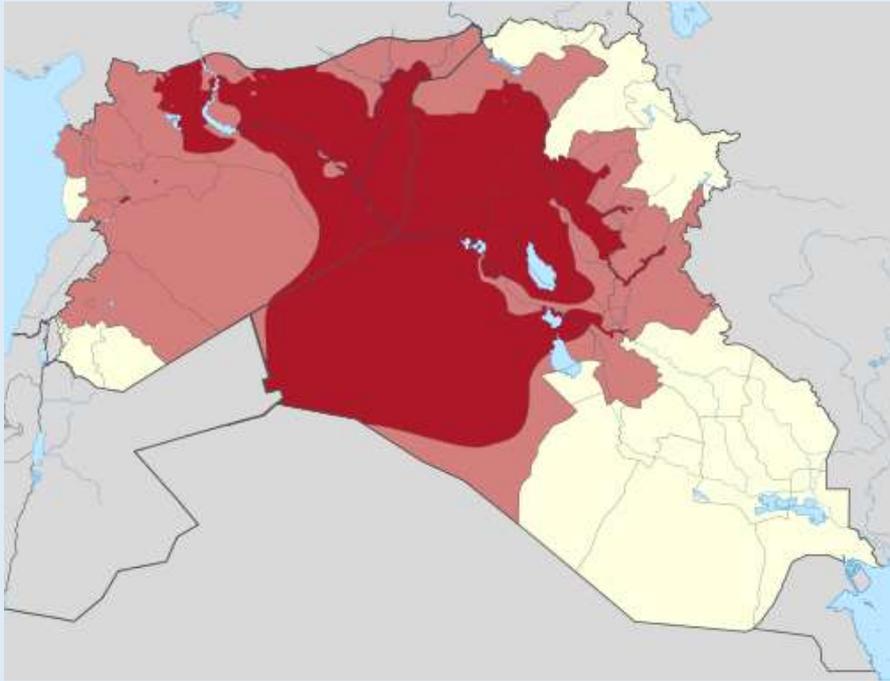
In 2011, it seemed that the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) was on the decline - seemingly quashed by 2007's Anbar Awakening. As US troops prepared to withdraw, analysts predicted that the group would never again rise to the dominance it had experienced during the Sunni insurgency of 2006. "The organization is certainly weaker than it was at its peak five years ago and is unlikely to regain its prior strength," wrote Michael Schmidt and Eric Scmitt for the New York Times in November 2011¹.

But today, the Islamic State in Iraq - now the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) - is back on the scene with a vengeance, its recent swarm across northern Iraq stunning the international community. Since its push into Syria in 2013, its name has risen to the forefront of the jihadist community - gaining a reputation for its extreme brutality, a group disowned even by al-Qa'ida's al-Zawahiri. Then in June, the situation seemed to implode: the group rapidly seizing control across vast swathes of Iraq - capturing Mosul, Tikrit, Tal Afar, and even the Turaibil border crossing with Jordan. And it is not just Syria and Iraq which are feeling the weight of ISIS. With the group paying scant regard to territorial boundaries and seemingly set on spreading across the Levant more widely, countries such as Jordan and Lebanon are starting to feel the group's unwelcome gaze. "We will go to Jordan and Lebanon, with no problems, wherever our sheikh wants to send us," said one of the British jihadists on the ISIS recruitment video released recently. As

it declares the end of the Sykes Picot Agreement on social media, and celebrates the formation of an Islamic Caliphate with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as its head, it seems that there is little stopping ISIS.

.THE ORIGINS OF THE ISLAMIC STATE IN IRAQ AND AL-SHAM.

Today's ISIS has a rather lengthy, and complicated history. It began in Jordan, when a resident of the north-eastern city of Zarqa - a man known as Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi - returned from Afghanistan and established *Bayat al-Imam* under the influence of Jordanian Salafist thinker, Muhammed al-Maqdisi. With the group's aim to overthrow the monarchy and establish an Islamic regime in Jordan - something Zarqawi was extremely vocal about² - Zarqawi and Maqdisi were both arrested and imprisoned in Suwaqa prison in 1994 as part of the wider crack-down on militants by the Jordanian authorities. Following his release in 1999 - the result of an amnesty provided by newly crowned King Abdullah - Zarqawi travelled from Jordan to Peshawar, and on into Afghanistan before entering Iraq shortly after the US invasion in 2003. Here, he quickly started work under the orders of Osama Bin Laden's military chief, Muhammad Ibrahim Makawi, helping militants slip into the country from Syria, resulting in Zarqawi essentially acting as the "regional 'emir' of Islamist terrorists in Iraq"³. In 2004, Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Bin Laden,



Map showing extent of territory claimed by ISIS in Syria and Iraq (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

and his group became *Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad Rafidayn* ('the Organisation of Jihad's Base in the Country of the Two Rivers') - essentially known as 'Al Qa'ida in Iraq'. Joining with various other insurgent groups such as *Jeish al-Taiifa al-Mansoura* (Army of the Victorious Sect), Zarqawi's forces joined to form the Mujahideen Shura Council (MSC) which, following Zarqawi's death in June 2006, was renamed the 'Islamic State in Iraq', with Abu Abdullah al-Rashid al-Baghdadi as its head (later replaced by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi - a man nicknamed the 'invisible sheikh'⁴ - following Abu Abdullah's death in 2010).

Between 2003-2007, ISI (and its previous forms) wrecked havoc in Iraq. It did not just attack international forces and humanitarian workers, but in line with its radical anti-Shi'ite ideology, it struck Shi'a religious

sites in an attempt to instill sectarian conflict within the country. In 2007 however, the environment changed for ISI as the US began co-opting Sunni tribal leaders during the so-called 'Anbar Awakening'. The group's popularity base shrank, and with many leaders killed in attacks, it was left crippled with no central command structure.

FILLING A VACUUM.

In the wake of the US withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, ISI managed to re-emerge and prosper within the country, exploiting the ISF's inability to continue effective counter-insurgency work to rebuild its networks. Yet, it was only following the group's push into Syria in 2013 that it seemed to once again grab international attention.

In 2011, al-Baghdadi had sent a subsidiary group into Syria to begin participating within the uprising. Under the leadership of Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, the group announced its creation in January 2012, naming itself *Jabhat al-Nusra li-Ahl al-Sham* (The Support Front for the People of Levant, a.k.a. Jabhat al-Nusra). ISIS itself did not enter Syria until 2013. Arriving late on the scene, it quickly made gains across the north of the country, capturing cities such as Atmeh, Azaz and Jarabulus and renaming itself the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham⁵. Yet when al-Baghdadi attempted to merge ISIS with al-Nusra, he was promptly rebuked not just by al-Jolani, but by Zawahiri himself who declared al-Nusra the only al-Qa'ida representative in the country. Known not just for its brutal tactics and wanton violence against the fellow opposition, but also for its view of itself a 'state' which can exert its rule over others (rather than a faction within the broader opposition), ISIS has received extensive criticism from al-Qa'ida central, as well as the wider opposition landscape.

The group is certainly aware of its poor reputation, and remembering just how detrimental its loss of support in Iraq had been, ISIS has been working to win the hearts and minds of Syrians - attempting to build a softer, more favourable, image for itself. Last August, it went so far as to hold ice-cream eating competitions for young boys, Qur'an-reading competitions for girls, and tugs of war between ISIS and al-Nusra supporters in Aleppo⁶. Max Fisher also reported on the group's decision to hand out toys to youngsters for Eid al-Fitr - the toys

bizarrely being Spiderman and Teletubby dolls⁷.

Yet it is questionable how far its re-branding efforts have gone. Opposition groups continue to attack ISIS strongholds, and with many of those under its control living in a state of constant fear, the group continues to be referred to by its derogatory name of 'Da'ish (داعش)⁸. The group's brutality has not subsided - if anything, it

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has increased since the new year. In January, the group was responsible for beheadings *en masse*, as well as a car bombing killing 33, in central Jarabulus⁹ - for which members were called to repent. More recently, on 29 May 2014, the group reportedly kidnapped an estimated 133 school children aged 13 and 14 from the Syrian-Kurdish town of Ain al-Arab - a kidnapping which, unlike that by Boko Haram in Nigeria, has received remarkably little attention. “Two of the boys who escaped told the media that ISIS was forcing the children to undergo lessons in Sharia and jihadist ideology, and one of these boys said that ISIS beat the children who misbehaved,” reported Human Rights Watch¹⁰.

And yet, even whilst the international community's attention has been focussed on

Iraq, ISIS has continued to make advances within Syria, moving closer towards Turkey and in early July seizing the al-Tanak oil field close to Deir ez-Zor, as well as the strategically important al-Omar oil field¹¹¹². So how does ISIS continue to expand in Syria? In part, it is a result of the group's history of insurgency in Iraq and its deep financial reserves¹³ - both of which have helped the group stand out within the opposition landscape. In an environment in which the majority of groups are fragmented and disorganized, ISIS' discipline and possession of a vision, expertise and superior weapons has resulted in fighters - both Syrian and international - flocking to join. Now, with US-made weapons and even deeper financial reserves looted from Mosul, the group is stronger - and wealthier - than ever.

Of additional importance is ISIS' role in 'filling a vacuum' - the group's behaviour somewhat resembling that of the Taliban within Afghanistan¹⁴. As members of the Syrian interim government recently commented at an IISA-organised event at the House of Lords, ISIS has been able to carve out space through filling the vacuum left by the collapsed state - paying salaries, establishing its own courts, setting up bakeries selling bread at subsidised rates and distributing fuel. Should another group prove itself capable of filling the state's void, it is unlikely that ISIS would continue to do so well. "If the moderate opposition receive sufficient funding, it too could provide a pseudo-state in Syria - and quite possibly

oust ISIS," commented one of the members of the interim government.

ONE PIECE OF THE PUZZLE.

Unlike Syria, ISIS in Iraq has been enjoying considerably more popular support - largely the result of the political context within the country. Its recent sweep is certainly shocking - seizing Mosul overnight, and seemingly marching towards Baghdad - but none of this should be de-contextualised. Its rapid march across the country was facilitated not just by the apparent collapse of the Iraqi forces, but by it capitalizing on feelings of political isolation within Sunni areas.

Whilst the collapse of Saddam's Ba'athist rule gave many Iraqis great hopes for a peaceful and democratic future, the political system which emerged in its place was distinctively biased - based largely on the Shi'a majority community. As Charles Tripp (2010) wrote, "detailed and meticulous planning had gone into the military campaign...however, there had been no corresponding effort to think about how the politics of Iraq might develop in the aftermath of the fall of Saddam Husain." Shi'as - so long repressed under Saddam's Ba'athist system, and possessing a strong communal identity - dominated the new Iraq Governing Council. Sunnis, meanwhile, concentrated in the north and west of the country, were increasingly isolated, the al-Maliki government failing to develop a political system which shared power between the two communities. And the

Sunni sense of political isolation has only been deepening. Nouri al-Maliki may have been seen as a man capable of restoring stability to Iraq back in 2006, but he has increasingly demonstrated an overly Shi'a outlook to his politics - gradually removing Sunnis from office within the government, and using excessive force against protestors demanding political reform. In December 2013, al-Maliki arrested Ahmed al-Alwani, a powerful Sunni MP, from his home in the western city of Ramadi, killing his brother and five of his guards in the raid¹⁵. The same month saw the government shutting down a peaceful Sunni anti-government protest camp outside Ramadi, resulting in major clashes¹⁶.

Such oppression of the Sunni community, and the increasingly Shi'a-leaning government, has significantly aided ISIS, pushing Sunni groups and individuals to join it, all in the hope that the insurgency will succeed in ousting the al-Maliki government. It is subsequently inaccurate to refer to recent events in Iraq purely as an 'ISIS advance' - the militias are broad, including members of Ansar al-Islam, Sunni Arab tribes in the form of the Military Council of the Tribes of Iraq, and the 'Army of the Men of the Naqshbandi Order' which is said to be dominated by Ba'athists. "This is a revolution against the unfairness and marginalization of the past 11 years," commented Sheikh Khamis al-Dulaimi, one of the tribal leaders in the Military Council of Tribal Revolutionaries¹⁷. These groups are not wholly united, either - as Hassan Hassan (2014) wrote:

*"Shortly after the takeover of Mosul last week, ISIS issued a 24-hour ultimatum to the Naqshbandis to remove posters of Saddam Hussein from the streets of Mosul, and then demanded that no other group issue a statement about events on the ground. These tensions reflect profound differences, as ISIS considers Baathists to be kafirs (infidels) while Baathists reject ISIS religious extremism."*¹⁸

What we are currently seeing in Iraq is thus more than just an ISIS insurgency. It is a Sunni insurgency - one which has been brewing for years but which ISIS has simply capitalized on. "Remove the Sunni community and ISIS would be impotent in Iraq. Without it, ISIS would never have been able to achieve such a feat," commented Raed Omari, an Amman-based political analyst.

A solution to the crisis thus lies not just in a military operation against the insurgents, but in political reform which incorporates the Sunni community. Yet al-Maliki has continued to refuse such a step - rejecting calls on 25 June for a 'national salvation government' which would have attempted to represent all Iraqi communities. Whilst al-Maliki stated that such a move would be a "coup against the constitution"¹⁹, in rejecting the move it is difficult to envisage a speedy resolution to the current crisis.

BEYOND SYRIA AND IRAQ?

With the group referring to itself as the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham, (which, most agree, is in reference to the Levant) it is crucial that we consider where it may next seek to spread. Indeed, with the Levant consisting of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and a small part of Turkey, it would not be surprising if the group were to seek further geographical expansion based on its doctrinal beliefs. As Jordanian political commentator, Marwan Shehadeh, said, “ISIS wants to reach Jerusalem crossing through Damascus and Amman,”²⁰.

Whether it can or not, however, remains an entirely different issue. In Iraq and Syria, the group’s success has largely been determined by internal dynamics - namely, the failures (or absence) of the state. The internal dynamics of states such as Jordan and Lebanon must thus be considered when discussing ISIS’ future trajectory.

I. Jordan - the region’s pillar of stability

In the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which most view as the region’s pillar of stability, concerns have been growing. ISIS has certainly not remained silent over its desire to enter Jordan - videos having emerged showing members burning Jordanian passports whilst calling for the death of the pro-western King Abdullah. Immediately

following ISIS’s capture of Mosul, when a reported 500,000 Iraqis fled to the semi-autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan, the key fear was that Jordan would soon see another wave of refugees entering its territory. “Speaking to government officials, it seems the main fear is refugees,” said Mr Omari the day Mosul fell to ISIS. “We already have more than 600,000 Syrian refugees here, and before them we had thousands of Iraqis, we just can’t cope.” Yet, as ISIS advanced west towards the Jordanian border, concern shifted to the matter of security, the Jordanian army quickly increasing its military presence

“ISIS wants to reach Jerusalem crossing through Damascus and Amman”

along the border²¹, and various media agencies issuing dire warnings. But with an extremely professional, well-trained military - one which is unlikely to ‘melt away’ in the face of the enemy as the Iraqi forces did - the government remains confident in the impermeability of its border to an advancing army: Interior Minister Hussein Majali expressing his confidence in the military’s ability to withstand the ISIS threat²², and journalists taken on tours of the border zone.



*Banners with the text “Ma’an, the Fallujah of Jordan” and ISIS flags held in Ma’an, Jordan
(Source: @Ghareeba_7, Twitter)*

Where Jordan is most concerned, however, is the threat of home-grown ISIS supporters operating within the country. In the past few weeks, ISIS’ black flag has emerged in the southern city of Ma’an, waved by disgruntled locals who declared their city “Ma’an, the Fallujah of Jordan!”²³. Crucially, such signs were seen in the city before ISIS captured Mosul - when clashes in April between local residents and security forces saw the black flag emerge, and the formation of an armed salafist group calling itself Shuhada Ma’an (Martyrs of Ma’an) which pledged allegiance to ISIS²⁴. There is certainly scope for a degree of ISIS support in Jordan. As Mr Shehadeh commented, “even though he spent a considerable period

in jail, Zarqawi was not exactly isolated in Jordan. He had a large following - inside and outside prison - communicating his messages and building his ideology within areas of the Jordanian community.” Moreover, with several thousand Jordanians fighting alongside ISIS (and Jabhat al-Nusra) in Syria, the possibility of them slipping back into the country, spreading radical ideologies, is all too possible.

And yet many Jordanians agree that, for now at least, this is not cause for concern - there are “a number of un-receptive conditions for the group in Jordan,” commented Dr Khaled Hroub²⁵. Not only have the authorities begun a security mission in Ma’an, but they have

also stepped up their anti-terror monitoring - amending their anti-terror law and arresting all militant suspects returning to the country from Syria. “We [also] have the uncompromising American and Israeli support of the status quo in Jordan, which would not permit any serious rise of the group on the longest Israeli border with any Arab country,” explained Dr Hroub. One also cannot ignore the general lack of popular support for militant salafism within the country. Having seen the chaos in Egypt, Syria and Iraq, many Jordanians are vocally averse to threatening the status quo - “nobody here wants to be like Egypt, and nobody here wants to be like Syria. Jordanians are very careful, and they are afraid that their country is going to be sucked into a vortex of chaos and instability” commented one Jordanian²⁶. Moreover, with extremely minimal sectarian division within the country, ISIS’ sectarian rhetoric is likely to fall on deaf ears.

II. Lebanon - instilling chaos?

Just as it has expressed its plans to install Islamic rule in Jordan, ISIS has stated that it hopes to instill chaos in Lebanon - using sleeper cells to orchestrate bombings *en masse* to overwhelm the state and produce an optimal environment for it to enter the fold²⁷. With its already fragmented society, a weak and vulnerable political system, and

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the heavy presence of Hizbullah - which is still busy propping up Assad - Lebanon provides particularly fertile ground for a group such as ISIS. (After all, analysts have long been predicting a return to violent civil unrest). A city such as Tripoli, which has seen years of enmity and armed confrontation between Sunni Bab al-Tabbaneh neighbourhood, and the Alawite majority Jabal Mohsen²⁸, poses a particular challenge.

Already, ISIS has claimed responsibility for the recent bombing by a Saudi national in the Duroy Hotel in Beirut’s Raouche district²⁹ - and it has promised more. “We tell the party of Satan and its army in Lebanon that this is only the beginning. Get ready for hundreds of martyrs who love the blood of Rafida”³⁰ (‘Rafida’ being a derogatory term the group uses for Shi’ite Muslims). Leaked security documents - some of which date back to April - have also emerged suggesting that the group is gearing up for attacks in Shi’ite and Christian villages in the northern Bekaa Valley³¹.

In response, Lebanon has stepped up security in the country, increasing the number of checkpoints, raiding the residences of potential jihadists, establishing concrete barricades in strategic areas and strengthening the control of its borders³². “The other night, I walked past where one of

the bombs recently exploded,” commented one Beirut resident³³. “Everything was really calm. The security services were everywhere, and I’ve not seen so many checkpoints in the city for a long time.” Other residents have expressed hope in the country’s Sunni population remaining unsympathetic towards ISIS. “Sunni Muslims in Lebanon are really moderate, I can’t imagine ISIS gaining much of a foothold” said another Beirut³⁴.

Yet despite its moderate Sunni community, and a stepping up of security across the country, some in Lebanon remain fearful. One cannot deny that Lebanese society as a whole remains vulnerable to being buffeted by the waves of the ‘Jihadi Spring’, and it is hard to imagine the security forces holding the flood back forever. Whilst unlikely to be a full-blown military advance as seen in Iraq, continued bombings would not be surprising.

A ‘NEO-JIHADIST’ MOVEMENT.

ISIS’ sight is set further than just Baghdad. It is set on the Levant as a whole. As it works in ‘dismantling’ the border between Iraq and Syria and issues warnings to the governments of Jordan and Lebanon, it is clear that this is a group with no respect for territorial boundaries. In understanding the group as it stands today, it is thus useful to view it in terms of the ‘neo-jihadist’ - a group which is neither national nor international,

but rather, more regional. Just like a group such as the Taliban which expanded across Afghanistan and Pakistan with total disregard to the border in between, ISIS is set on treating the Levant region as one country. Whilst the group has certainly expressed its desire to confront the West, taking to Twitter under the hashtag ‘#CalamityWillBefallUS’, as it stands today the group appears primarily focussed on territorial gain in the Levant.

As we continue to monitor this ‘ISIS crisis’, we must thus engage holistically. Whilst internal dynamics of countries such as Jordan and Lebanon will ultimately determine ISIS’ success - just as they did in Iraq and Syria - we cannot afford to blindly assume that this is a group which will be contained by borders.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME:

Scope & Rationale:

Jihadists represent a fraction of the larger mainstream Islamist movement, which dominates the social space in most Muslim societies. Although Jihadism is ‘lethal’, it does not possess a viable broad social base like the Muslim Brotherhood. One silver lining for Al Qaeda, however, is its affiliate organizations. In Iraq, Syria, the Maghreb, Somalia, Yemen, and Egypt, Al Qaeda has won over formidable local allies to its cause, expanding its reach, power, and numbers in the process. This string of mergers is not over. In places as diverse as the Sinai Peninsula and Nigeria, Al Qaeda-linked organizations are emerging.

In retrospect; the death of Osama bin Laden, the onslaught of global war on terror, the Arab revolution and post Arab-revolution crises etc. have seriously impacted on Jihadists landscape which is constantly changing. Jihadism today is neither transnational such as Al-Qaeda central, nor national i.e. Hezbollah, but regional. It is also increasingly more sectarian. As the Jihadists’ landscape changes; the study and understanding of Jihadism must also adapt to address the developing movement of ‘Neo-Jihadism’.

“Neo-Jihadism is a diverse, syncretic form of global organisation and interaction that emerged from within Islamic Jihadism, is unique to early-twenty-first-centuries, is increasingly sectarian and through its advocacy of violent form of war and selectively literal interpretations of sacred texts, radically differentiates itself from the traditional Jihadist forces, the faith’s mainstream and constitutes a new body of thought and actions”.

Methodology & Research areas/questions:

This programme aims to conduct fact-based analyses of actual and potential uses of militancy and Jihadism as a tactic and belief and the changing concept of ‘war’ in the Muslim world; so that we may provide policy guidance to government officials and private sector decision-makers with alternative policy analyses. The key research questions are:

- How has Neo-Jihadism developed?
- Is Neo-Jihadism a new concept of war or culture?
- How Jihadism is perceived within the Islamic world and does it still carry meanings of a ‘just war’?
- How do its adherents maintain and facilitate it to transcend borders?
- Why have neo jihadi leaders been struggling to advance a coherent and effective response to the events of the Arab Spring and what trends are emerging
- Why, despite strong rhetoric of militancy, have we witnessed little action on the part of Neo-Jihadi groups that have emerged in countries that underwent regime change as a result of the Arab Spring?

Programme Deliverables:

1. Mapping the interplay between militant groups, the states and other external actors
2. A conflict and forecast analysis on current and emerging threats that might change the Jihadist landscape
3. In depth situation analyses on above issues, regional positioning and global powers interests etc.
4. Alternative policy analyses that may serve in policy making on regional and global governance levels
5. Strategic foresight for business and stakeholders that might be involved in the crisis affected regions

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR ISLAMIC STRATEGIC AFFAIRS (IISA)

IISA is a think-tank and an intellectual forum for addressing the current and future dynamics of the Islamic-world and its interaction with Western civilisation. Based in London, IISA will create trans-Islamic and global reach. IISA seeks to establish a platform where Islamic-world's dynamics, trends, issue, problems or crises are analysed within the Islamic-world and by working on local models and realities and not against any external standards or perceptions. We will be one of the leading think-tank on the Islamic-world and its role in the contemporary global system. In a short span of time we have attracted great academic support and a reputation for both open and track-II dialogues. IISA is the only think tank initiative that goes beyond national and regional inclinations and addresses strategic and socio-political issues/crises of the Islamic-world in its totality. For more information i.e. our mission statement, current programmes and our academic and regional expertise please visit the following links:

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- ¹² Al Arabiya (4/7/14) “ISIS militants seize another oil field in Syria’s Deir el-Zour”, - <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/07/04/Islamic-militants-seize-Syria-oil-field.html>
- ¹³ The result of funds from wealthy Gulf donors as well as self-financing work in Syria such as controlling oil wells and grain stores, the smuggling of antiquities, and the trafficking of weapons
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- ¹⁶ The National (31/12/13) “Iraq PM seeks to calm tensions after protest camp shut down”, <http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/iraq-pm-seeks-to-calm-tensions-after-protest-camp-shut>
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²⁸ Lefèvre, R. (21/5/14) “Lebanon’s Alawites at a crossroads”, Carnegie Endowment - <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55663&reloadFlag=1>

²⁹ “Two lions of ISIS, who infiltrated the city of Beirut at the Duroy Hotel, engaged a group from the General Security service loyal to the Party of Satan [*by which it means Hizbullah*]” read the statement (Asharq al-Awsat (28/6/14), “ISIS fears in Lebanon on the rise”, <http://www.aawsat.net/2014/06/article55333757>)

³⁰ Al Arabiya (27/6/14) “ISIS tells Lebanon to prepare for more attacks”, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/06/27/ISIS-warns-Lebanon-to-prepare-for-more-suicide-attacks.html>

³¹ Daily Star (6/7/14), “ISIS preparing attacks in Lebanon: report”, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jul-06/262807-isis-preparing-attacks-in-lebanon-report.ashx#axzz36lrheYda>

³² Corbeil, A. (2/7/14), “Events in Iraq makes Hezbollah vulnerable”, *the Daily Star* - <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Opinion/Commentary/2014/Jul-02/262316-events-in-iraq-makes-hezbollah-vulnerable.ashx#axzz36bb9GUg0>

³³ Personal correspondence

³⁴ Personal correspondence