

Crisis by ISIS

An analysis of ISIS's use of violence for its revolution

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Introduction

During the Civil War in Syria in 2011, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) suddenly appeared in the conflict and became internationally known for its explicit use of violence. Beheadings, torture, and the targeting of civilians are a normality for the organisation. ISIS rapidly gained territory and influence in the Syrian civil war and formed a powerful group in the Syrian Civil War who strictly controlled its subjects in its territory. When ISIS in the summer of 2014 announced the creation of the caliphate, it achieved its intentions of forming a Sunni state in which its subjects would obey the caliph and live in accordance with the traditional strict sectarian interpretation of the Islam. During social revolutions, previously excluded groups unify to become the central authority and change society and its political structures (Skocpol 1988). ISIS also rapidly mobilised former out-groups to and replaced the former elite with the creation of its caliphate. Therefore, ISIS can be understood as a social revolutionary movement, because ISIS's rapidly emerged in the Syrian civil war and is aiming to drastically change the political power institutions and society by massive mobilisation of civilians.

Considering ISIS from a social revolutionary perspective will present a new dimension on ISIS's objective of constructing a state in Iraq and Syria. ISIS tends to be analysed as an insurgent or as a terrorist group fighting against the other religious and ethnic groups in Iraq and Syria, but the revolutionary dimension of ISIS's objective tends to be ignored. Linking ISIS to social revolutions will shed a light on the progression and the operability of the organisation. The use of violence of the organisation could be understood by considering ISIS's objective of forming an Islamic state, and hence pursuing a revolution. In addition, viewing ISIS from a social revolutionary perspective can contribute to our understanding of the use of terrorism, and guerrilla tactics employed by the fighting religious groups as their use of violence can be related to their own revolutionary objective. At the same time, taking a social revolution point of view could explain how ISIS uses violence to achieve its objective.

ISIS's strict sectarian interpretation of the Islam and propaganda presents a great concern for Muslim ethnic groups in Iraq and Syria, but also non-Sunni religious group in the region. ISIS has proven to be a threat in the civil war in Syria and the other non-Islamic groups. Hence, studying ISIS from the perspective of a revolutionary perspective on ISIS can contribute to understanding the group's activity and its use of violence in Iraq and Syria. By

considering ISIS as a movement driven by revolutionary change, the use of violence can be considered and can give rise to the formation of a counter strategy. In addition, considering ISIS from a social revolutionary perspective will improve our understanding of ISIS's role in Iraq and Syria and its process of forming a state. Lastly, for policy makers, considering ISIS as not solely a terrorist group or as an insurgent, but linking this to its ideological revolutionary objective will also provide an understanding of the group's strategy. Therefore, by understanding ISIS as a social revolutionary group, the motivation of the group will have to be incorporated to avoid the rise of new revolutionary/terrorist groups.

An essential element in the analysis of ISIS as a social revolutionary group will be its use of violence to form and secure its revolution. The organisation seems to have a violent strategy which fits with its ongoing objective of consolidating and expanding its revolutionary objective. For that reason, the following research question will be addressed: how does ISIS use violence to pursue its revolution? This thesis will consider how violence is used by ISIS to achieve its revolutionary objective of creating an Islamic State. The main argument is that ISIS uses violence to protect and expand its revolutionary objective of creating and expanding its Islamic state. In the consideration of the revolutionary process of ISIS and its strategic use of violence, the hypothesis will be that ISIS is pursuing its revolution by violently filtering its population on who fits with its ideology or can be forced into compliance to create a homogeneous revolutionary group, but also that its violent strategy functions to defeat its enemies and expand its caliphate.

By tracing the development of the organisation and evaluating its process towards its main objective of forming a state, the revolutionary objective of the organisation can be analysed. Moreover, process tracing permits a deeper analysis of the creation of ISIS's violent strategy. Tracing the rise of the organisation and relating the identity of the group to the ideology and violence will develop the revolutionary context of the organisation. The temporal dimension in which ISIS's use of violence will be considered is between 2014-2016. However, different historical events (the rise of ISIS in the wake of the Iraq war, the entrance of ISIS in the Syrian civil war, and the creation of the Caliphate) have contributed to the development of the organisation. These events could be considered in the analysis within the historical context, but will only be considered to support the rise of the organisation. The progression of the counter strategy by the international community and the local fractions continues and are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Another research method adopted in this thesis is the use primary sources such as the magazine from ISIS which exposes the dynamics within the organisation. In addition, the primary sources in combination with supplementary secondary studies can be used to understand the revolutionary objective as envisioned by the organisation. Terrorist organisations frequently publish their views to gain support and publicise their message and ideology. ISIS has published its ideology in their magazines called *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. For that reason, these magazines can be used for analysing of the revolution and to illustrate their ideology, but also as they present a rather idyllic image of how life is within the organisation.

The revolutionary element and ISIS' use of violence will be evaluated by first considering the literature on ISIS's roots and its use of violence, but also the literature on social revolutions. In this chapter, the different scholarly positions and characterisations of ISIS will be considered. Especially in the light of how the group has come to existence, but also the different scholarly perceptions of the groups use of violence, and how the group uses violence to communicate its ideology and objectives. A last part of the literature review will consider the theories and literature on social revolutions and especially on Islamic social revolutions.

The second chapter will develop the context in which the revolutionary movement came to existence. This chapter illustrates the broader context in which the organisation was formed and how the identity was constructed between the aftermath of the Iraq War in 2003 and the creation of the caliphate in 2014. The focus within this chapter will be on the exclusion of Sunni Muslims in Iraq and Syria who would later join ISIS. It is also necessary to illustrate the break up between Al-Qaeda and ISIS. This split from Al-Qaeda after the Iraq war and during the rebuilding process of the Iraqi government and the political institutions. The organisation broke with Al-Qaeda based on an ideological rift in which ISIS deemed Al-Qaeda as too soft and their revolution to be unfolding too slow. The combination of these factors has enabled ISIS to become and pursue its own strategy.

While the historical context can illustrate the revolutionary roots of the organisation, the religious component is at the centre of the ideology of the organisation. Consequently, the religious element of the organisation needs to be developed in order to portray the identity of the group and how the group's use of violence enforces the cohesion of the group. In addition, it seems that violence also has the purpose of reinforcing the revolution. In order to make sense of the ISIS's instrumental use of violence against its enemies and out-groups in relation to its religious identity, ISIS's own publications might shed a light on the

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legitimisation of religious violence. Therefore, considering the magazines of ISIS can contribute to strengthen the revolutionary process of the organisation and to conceptualise the groups identity. The propaganda should, however, be treated carefully, because they provide a very biased view of the progression of ISIS's revolution.

The fifth chapter will address the group's use of propaganda and the use of violence within the caliphate. The image ISIS projects of their revolution as it could increase support and can legitimise ISIS's rule over their territory. The secondary sources suggest that there is a blatant contrast between its own portrayal of life within the caliphate and the use of violence by ISIS against its citizens. The actual living conditions within the state created by ISIS might illustrate how ISIS treats its own subjects and enforces its revolutionary ideology.

Chapter 1: State of the Art

ISIS gained global attention during the Syrian civil war as it started fighting both the Syrian army and the rebels, but also by its violent nature against the civilians. The literature on ISIS can be categorised into three broad debates. The first debate is transfixed on the historical roots of ISIS and whether the rise of ISIS was a product of the American-led invasion in Iraq in 2003 or stems from the inner conflicts within Al-Qaeda. The second debate centres on ISIS's use of violence against its enemies in relation to its religion. The last debate focuses on ISIS's propaganda. This debate puts forward that violence within the group is used to create a coherent revolutionary group or whether the use of violence is embodied by the revolutionaries. In addition, this literature review indicates the debate on social revolutions literature by linking the outbreak of revolutions to the use of violence in the Middle East. The debate on social revolutions is constructed with on the one hand classical understandings of revolutions unfolding as rapid movements restructuring the state, and on the other hand, contemporary perceptions introducing this perspective of social revolutions being achieved by violent means such as civil wars and terrorist strategies.

Historical roots of ISIS

A first group of authors tend to focus on the historical development of the organisation. In his book, the American scholar of militant Islamism William McCants traces the roots of ISIS back to the ideological differences with Al-Qaeda after the creation of the predecessor of ISIS in 2003 in Iraq¹, but also analyses its Islamic ideology (McCants 2015). He argues that the savagery of the organisation originates from its literal interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sharia, and that ISIS considered Al-Qaeda to be ignoring the implementation of these religious texts within Al-Qaeda's territory. British political scientist Holbrook also analyses the rise of ISIS, but he focuses on the organisational differences between Al-Qaeda and ISIS (2015, 96). Unlike McCants, Holbrook's article sheds a different light on the foundation of ISIS and its competition with Al-Qaeda, because Holbrook argues that ISIS separated from Al-Qaeda due to ISIS getting out of control of the al-Qaeda leaders. Both authors carefully illustrate the

¹ ISIS' split from Al-Qaeda has been a gradual process which started due to the, in ISIS's perspective weak strategy of Al-Qaeda and inaction against the non-Sunni enemies in the Middle East. While this sentiment arose already in 2006, the definitive split only came about when ISIS started participating in the Syrian Civil War in 2011

conflict between Al-Qaeda and ISIS by considering English and Arabic primary sources such as the correspondence between Al-Qaeda and reports from international organisations monitoring the region. However, both McCants and Holbrook ignore the regional component of ISIS's development in Iraq. They predominantly focus on the historical context of the rise of ISIS, but remain too focused on the ideological differences between al-Qaeda and ISIS in their analysis on the historical background. Their analysis is primarily a study of the groups historical roots rather than an examination of the broader revolutionary objective of ISIS.

Unlike McCants and Holbrook, British political scientist Turner only considers the role of ISIS in the Syrian civil war and links it to ISIS rejecting Al-Qaeda's instructions of remaining the Al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria. In his article on the strategic differences between Al-Qaeda and ISIS, Turner argues that the rise of ISIS comes from when it ignored Al-Qaeda's order to resign in the Syrian civil war in 2013 and let Al-Nusra be the Al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria. While ISIS would function as Al-Qaeda's organisation in Iraq, al-Nusra would have authority in Syria and fight in the Syrian civil war on behalf of Al-Qaeda (Turner 2015, 217–18). Turner agrees with McCants that ISIS expanded due to the competition among jihadists groups, but also argues that ISIS could develop because social groups are consistently excluded from the political process and are barely represented in politics (Turner 2015, 210) The weak Shia state building practice after the American invasion in Iraq in 2003, and the ideological differences between Al-Qaeda and ISIS together resulted in the rise of ISIS.

In contrast to McCants, Holbrook, and Turner, Joffe relates the origin of the organisation back to the geopolitical situation, as he illustrates that the American-led invasion in Iraq in 2003 replaced the Iraqi Sunni government with a Shia-led government which excluded the Sunni majority. As an effect of the newly installed weak Shia government, between 2003-2006, ISIS profited from chaos created by the lack of government control in Iraq and the marginalisation of Sunni groups, and seized control as it formed an inclusive organisation for the marginalised Sunnis in the aftermath of the Iraq War in 2003 in which the state's control broke down. Similarly, he argues that the Sunni's suffered as a majority and were discriminated in Syria under Assad's Alawite regime (Joffé 2016, 5). Both Turner, and Joffe illustrate the link between the rise of ISIS and the Iraq war, it seems that the invasion in Iraq only provided a vacuum in which ISIS could independently develop from Al-Qaeda in 2006 and exploit the lack of government control in Iraq.

The literature introduced two different explanations for the rise of ISIS with the first being the separation of ISIS from Al-Qaeda, and the second one being the American-led war in Iraq. This thesis will trace the development of ISIS as an interplay between the two factors. Whereas ISIS's ideological differences and frustration with Al-Qaeda's inaction accounts for ISIS's identity, the chaos and the competition among religious groups and tribes in Iraq in the Civil war after 2003 enabled ISIS to develop and express its ideology.

ISIS and the centrality of religious violence

While one group of scholars focuses on the historical origins of ISIS, another element, the centrality of religion, draws attention from scholars who emphasise the connection between religion and violence within ISIS. Although McCants provides a thorough historical account on the rise of ISIS and the roots of the organisation, he also illustrates the centrality of the religious beliefs and jihadism within the group. ISIS differentiated itself from its enemies by its sectarian interpretation of the Islam and its agenda to defeat the other ethnic groups to form an Islamic State and enforce the Qur'an and the Sharia within its territory. He argues that ISIS was frustrated about Al-Qaeda's lack of Islamic leadership in the region inactiveness and "low-key" Islamic agenda led to a strict adoption of the Qur'an and the Sharia in his organisation (2015, 34).

In contrast, Fromson and Simon, Byman, and Katagiri, elaborate on the Islamist characteristic of the group. The article of American researcher Fromson and American terrorism scholar Simon on the religious strategy and identity of ISIS focuses on the long-term political implementation and motivation of ISIS as they outline the strength of its violent strategy. Between 2006-2008, ISIS focused on unifying the Sunni communities (ummah), and rule over the territory with a strict Islamic agenda. By relying on news sources on the progression of the Syrian Civil War, their analysis critically assesses how ISIS expanded in Syria. They assert that ISIS's strength comes from forming an organisation representing the Sunni tribes in Iraq and Syria (Fromson and Simon 2015, 9-13). On the other hand, American historian Byman and American Security scholar Katagiri exemplify ISIS's weakness as its strict religious attitude would alienate the population's support for its radical Islamic agenda (Byman 2015; Katagiri 2015, 550). Therefore, they are excluding moderate Sunnis from its Islamic state which might wane support from ISIS, as they maintain a rather extreme vision on the Islam which might not appeal to the moderate Sunnis.

A similar argument can be identified in the article which was published in *The Atlantic* by the American research journalist and political scientist Graeme Wood. He thoroughly portrays how the Islamic State developed from a clandestine movement towards a semi-state formation with Islamism at its core (Wood 2015). Whereas Fromson and Simon argue that the ISIS's jihadist strategy has contributed to ISIS's success in the Syrian Civil War, Wood argues that ISIS has more state-like responsibilities now that it proclaimed the creation of the caliphate. Having announced the creation of the caliphate, requires a population and territory over which ISIS can rule and maintain law and order. He argues that ISIS must maintain a territory as the caliph needs a territory to rule over its subjects and enforce the Sharia law. Wood's analysis of the centrality of religion within ISIS's envisioned state provides an understanding of how ISIS desires to develop its state and the kind of responsibilities of having created the caliphate. However, what is missing in this analysis of ISIS's aspirations of establishing a state, and the accompanied vulnerability of managing their state and how violence is utilised to enforce control over their population

American terrorism scholar Stern and American extremism scientist Berger focus on the relation between extreme Islamism and the terrorist ideology of ISIS (2016). In their book, *ISIS: The State of Terror*, they examine how the religious aspect is politicised by ISIS and how terrorism and its religious beliefs are interlinked with each other. They reflect on the role of terror against other religious groups and the West in the Syrian civil war and their controlled territory in Iraq and how terrorist strategies are applied to communicate the group's ideology and enforce order within their territory. However, they tend to focus on the violent implementation of law and order within ISIS's territory without further analysing the use of violence in relation to their objective of creating a state. Moreover, they ignore the relevance of Islamic violence as an instrument to achieve the foundation of their state. While these authors analysing ISIS in the Middle East have valid points, they tend to focus on news articles and barely respond to each other. These secondary articles are all published soon after the creation of the caliphate, which hinders the authors to respond to each other's contributions

ISIS' message and life within the group

A last element identified by the literature on ISIS as an organisation is the social mobilisation aspect of the organisation. The organisation desired to attract followers by projecting of their Islamic message through (social) media. The American military propaganda analyst Farwell

has focused on the media strategy of ISIS. In his article, he argues that the online media strategy enabled ISIS to rapidly distribute its message to its supporters (Farwell 2014, 50). His brief article analyses how ISIS's online media strategy functions to attract Western fighters and legitimises ISIS's actions as the followers accept its authority, because the propaganda would broaden the support and set an example of how this violent behaviour is acceptable. Berger and Morgan analyse the social media campaign of ISIS and argue that this enabled the group to attract potential jihadists in around the world, while at the same time boasting its achievements (Berger and Morgan 2015). ISIS' propaganda has created a romantic picture of life within the caliphate (General Intelligence and Security Service 2016, 10). In reality, the life of the members of ISIS would be dominated by the ISIS' use of violence to maintain control over their followers and the living conditions would be horrendous, in which the subjects are put in dysfunctional houses, have no healthcare, women are subjected to sexual violence.

Literature on Social Revolutions

Huntington, in his book *Political Order in Changing Societies*, was among the first to distinguish between social revolutions and other forms of political resistance. He argued that a revolution can be defined as a "rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change [...] in the political institutions such as parliament and the government, society, leadership and governmental activity" (Huntington 1968, 266). Revolutions would create a modernisation process within the boundaries of the state. Therefore, Huntington argues that mass mobilisations might turn into revolutions and result in a modernisation of the institutions by the revolutionary groups. Hence, revolutions would lead to the modernisation of the state. In his view, revolutions would occur as the interests of the revolutionaries are not sought after by the ruling elite and results in the massive mobilisation of the marginalised citizens and start the revolution. Consequently, he argues that revolutions are illustrative in the sense that if revolutions succeed, they cause a rapid mass mobilisation of previously excluded citizens who become politically active with as a result the modernisation of political institutions.

Another influential contribution in the literature on revolutions has been the work of the American sociologist Skocpol who has argued that social revolutionary processes result in a broader incorporation of the social classes after the revolution (Skocpol 1988, 147). In her article, she illustrates that revolutions occurs when the state is in a national crisis in which a dominant group will take advantage to revolt. The revolution replaces the established

political elite by the revolutionaries and the political and social institutions are replaced to include the revolting population. The integration of the revolutionaries would be essential for the revolution as this would end the rule of the previous state as these political institutions are shaped according to the ideas of the revolutionaries.

These classical contributions to the study of revolutions and political change have been constructed around nationalist revolutions such as the French revolution, and the Marxist revolutions such as the Russian and Chinese revolutions. Therefore, they emphasise the modernisation element of revolutions and the drastic change in the state's political institutions and political culture by looking at the breakdown of the existing order and the installation of the revolutionaries into the ruling elite. Although revolutions indeed indicate an essential political and social transformation in their target structure, these classical views are straightforward and ignore the importance of the social cohesion and the ideological motivations of the revolutionary group.

Based on more contemporary revolutions in the Middle East, different perspectives on the revolutionary process are introduced which tend to focus on the role of violence in achieving the objective of the revolution, but also how revolutions unfold in the Middle East. For instance, the American political scientists Fearon and Laitin argue, in their quantitative cross-sectional study on the rise of violence and civil wars, the relationship between social revolutions and the escalation into civil wars and the rise of ethnic nationalism since the Cold War in the Second and Third World (2003, 75). They maintain that the revolutions following the Iranian Revolution have mainly risen due to ethnic nationalism and more often have resulted in civil wars or other violent struggles. In their article, they maintain that Skocpol's view on social revolutions ignores the spill-over of mass protests and revolts into rebellion.

Similarly, the French historians Boroumand and Boroumand have argued in their article on the relationship between revolutions in the Middle East and terrorism, that terrorism is the preferred strategy of Islamist groups aiming to overthrow the national regime, this strategy would achieve the revolutionary change. Their argument rests upon the use of terrorism by Shia militias during the Iranian revolution which has formed the basis for consecutive revolutionary groups in the Middle Eastern region to convey the revolutionary groups' message (Boroumand and Boroumand 2002). Boroumand and Boroumand criticise Skocpol's by neglecting the role of ideology for the creation of social revolutions, as they argue that revolutionary terrorists in the Middle East are ethnic groups with different religions and

backgrounds rather than revolutions being centred on social classes. In addition, the use of terrorism by Shia militias in Iran proved to other Sunni fractions how terrorist strategies and guerrilla warfare can be employed for the sake of the revolutionary objectives of Sunni fractions after the succession of the Iranian revolution

The use of violence in social revolutions has specifically gained attention by American sociologist Berman who reviews the relation between Islamism and revolutions as she argues that Islam has a revolutionary aspect as it slowly started to become a central element in Egyptian society (Berman 2003, 257–58). She argues that the Islamists wanted to become more politically pronounced, but the political institutions in Egypt appeared to be too strong. For that reason, the Islamists refocused their efforts to the Egyptian society to gradually incorporate them. Hence over time, Egyptian civil society turned to the Islam, because the Islamists offered accessible social-religious institutions and represented them in the Egyptian society. Berman's idea of viewing revolutions as a cultural process with the possibility of being independent from political institutions accurately reflects how religion can become at the centre of the revolution by offering the marginalised out-groups security and how the religious revolution develops alongside the political authority and institutions. In contrast, Fairbanks has elaborated on the outbreak of social revolutions in Islamic countries by considering violent strategies to achieve the revolutionary objective. He argues that in the Islamic revolutions tend to become violent as the revolutionaries would use violence to draw attention and gain popular support of the Islamic societies in the Middle East (2007, 44). In addition, terrorist attacks could create maximum damage by using minimum means.

Similar to Berman, Beck has argued in his article on the spread of revolutions in the Arab Spring, that revolutions in the Middle East have a pronounced transnational nature. During these revolutions, the revolutionaries hide among the affiliated tribes which are harboured across national borders, but also as the revolutionaries would use violent strategies to topple the power structures and consequently pass the border to avoid being targeted by counter-revolutionaries (Beck 2014, 198). He argues that revolutions in the Middle East are frequently transnational, because the revolutionaries are operating from neighbouring countries, but also that the interconnectedness between the Islamic revolutionary groups has increased. Both Berman and Beck challenge Huntington and Skocpol's argument of revolutions being state centred and illustrating the escalation of violence in social revolutions in Arabic countries.

The perception of ISIS being a revolutionary organisation will fit in the contemporary debates on revolutions. ISIS' revolutionary attitude can be illustrated by considering the historical context, the role of religious violence, and the use of violence within the organisation in relation. This thesis will combine these perspectives to illustrate how ISIS uses violence to pursue its revolution and contribute to the literature on ISIS how these perspectives can shed a light on revolutions. In addition, by linking social revolutions to ISIS, one can make sense of how ISIS pursues its objective of forming a caliphate and violently pursuing the construction of the ummah. For that reason, this thesis will add to the current literature by illustrating how violence can be used by revolutionary groups.

Chapter 2: the rise and expansion of ISIS

While ISIS only became internationally known when it started fighting in the Syrian Civil war in 2011, the roots of the organisation can be traced to the American-led invasion in Iraq in 2003. Therefore, in this chapter, it will be argued that ISIS's ideological differences with Al-Qaeda shaped the group's identity and strategic focus, but the Civil War in Iraq provided the ideal context for ISIS to grow and expand its territorial control and influence in the region. This chapter will explain the rise of ISIS as a consequence of its ideological differences with Al-Qaeda, but also that ISIS developed by the lack of state control in Iraq and Syria. The Civil War in Iraq in 2004-2010, and the Syrian Civil War in 2011 created chaos and weak state control which ISIS exploited to expand and secure its control over the population in its territory.

The creation and the rise of ISIS can be contributed to three factors. Firstly, between 2003-2006, ISIS started to alienate from Al-Qaeda due to vital differences over Al-Qaeda's focus on the West rather than fighting against non-Sunni groups in Iraq and ISIS's strategy to control territory and the population by fighting against the Shias, Kurds and other non-Sunni militias. The second factor contributing to the rise of ISIS is the American-led invasion in Iraq and the following civil war, in which Jihadist organisations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS could freely develop in this political vacuum. A last factor is the entrance of ISIS in the Syrian civil war in 2011 and the announcement of its caliphate in 2014.

ISIS' roots in Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda was founded by Osama bin Laden and several other veterans who fought with the Afghans against the Soviet Union in 1988 in Afghanistan as a reaction to the non-Islamic colonial powers in the Middle East and North Africa. Al-Qaeda focuses on expelling the Western influences in the Middle East and to strengthen the position of the Sunni Muslims in relation to the Western crusaders. It forms an umbrella organisation for its affiliates in the different states in the Middle East and North Africa. ISIS also started as an Al-Qaeda affiliate, but became gradually independent from Al-Qaeda. Both Al-Qaeda and ISIS use jihadism and terrorist attacks in their strategy to defeat their enemies.

While ISIS's separation from Al-Qaeda was only publicly announced during the Syrian civil war in 2011, the roots of the conflict between ISIS and Al-Qaeda can already be

traced to 2003 when Al-Zarqawi's led the Iraqi branch of Al-Qaeda, simply named Al-Qaeda in Iraq [AQI] (Byman 2015). Al-Zarqawi was a Jordan jihadist who was distressed about the maltreatment of Sunnis in the Middle East. Therefore, before Al-Zarqawi led AQI, he helped to create the jihadist group called Jund al-Sham² [the Syrian Division] in Jordan in 1991. When he was imprisoned in Jordan between 1992-1999 for the possession weapons, he spread his sectarian beliefs among his inmates. Upon his release from prison in 1999, Al-Zarqawi created Jama'at al Tawhid wal Jihad [organisation for Jihad and Monotheism] with whom he planned an attack in Jordan. However, this plan was discovered causing him to flee to Afghanistan where he was trained in the jihad and fought with Al-Qaeda. In 2003, Al-Zarqawi planned the military resistance against the US troops in Iraq by reviving Jama'at al Tawhid wal Jihad in Iraq which pledged its loyalty to Al-Qaeda and became AQI (Celso 2015, 23–24). He centred sectarianism within AQI by illustrating how the Sunni-groups were targeted by the Shias and the Kurds (Joffé 2016, 8). He believed that only the Sunni-Jihadists should be released from the control of non-Islamic groups by fighting against these ethnic groups.

Initially, in 2004, when Al-Zarqawi's led AQI, the organisation remained close to Al-Qaeda Central's strategy of fighting the Western troops in Iraq. Under the name of Al-Qaeda, AQI executed several terrorist attacks against Shia communities and the United Nations' peacekeepers in Bagdad (Kaválek 2015, 10–11). However, between 2004-2006, AQI started to alienate from Al-Qaeda Central and its strategy. AQI independently developed from Al-Qaeda Central's control and started to pursue its jihadist strategy against the religious militias in Iraq to expand its control. Due to the lack of control from Al-Qaeda Central, Al-Zarqawi and AQI concentrated on its sectarian roots and started fighting other religious groups such as Kurds, Alevites, and Shia groups in North Iraq. Ideologically, AQI legitimised these attacks against these groups as it would liberate the Sunnis from the other religious militias, but also as AQI considered that these ethnic groups were infidels, because they rejected to divert to the Sunnah (Hashim 2014, 70–71).

Al-Qaeda's strategy concentrated on fighting the far enemy by using terrorist attacks against the western troops present in the Middle East by fighting against the Western

² Before his detainment, Al-Zarqawi started several jihadist groups. In Jordan, he created Jund Al-Sham [the Syria Division] but this group was rather quickly dismantled when Al-Zarqawi was imprisoned. The second group, Jama'at al Tawhid wal Jihad created in 1999, became obsolete when Al-Zarqawi fled to Afghanistan, but upon he revived this organisation in Iraq when he planned the military resistance against the US troops in Iraq (2003). Jama'at al Tawhid wal Jihad was in 2004 renamed Tanzim Qaidat Al Jihad Fi Bilad al Rafidayn to indicate its alliance with Al-Qaeda. Hence it is known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq or AQI

troops, and conducting terrorist attacks in the West such as the attacks in London and Madrid. In addition, Al-Qaeda Central believed that the conflict against regional militias would be pursued after the defeat of the European and American troops in the Middle East, but also that Al-Qaeda should win the “hearts and minds” of the non-Sunni local groups and fight with them against the Western enemies. This formation process from being an Al-Qaeda affiliate towards an independent organisation was a gradual process in which the distance between AQI and Al-Qaeda Central, which is located in Afghanistan, created a sense of independence and self-governance for AQI.

The Iraq war and the development of ISIS

While the strategical focus of AQI, and later ISIS, can be traced to the separation with Al-Qaeda, the creation of ISIS cannot solely be attested to these ideological differences. The Iraq War and the chaos of the Civil War in Iraq offered the ideal circumstances in which AQI could build its organisation and control, because the Iraq War shifted the dynamics of power in Iraq and created a competition for power between the fighting groups. In the chaos, AQI could expand its influence as it was supported by the Sunni tribes, but also as the state was too weak to counter AQI and because the organisation enjoyed sufficient support to resist its enemies.

In 2003, the American-led War in Iraq toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein after a swift military intervention. Due to the collapse of the Hussein regime in 2004, Iraq was in a state of anarchy in which Iraq’s society was divided along tribal and religious lines. These tribes all have different religious backgrounds (Christians, Jews, Alevite, Sunnis, Shias) and control the population in their territory. In his article on the local population taking sides during the war in Afghanistan, Kalyvas explains how local groups are forced to take a position in conflicts (Kalyvas 2003). Kalyvas argues that during violent conflicts, the local population will support one side of the fighting parties and will form cleavages to support the side which will offer protection to the population. In the period during the Iraq Civil War, the Iraqi population also formed cleavages. While some local Sunni tribes joined ISI as they shared ISI jihadist ideology and siding create a strong unified regional force able to resist the Shias. Other tribes sided with ISI, because this would prevent ISI to use violence against the tribes to force them in coercion or could provide protection from other tribes.

The use of violence by AQI divides the population in the region and identifies its enemies, but also coerce groups to accept ISI’s authority in the region. ISI aimed to win

support from Sunni tribes who were targeted by the Shia militias and American troops who were still stationed in Iraq to assist the Shia government (Kfir 2015, 241). In order to pursue its strategy, AQI thrived by the creation of chaos and the weak Shia state control, because this enabled ISI to extent its influence and coerce the tribes to side with ISI in return for protection (Saltman and Winter 2014, 28). By using violence against the local tribes ISI positioned itself as the most powerful Sunni group in North Western Iraq.

In 2006, three years after the collapse of the Hussein regime, Al-Zarqawi died in an air strike from the United States. Although AQI lost its leader, it rapidly filled this and renamed itself to Islamic State in Iraq [ISI] as AQI merged with four minor Sunni-jihadist groups causing for the name change to emphasise its ambition of forming an Islamic state in Iraq. After the death of Al-Zarqawi, the connection with Al-Qaeda became weaker as the communication between the organisations decreased (Joffé 2016, 6). After the formation of ISI and its expansion between 2006-2010, ISI lost two of its leaders, Abu Ayyub al-Masri who led ISI between 2006-2008 and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi who led ISI between 2008-2010. Under their control ISI expanded its control to regions close to Baghdad and to the border region with Syria (Hashim 2014, 72–73). The organisation was, however, able to revive from these losses, as the ISI leadership rapidly replaced its leaders and in 2010 Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi was appointed by ISI to lead organisation.

Whereas Al-Zarqawi's jihadist strategy originates from his personal relationship with jihadist thinkers and his personal background as a Sunni in Jordan in the 90s, Al-Baghdadi was educated in Qur'an and Sharia studies at the university of Bagdad and obtained his Ph.D. in this field. The Sunni Army, was a violent Sunni militia conducting terrorist attacks in major Mosul and Bagdad against the Shia government and international peacekeepers (McCants 2015, 75). Even though he was imprisoned for distributing radical messages in the mosques in which he served as an imam, he was not regarded as a high value target and released after which he would later join ISI in 2008. Baghdadi was previously active in Samara, Dyalah, and Bagdad where he had led a jihadist organisation named the Sunni army. His leadership incorporated his tribe, but also the remnants of Al-Baghdadi's Sunni Army.

During his leadership in 2010, ISI constructed its administrative and operative order, but also intensified Al-Zarqawi's sectarian vision. Al-Baghdadi's experience as an imam and leader of the Sunni Army led to an intensification of sectarianism, and a stricter Islamic focus of fighting all the apostates (McCants 2015). While Al-Zarqawi was a jihadist and

remained a strict central leadership on AQI, Al-Baghdadi had a better understanding of how to delegate power to strengthen ISI. ISI's focus on the Shias and other militias infuriated Al-Qaeda Central, because ISI ignored Al-Qaeda Central's instructions to drop the violence against the Shia groups and return to fight against the Western presence in Iraq (Turner 2015, 215). Hence, the Iraq War had an essential role in the development of ISI as it caused the collapse of Sunni control and the installation of a weak Shia government. The weak control of the Shia government and the tribes and religious militias fighting each other provided this context in which ISI could freely develop and exploit this chaos to assume control and unify the Sunni tribes.

The Syrian civil war and the construction of the Caliphate

The spill over of ISI into the Syrian civil war came during the Syrian revolution in 2011, as Syrian citizens started protesting for regime change. The protests rapidly escalated into a violent conflict between the ununified opposition and the regime. While the Al-Assad regime was supported by the Alevite minority, the Syrian Sunni majority was fragmented and created the excellent opportunity to install a Sunni-led state in in Syria (Kahf 2014). Similar to the Civil War in Iraq, ISI profited from the rise of chaos in Syria, because the opposition was divided among religious groups who fought in smaller militias and were not only interested in toppling the Al-Assad government, but also tried to gain political influence for their own militias.

ISI did not gain international attention in the Syrian Civil War until the protests in Syria violently escalated into a Civil War and the opposition started fighting each other to achieve their own interest of gaining territory and political influence. The multiple regional resistance movements were ununified and all fought for their own interests. Jawhat al-Nusra, the Al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria, seized this moment to pursue the agenda of Al-Qaeda in the Syrian Civil War. However, at the same time, ISI also expanded its area of control to include territories in North-Eastern Syria and it changed its name into the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria [ISIS] (Holbrook 2015, 94). The expansion of ISIS towards Syria, was the last straw for Al-Qaeda, and formed the official separation of ISIS from Al-Qaeda. ISI independently organised its strategy and became uncontrollable for the leadership of Al-Qaeda. The rebellion of Sunnis in Syria, and the Sunni-Syrian members of ISI convinced ISI to fight into the Syrian civil war.

In Raqqa in 2014, ISIS announced that it would continue under the name of the Islamic State [IS³] and that Al-Baghdadi would be its caliph (Celso 2015, 28). ISIS's necessity of having declared the caliphate originates from the context in which the effect of having a caliph could unite the Muslim fractions, but also legitimise their use of violence in the region, as it would fit in the war against the apostates and crusaders. In addition, by declaring the caliphate, Al-Baghdadi would gain religious authority and create the Islamic state which was ISIS's objective right from the start. Al-Zarqawi, created AQI to eventually create a sectarian Sunni Islamic State which would be the sole authority in Iraq and Syria. The creation of the caliphate would broaden the support among Sunni Muslims as the caliphate would unify the Muslims now that they all have the same religious leader (Jabareen 2015, 53).

This chapter, illustrated that ISIS developed because of the interaction of two elements. Firstly, ISIS pursued its own strategy independent from Al-Qaeda. By abandoning the strategy against the Western enemy, ISIS could profit from the chaos of the Iraq Civil War and form a Sunni front for and fight the other religious militias. In addition, because of the Shia weak state building practice, the organisation profited from the chaos and the lack of state control and expand its control in North Western Iraq. While ISIS's rift with Al-Qaeda facilitated its strategy and religious focus, the Civil Wars in Iraq and Syria created the ideal context in which ISIS could expand its organisation and control. Furthermore, in the midst of chaos, ISIS develop its sectarian strategy which would form an essential component of the group's strategy in the Syrian Civil War in 2011. Lastly, an essential step in ISIS's history was the creation of the caliphate. The creation of the caliphate would realise ISIS objective of forming a Sunni-based Islamic State. The next chapter will provide a more in-depth analysis on the group's use of violence and develop an understanding of how this served the revolutionary goal of the organisation.

³ Even though the organisation calls itself IS, due to practical grammar reasons the abbreviation used in this thesis will be ISIS as this will prevents confusion

Chapter 3: ISIS' use of violence against out-groups

During ISIS's development in Iraq, ISIS pursued a sectarian ideology and strengthened the organisation by incorporating the marginalised Iraqi Sunni tribe. The strict conservative adoption of the Islam in combination with ISIS's need to maintain territorial control, caused ISIS to rely on violence. By using violence, ISIS could fill the power vacuum which was created after the collapse of the Hussein regime and which the weak Shia government failed to restore stability and law and order. The Shia's elite poor state building attempts and weak control of violence in the aftermath of the Iraq War enabled ISIS to freely develop without strict state control and interference national security forces. ISIS has continuously relied on violence, to secure its control over its territory. Violence against other ethnic groups dominates ISIS's agenda and strategy for expanding their influence. For that reason, this chapter will provide an analysis of the concept of the jihad which is essential for ISIS's strategy. Thereafter, ISIS's use of violence will be analysed by considering the articles in ISIS's magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* which expose how the organisation uses violence for its revolutionary objective.

Jihadism and “*the Management of Savagery*”

To understand ISIS's strategy and use of violence, it is firstly useful to consider the Jihad and the book explaining this strategy, *The Management of Savagery*. The Qur'an differentiates two types of jihad: the greater jihad which involves the personal struggle to find the true meaning of the Islam. Secondly, the lesser jihad is the violent struggle to reinforce faith at the communal level (Burchill 2016, 960). For that reason, the lesser jihad contains a revolutionary element as it aims to restore the status of the Islam and liberate the Muslims from the infidel rulers (Rich 2016, 778). In addition, after the jihad, the status of the Islam and the communal faith would be restored as the enemies of the Islam are defeated from the Sunni lands.

The link between the jihad and the religious objective of expelling foreign influences in the region and violence is theorised in Abu Bakr Naji's book: *The Management of Savagery*. Naji was born in 1961 in Egypt and was an Islamic philosopher and propagandist of Al-Qaeda and died in an U.S. airstrike in Pakistan in 2008. In his long and dense theological book, Naji aspired to connect the old understanding of the jihad to a contemporary setting by offering instructions for how jihad should unfold and how it can contribute to formation of a caliphate. According to Naji, the jihad should be executed according to the principles of the

Sharia (Naji 2007, 8). Consequently, Naji offers instructions on how the jihad should be executed and can contribute to achieve the formation of the ummah and the caliphate. The jihad would unify the separate Islamic cells together to fight the apostates and crusaders in the region where the jihad is declared and liberate the Sunnis from their non-Sunni leaders. In addition, in Naji's view the jihad would mobilise Sunnis around the world to fight in the region where the jihad is declared as all the Sunnis would have the duty to fight for their fellow Muslims. Hence, the jihad would create a cohesive Muslims community with a common objective of fighting against the enemies trying to destroy the Islam.

In the following chapters, *The Management of Savagery* proceeds by arguing how violence can assure the establishment and the consolidation of the Ummah. The liberation of the Sunnis would occur by the jihadist strategy of vexation operations (Naji 2007, 22). The vexation operations are guerrilla-like strategy to face the enemy as Naji illustrates that these strategies would be the most appropriate for the jihadists as it would require a minimum of training and would give them the best chance of defeating the enemy. These tactics would exhaust the enemies' economic resources (oil fields and industries), political institutions (embassies and ministries) and military bases are targeted. By gaining territory and fighting the enemy over time, they can actively create a cohesive society after having expelled the alien forces in the Muslim lands. Hence, *The Management of Savagery* explains that jihadism and the vexation of power strategy can result into the creation of a cohesive ummah and the formation of a caliphate.

ISIS's use of violence against non-Islamic out-groups

Naji instructed, in his reflection on the jihad, that the caliphate can only be created after expelling the apostates and crusaders from the Middle East. This idea is also present in ISIS online magazines, in which it depicts the out-groups as enemies aiming to destroy the Muslim community. As *Dabiq* has a propaganda objective, it becomes clear that the articles aim to mobilise Muslims to join ISIS, but also to separate who is included in ISI's caliphate and who is considered to be its enemy (Saltman and Winter 2014, 50). *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* are written by anonymous authors from ISIS's Al Hayat Media centre, and John Cantile who is an American imprisoned by ISIS. This media centre publishes ISIS's digital magazines, radio podcasts, videos and photo reports of executions, and the management of communication on social media.

The issues of the magazines have recurring articles and columns such as: updates on successful attacks against ISIS's enemies and the terrorist attacks they conducted. Other themes in the magazine are dedicated to reporting the western enemies' words on ISIS being the enemy, the role of men and their role in the conflict against their enemies, but also the role of women and their supporting role as mothers and wives in the caliphate. In between the articles in the issues, there are advertisements for their Western readers to join the caliphate, but also lists and links to their most streamed videos. Every issue of *Dabiq* has on the second page the following quote of Al-Zarqawi: "The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify –by Allah's permission- until it burns the crusader armies in Dabiq [the Syrian city]" The focus of the magazine lay on religiously legitimising ISIS and its caliphate and encourage the Muslims to migrate to its territory and to justify its actions against the enemy (Farwell 2014, 51). The length of the issues varies with *Rumiyah* having around 30 pages and the issues of *Dabiq* containing between 45-70 pages. The articles of its military attacks frequently contain pictures of the soldiers of ISIS being targeted by its enemies, or pictures of victims of ISIS's campaigns to boast its accomplishments.

In an article on the significance of having established the caliphate, published in the first issue of *Dabiq* in July 2014, ISIS stated that the use of violence is permitted against its enemies (*Dabiq* 1, 2014a, 6). In this short article in the beginning of the issue, *Dabiq* explains the implications of declaring the Caliphate and the urgency of the Muslims around the world to pledge alliance to ISIS and request its followers to carry out attacks in the name of Allah. In a long article in the middle of this issue called "The Islamic State reports", *Dabiq* reports on the Syrian tribes pledging loyalty to ISIS (*Dabiq* 1, 2014b, 12). These articles are important as they illustrate the importance of having declared the creation of the caliphate. In addition, they emphasise the inclusive element of ISIS and how the Muslims and tribes should unite to fight the western enemies. *Dabiq* tries to portray the cohesion of the group and ISIS's relationship with the tribes in their area, and consequently illustrate how the caliphate is targeted by the Western troops to undermine the control of the caliph but also to attack the religion. Therefore, this issue explains how ISIS aims to broaden support for their objective of creating the ummah on the one hand, while at the other hand triggering and justifying the use of violence by other ISIS cells to continue the fighting of the group in Syria to secure their caliphate in the region.

In the same issue in a long article on Islamic leadership, *Dabiq* reflects on what might be the most appropriate strategy to fight these Western Crusaders by relying on guerrilla strategies and choose easy targets with the objective to exhaust the Western militaries (*Dabiq*

1, 2014c. 23). The article in *Dabiq* explains that creating chaos and targeting the infrastructure of the enemy would result in their defeat in the long term in Syria and enabling ISIS to expand its control. ISIS also justifies this strategy by emphasising the hostility of other groups and exploiting the animosity of the Sunnis. The secondary literature, from Cheterian, and Ryan, provide a context on how to interpret this article. They argued that this article in *Dabiq* relates to Naji's jihadist strategy (Cheterian 2015, 133; Ryan 2014). The use of terror and guerrilla-attacks against the enemies' resources would weaken the western resistance, while terrorist attacks would create chaos and savagery among the local population, and lastly would enable the consolidation of the caliphate.

The articles in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* consistently use theological references and historic events to explain how the caliphate will win its war against the enemy and to illustrate why ISIS has an advantage (because they are supported by Allah) over the enemy. For instance, in an article on the survival of the Islamic State in the beginning of the second issue of *Dabiq*, the author uses the story of Noah and the float to illustrate that God washed away all the infidels and that only the believers at that time survived (*Dabiq* 2, 2014e, 5). This reference is used to clarify how ISIS with the will of god will extinguish all its enemies. With Allah's support, ISIS will defeat all the enemies like the float did to the infidels in Noah's story.

In the issues of *Dabiq*, the Kurds are also specifically targeted. The PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê/ Kurdish Workers Party), which is a Marxist group striving for the independence of Kurdistan, would harm the faith in the Islam by following other ideologies (Marxism and nationalism) alongside the Islam. In ISIS's perception, combining this religion with other ideologies would harm the devotion to Allah. This point is clarified in an article in a long article in the fourth issue of *Dabiq* which clarifies the caliphates position on the PKK:

Our war with Kurds is a religious war. It is not a nationalistic war – we seek the refuge of Allah. We do not fight Kurds because they are Kurds. Rather we fight the disbelievers amongst them, the allies of the crusaders and Jews in their war against the Muslims. As for the Muslim Kurds, then they are our people and brothers wherever they may be. We spill our blood to save their blood (*Dabiq* 4, 2014f, 5).

Exactly this sentiment of the Kurds being nationalist and Marxist and neglecting their Islamic roots would legitimise the use of violence against groups like the PKK. Herein, ISIS makes it perfectly clear that the organisation is not against the Kurds, as long as the Kurds would convert to ISIS's religion. ISIS is not necessarily at war with the Kurds, they would even be allies and part of ISIS's ummah, but they would need to abandon their nationalist and Marxist aspirations. In its perception, the war against the enemies is centred on the religious means rather than other

ideologies as Marxism, Christianity, and nationalism or capitalism. In the same article, ISIS also states that it fights the American and European troops, because they started the war against the caliphate (Dabiq 4, 2014g, 8). Therefore, the organisation would only defend its territory and punish the Western troops for starting the war.

The group's conception of the Western enemies is also demonstrated in a brief in article in the middle of the fifteenth issue of *Dabiq* in which it extensively describes why ISIS hates the West and fights them:

We hate you, first and foremost, because you are disbelievers; you reject the oneness of Allah by making partners for Him in worship, you blaspheme against Him, claiming that He has a son, you fabricate lies against His prophets and messengers, and you indulge in all manner of devilish practices. [...] We hate you because your secular, liberal societies permit the very things that Allah has prohibited while banning many of the things He has permitted, [...] We hate you for your crimes against the Muslims; and your puppets in the usurped lands of the Muslims oppress, torture, and wage war against anyone who calls to the truth. As such, we fight you to stop you from killing our men, women, and children, to liberate those of them whom you imprison and torture, and to take revenge for the countless Muslims who've suffered as a result of your deeds. [...] We hate you for invading our lands and fight you to repel you and drive you out. As long as there is an inch of territory left for us to reclaim, jihad will continue to be a personal obligation on every single Muslim (Dabiq 15, 2015a, 31-32)."

This important excerpt illustrates the organisation's vision on why they hate the West and why they are the enemy. ISIS explains that the Western values are in conflict with its own values and that the rejection of the Islam makes them an enemy of all those who do belief. Therefore, ISIS legitimises violence against non-Muslim groups as a reaction to the Western values which it deems as wrong and harmful to the religion. At the same time, ISIS's use of violence is a response to the Western harmful operations and marginalisation of the Sunnis in Iraq and Syria. ISIS maintains that the West has structurally targeted the Sunnis and that violence would be an answer to the Western oppression and targeting of the Muslims. In ISIS's perception, the use of violence against the western crusaders would be to defend the religion, and retaliate for all the losses of the Muslims in the caliphate.

ISIS's bases its legitimisation of violence to defend the religion and to punish the west for its actions in the Middle East. However, the articles in its magazine also aim to create a homogeneous in-group by emphasising the religious fundamentals of the organisation. For instance, in a short article in the seventh issue of *Dabiq* on the enslavement of its female prisoners, the author justifies the use Jihadist fundamentals by repeating how this is encouraged by the Qur'an (Dabiq 7, 2015b, 14). Celso, has related the ritualistic violence as portrayed in this issue to illustrate how Al-Zarqawi's jihadist fundamentals have formed the basis for ISIS to structure its caliphate according the religious texts. The execution of prisoners, the mass killings of other religious groups, such as the Yezidis, can be considered as a part of this process

to evaluate who embodies these jihadist principles and can be included in the ummah. The graphical violence urges the people in the area which ISIS conquered to make a choice: they are either with ISIS or they will be targeted themselves. At the same time, it mobilises foreign fighters as it attracts foreign excluded Muslims in the west to travel to the caliphate.

As a propaganda magazine, *Dabiq* clearly tries to mobilise its followers to follow ISIS in its battle against its enemies. In its foreword of the sixth issue of *Dabiq*, ISIS mobilises its readers, whether they are in the west or in the caliphate, to conduct attacks at every opportunity:

“If you can kill a disbelieving American or Europe an – especially the spiteful and filthy French – or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be. Do not ask for anyone’s advice and do not seek anyone’s verdict (Dabiq 6, 2014h, 4).”

This excerpt was published after a follower of ISIS conducted a terrorist attack in Sydney on 14-15 December. Consequently, this excerpt illustrates how ISIS calls for its followers to terrorise the West, like the attack in Sydney. At the same time, this excerpt illustrates how the organisation relies on its foreign fighters and their terrorist attacks. By emphasising these fighter’s role in the caliphate, the magazine tries to convince its foreign followers that they are part of the caliphate and should terrorise the crusaders.

Dividing ISIS’s caliphate from the apostates and the crusaders forms the strategy to protect the caliphate from the demonised West who seeks to divide the caliphate. In the first article of the first issue of *Rumiyah*, “The religion of the Islam and the Jama’ah [gathering] of Muslims”, the author illustrates how the ummah should remain united and fight collectively against the infidels:

“So, whoever comes to divide the matter of this Ummah while it is united, then strike him – whoever he may be – with the sword. [...] Whoever comes to you wanting to break your strength or divide your unity [ISIS’s ummah] while your matter is altogether under a single man, then kill him [i.e. the agitator].” He also said, “If bay’ah [pledge of allegiance] is given to two khalifahs [caliphs], then kill the second of them. [...] O Allah, make the conquest of Constantinople and Rome be at our hands and make us from among your patient and grateful slaves (Rumiyah 1, 2016. 8)”

With this text, ISIS encourages the readers to maintain faith in the Caliph and remain unified. At the same time, this text also clearly illustrates that all the infidels trying to defeat ISIS are the enemies should be killed. The article would try to insinuate to its followers to remain unified when ISIS enemies would attack them, and strengthen the cohesion of the Ummah when the

caliphate is under attack. The first issue of *Rumiyah* was published when ISIS started to lose territory and influence. For that reason, the article aims to inspire the ummah to remain unified even when it is under attack and collectively resist all the attacks and remain faith in the caliph. However, this excerpt can also be considered as ISIS aspiring to expand its caliphate. ISIS will continue to fight until the caliphate has conquered Rome and the rest of the West.

ISIS use of violence against Islamic out-groups

ISIS's use of violence is illustrative for its strategy, because it enforces ISIS's identity and mobilises outsiders to join the group. The organisation's explicit use of violence fits this objective of creating a boundary between who belongs to ISIS and who it wants to join and who the organisation considers to be the enemy. The importance of repeatedly clarifying who belongs to ISIS and to inspire its followers to use violence functions to strengthen its members dedication to the caliphate by prioritising the shared in-group's background by focusing on the Sunni's anger for other Muslim groups who deny the caliphate. In a lengthy article on the imams in the West in the ninth issue of *Dabiq*, ISIS frames every person claiming to be a Muslim while not joining the caliphate to be apostates:

The person who calls himself a "Muslim" but unapologetically commits blatant kufr [disbelieve] is not a munāfiq (hypocrite), as some mistakenly claim. Rather, he is a murtadd (apostate). [...] The ruling of the person who commits riddah [apostacy] is that he is killed, unless he repents before he is apprehended (*Dabiq* 9, 2015c. 7)

In this significant text, the author legitimises the targeting of other Muslims. ISIS claims that the use of violence is permitted against other Muslim groups to defeat the apostates. The beheadings, and other forms of violence is permitted on the principle of mirroring the crimes befallen upon the organisation. ISIS targets other Muslims not only because they would not follow ISIS's interpretation of the Islam, but also because they reject to obey the rule of the caliphate.

ISIS's use of violence against the Islamic enemies could convince the Muslims in the region to join ISIS, as it would empower the Sunnis and convert their position as being marginalised and subjected to non-Sunni control. Moreover, ISIS legitimises its use of violence against Muslim out-groups by explaining how these groups are *kaftir* (enemies of the Sunnah). Violence would be justified as these kaftir groups have lost faith and betrayed the Ummah. This is also illustrated in an article on *Dabiq* issue 13:

“We clarify to all that the Islamic State’s position is clear concerning the ruling on these factions [Shia groups, and other Muslim factions fighting in Syria], and it is that they are groups that have apostatized from the religion of Allah and have committed numerous deeds that have nullified the fundamentals of the religion. From amongst these deeds is that they fight a state that rules by the Shari’ah of Allah while these factions are in one trench and one coalition with other factions that have resisted the implementation of the Shari’ah and declared their efforts to build a ‘democratic, civil, pluralistic’[...] All this is done with support and direct air cover from the American-led crusader coalition that only strives to destroy the mission of the Khilāfah [caliph] [...] the above statement, along with the operations conducted by the soldiers of the Khilāfah against the factions of apostasy in all their colors, make it clear that the Islamic State does not differentiate between those murtaddīn [apostate] who shamelessly ally with the disbelievers against the Muslims due to their openly secularist disposition, and those murtaddīn who do so using false pretexts while taking desperate and futile measures to try and maintain an “Islamic” image. (Dabiq issue 13, 2015d, 14).”

This excerpt comes from a report on ISIS’s missions in Syria and clarifies that ISIS fight its Islamic enemies because they follow the orders of the Western Crusader. Moreover, ISIS clarifies that in its perception, it does not differentiate between “the crusaders” from the West and the Islamic enemies who would “pretend” to be devoted to the Islam, the Qur’an and the Sharia. As long as these Muslim groups would deny the rule of the caliph, ISIS perceives them as apostates who have turned against the caliphate.

Hence, by fighting against ISIS’s enemies differentiates between the Sunni in-group of ISIS and all the groups who defy ISIS and try to harm its Sunni followers. The first article of the ninth issue of *Dabiq*, considers Jawhat al-Nusra as an apostate because this organisation would have nationalist objectives (Dabiq 8, 2015e, 7). Targeting the other groups would build the legitimacy of the caliphate, because it strengthens the position of ISIS in the region by explaining why these groups are not Islamic enough. By fighting the other groups and delegitimise the other fighting fractions in the Syrian civil war ISIS restates the borders of the caliphate as the borders of the caliphate depend on who accept the control of ISIS or are expelled by ISIS violent strategy.

This chapter illustrated firstly the use of Naji’s use of jihadism which has become to the centre of ISIS strategy to defeat the enemy as this would be the most suitable strategy. Thereafter, it was argued that ISIS uses violence to against the Western enemies to expel them from ISIS’s territory and expand its control by convincing the Sunnis to join the caliphate. In addition, violence against Western out-groups would secure the caliphate and convince the other Sunnis that ISIS is the only legitimate Sunni group. Violence against Islamic out-groups would function to convince other Muslims in Syria to join the caliphate, but also to defeat the apostates

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and the Muslim groups who would be to close with the Western Crusaders. Therefore, violence would filter the ummah from all the Muslims who would turn against the caliphate. By delegitimising the other Islamic group, the followers will consider ISIS as the only valid group in the region. While this chapter considered the use of violence against out-groups, the next chapter will delve into violence within ISIS.

Chapter 4: ISIS' use of violence within the caliphate

Even though ISIS uses excessive violence against out-groups, the group also shapes the behaviour of the revolutionary in-group to comply with its attitudes. This chapter will consider the use of violence within the caliphate functions as a tool to pursue its revolutionary religious identity. In considering the inner-dynamics of the group, firstly the propaganda illustrating the situation will be considered, which will give an insight in the role the population is deemed to assume within the Islamic State. The second section will outline the sharp contrast with how the organisation desires to present the caliphate and how violence has been institutionalised and exploited. Lastly this chapter will consider the use of violence within the caliphate in relation to its revolutionary aspirations.

ISIS projected life within the Caliphate

In its magazine, ISIS presents the life within the caliphate as a glorious state in which the caliph's followers will find a rightful place. As long as the Muslims follow the teachings of the Sunnah and the Sharia. In the first issue on brief article on the creation of the caliphate, ISIS argues that the creation of the caliphate was a necessary step to bring the Sunnis together and create a strong community:

Raise your head high, for today – by Allah's grace – you have a state and Khilafah [caliph], which will return your dignity, might, rights, and leadership [...] It is a Khilafah that gathered the Caucasian, Indian, Chinese, Shami, Iraqi, Yemeni, Egyptian, Maghribi (North African), American, French, German, and Australian. Allah brought their hearts together, and thus, they became brothers. [...] Soon, by Allah's permission, a day will come when the Muslim [Sunnis] will walk everywhere as a master, having honor, being revered, with his head raised high and his dignity preserved (Dabiq 1, 2014a, 6-8).

The members of the caliphate and project the caliphate to be a unified wholesome state. In addition, the excerpt purposefully illustrate how nationality is insignificance within the caliphate, because only following ISIS's interpretation of the Islam and its caliph would matter. This first issue of *Dabiq* was quickly published after the establishment of the caliphate in 2014, is predominantly aimed at the readers in the region. The article would convince these readers that its followers should jointly take upon the arms and that they are blessed by having a caliph who can guide them on the path of Allah.

ISIS's media strategy concentrates on the one hand on identifying its enemies who undermine the Sunni group, and on the other hand presenting an inclusive strong organisation

who is protecting the interests of the Sunnis and providing security against the enemy who targets the Sunnis (Ingram 2015, 731). At the same time, ISIS's media strategy follows a rational choice following-logic as it tries to convince that ISIS would be the logical protector of the Sunni Muslims and would be the only reliable organisation maintaining the "right" interpretation of the Qur'an and having a Caliph. Ingram, in his in-depth studies on the media strategy of ISIS, argues that the magazines aim to convince its readers that joining ISIS would be a rational choice as it is the only platform in Iraq and Syria able to provide security and adequately defending the religion against harmful influences. Within, its propaganda, ISIS portrays itself as the sole legitimate religious state defending the Islamic principles and the Sunnis in Iraq and Syria which makes it for its potential followers the best choice to join the organisation.

The magazine's depiction of the caliphate offering the perfect life for Sunnis as in accordance with the Qur'an and the Sharia focuses on forming the Islamic State as their end goal. This is also stated in the article "From Hijrah to Khalifah" first issue of *Dabiq* in which ISIS explains the meaning and the importance of having declared the caliphate.

"[ISIS's] jihad would be based upon hijrah, bay'ah, sam' [listening], ta'ah [obedience], and i'dad [training] leading qital (fighting), then Khilafah [caliphate]. [...] Then the events of Sham [Civil War in Syria in 2011] began to unfold and the Islamic State quickly got involved, answering the cries of the weak and oppressed Muslims by sending a mission from Iraq to activate its units in Sham and later make the announcement of its official expansion. [...] This new condition opens the path for the complete unification of all Muslim peoples and lands under the single authority of the Khalifah. [...] The obligation is now clearer than ever before for all Muslims to raise their voices and pledge their allegiance to the Khalifah – Abu Bakr al-Husayni al-Baghdad (*Dabiq* 1, 2014d, 38; 40)."

In this important passage, it becomes clear, that the focus of ISIS lays on maintaining the caliphate and restore the status of the Muslims in the Middle East. In this phase, after having announced the creation of the caliphate, the magazine aspires to exploit the pride of the Muslims by arguing how ISIS and the caliph want to restore the status of the Muslims in the Middle East. In addition, this text also emphasises that all the Muslims would be obliged to pledge loyalty to the caliph.

The creation of the caliphate was both a strategic consequence and a religious choice. According Wood, who has reflected on the significance and the role of the caliph. The caliph has religious authority as he represents the prophet and would be the most religiously educated imam and knows how to lead the ummah (Wood 2015). However, having declared

the caliphate also brings responsibilities. The caliph's position is constructed on religious authority, but also has a political factor as the caliph would rule over its territory (Wood 2015). At the same time, the formation of the caliphate has a mobilising role as it would pressure all the Muslims to accept the caliph's rule and travel to join the ummah. Therefore, the construction of the caliphate would expand its population. It also shaped the behaviour of the followers as the caliphate would enforce the rule of the Islam which forces its subjects to follow this and adjust their lives in accordance with the Qur'an. This is also illustrated by ISIS's propaganda which clarifies how its citizens ought to behave.

To build and structure the caliphate, ISIS aims to provide the infrastructure and presents that it has all the facilities to construct an independent state-like territory. On some occasions, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* give a glimpse of the living conditions. In the ninth issue of *Dabiq* in an article called "the Islamic State reports", ISIS presents that the caliphate has created two medical schools in Raqqa and in Mosul. Students would be offered free education, housing and health care (*Dabiq* 9, 2015f, 26). Therefore, ISIS built medical facilities in Raqqa and Mosul and provides education to all the children. The caliphate would have built modern medical schools with state of the art equipment. Throughout several of its issues of *Dabiq*, ISIS advertises that it will reintroduce the currency which was used by the prophet Muhammed. By reintroducing this currency, ISIS emphasises the importance of the prophet and the Islam, while it also removes the remainders of the previous regimes. Therefore, destroying and replacing the infrastructure would also legitimise ISIS's control.

In its propaganda, discusses the role of men and women within the caliphate. ISIS frames it as the man's duty to fight in the name of Allah and protect the Islam against her enemies. They argue the man's role is to participate in the organisation's armed struggle. For example, in this article on the role of men as soldiers in the sixth issue of *Dabiq*, it urges the men to fight for their caliph by giving them tips on how to fight and by emphasising the opportunity for the faithful jihadists to gain access to the paradise if they have remained faithful and fought for the Islam (*Dabiq* 6, 2014i, 6). In the caliphate, men are expected to take leadership and carry out attacks in the name of the caliphate. Likewise, in a recurring column: "among the believers are men", the magazine boasts the role of men as leaders and protectors of the caliphate. Within this column, the magazine describes the life of one of its soldier who participates in ISIS's armed struggle. This column in the thirteenth issue of *Dabiq*, the magazine portrays how Jihadi John, who was a Brit, has travelled to the caliphate to fight against the Western crusaders as he was unhappy with his life in London (*Dabiq* 13, 2015g.

22). The objective of this column is to convince other Muslims in the west to join the caliphate, but also to set an example on how the men in the area should behave as soldiers. This column idolises the most dedicated soldiers in the hope that the other men will follow their example.

On the other hand, the magazine clarifies that women play a secondary role, and are supportive to their husbands and mother the children in the caliphate. The magazine also portrays the role of women. In her column: “from our sisters” written by Umm Sumayyah al-Muhājirah who is a Finnish married jihadist woman living in the caliphate. She reflects on the role of the women and wives in the caliphate. In the tenth issue of *Dabiq*, she argues in her columns on how women should assist the soldiers and the protectors of their families in the caliphate by parenting and baring their children and how the men of the caliphate are romantic and passionate. At the same time, her articles are also aimed at the Western Muslimas and try to convince them to travel to the caliphate by promising them a dedicated mujahedeen husband (Dabiq 10, 2015h, 42-47). In the eleventh issue of *Dabiq* in the same column, Umm Sumayyah al-Muhājirah again illustrates this romantic picture for the women living in the ummah, where their husbands take care for them and the women would get housing and all the care they need, so that they can fulfil their desire of being a dedicated wife and mother (Dabiq 11, 2015i, 42-47). Hence, she encourages the woman to carry as many children as possible and obey the men within the caliphate.

Use of violence within the Caliphate

ISIS desires to project the existence of the caliphate forming a strong state in which the members of the caliphate are happy and obey to the rule of the caliph. However, there seems to be stark contrast in which the organisation uses violence to force compliance to its rule. Even though the magazines present the caliphate as a strongly unified ummah in which the organisation is unified in its religion and having a strong in-group, the reality sheds a caliphate in which the living conditions are harsh (General Intelligence and Security Service 2016, 10). The Dutch Secret Service, as one of the view intelligence services in the West, has been able to extensively encapsulate the life within the caliphate and has been able to refute the propaganda in the online magazine. The housing which would be offered to new members does not have electricity for more than a couple of hours in the week. Medical services would be offered, but would come at a high price while also not being sufficient and adequate. In addition, ISIS in Raqqa and Mosul would form a strictly supervised stronghold of ISIS in which

the religious police keeps the population in check and certify that the Islam is lived after by the population (Bouckaert 2015).

The punishment of religious offenders is illustrated in the seventh issue of *Dabiq* in a brief reportage on life within the Islamic State. In this article “clamping down on sexual deviance, the article reports on how sexual deviance, such as homosexuality, rape, and being in possession of pornography, are punished by stoning, or throwing from buildings (Dabiq 7, 2015j, 42-43). These “offenders” were punished in Raqqa and Mosul in which the caliphate has the strongest hold on the population and which are the most significant cities in the caliphate. The reporting of these punishments might function to set an example on how the other regions under ISIS’s control need to enact the Sharia. Even though, the article gives no time framework or indication of frequency of carrying out these punishments, the western media has reported that in Raqqa suspected sexual deviants are consistently punished (Bouckaert 2015; Saul 2015; Wedeman 2016). According to Bouckaert, the subjects in the Islamic State would already be punished for wearing jeans or eating food from “the Crusaders’ lands” which insinuates that these types of punishments are a normality.

Like sexual deviants, ISIS also threatens women differently than just being the obedient wives and mothers. Whereas Umm Sumayyah al- Muhājirah’s column on the role of women illustrates a romantic picture of the women in the caliphate, in her column in the ninth issue of *Dabiq* also justifies the enslavement of apostate women (Dabiq 9, 2015k, 44). She argues that the sexual enslavement of women is acceptable, because they refused to convert to the Islam and pledge their loyalty to the caliph. Therefore, she justifies the enslavement of women as this would be a liberation for the slaves. In the slaves’ new live within the ummah, they would learn to how to become a good Muslima. Ahram thoroughly analyses the online media publications in relation to the sexual violence within the ummah. She maintains that the sexual enslavement and mistreatment of women would sustain the religious hierarchy of the Sunni having control over the other religious groups such as Yazidis and Christians within the caliphate and project the supremacy of the Islam (Ahram 2015, 59). Sexual violence, structures the behaviour of the population as the enslavement of apostates illustrates how the Sunnis would be better and rule over these other communities.

ISIS and its revolution

Social revolutions originate from a bottom-up process in which the population of a former out-group collectively aim to get into power and change society according to its interests. In his

evaluation of ISIS being a revolutionary group, Kalyvas suggests that ISIS not only desires to take power, but also wants to transform society to live in accordance with its religious identity (2015, 43). Walt asserts that ISIS, just as revolutionary movements, uses indoctrination, induction and violence to encourage obedience of their followers (2015, 43). In Walt's view, ISIS would pressure its followers into accepting ISIS's revolution. Violence within the caliphate filters the ummah from who obeys and embody the group's revolutionary objective caliphate. The use of violence filters the ummah from the subjects within its territory who decline to obey with the ummah. Hence, it would force the subjects under ISIS's control into compliance or to flee. In addition, violence would also punish the subjects who violated the Islamic laws and secures ISIS's control over them. ISIS formed an alternative inclusive political movement in which the local tribes and the non-Sunni ethnic minorities within the region of control could channel the religious agenda.

Moreover, ISIS's revolution has a unique trans-national context. ISIS not only targets the Iraqi and Syria government, but instead ISIS strived for its revolution in a trans-national border region between Iraq and Syria (Byman 2016). ISIS's revolution unfolds in a transnational region without seeking to take over the existing political institutions, but rather create its own religious state supported by the Sunnis and other groups subjecting or accepting ISIS's rule. Lastly, ISIS's quest to expand by stimulating Western Muslims gives ISIS's ongoing revolution a global dimension as even though the territory is in the Middle East, the followers can still be part of the caliphate outside of its geographical physical territory. While violence functions to secure control over its in-group, it also mobilises potential jihadists from the West, because the propaganda brag about the strength of the organisation and attract new members.

This chapter reflected on the use of violence within the caliphate and ISIS's propaganda and ideological message of having established a caliphate in which its subjects would live a happy life. In the online magazines, the role of the ummah is on several occasions clarified with the men having to fight against the enemies of ISIS and women solely serving as mothers and wives to the soldiers. Similarly, the propaganda portrays the caliphate to be the only Islamic territory completely carrying out the true religion and having the capabilities to carry out its duties as a state by offering housing and healthcare facilities. The reality, however, is different as news sources and intelligence services has proven that the living conditions are horrendous.

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The subjects of the caliphate are violently forced into accepting ISIS's rule and endure its violent law enforcement. Women are being subjected to be wives and having the duty of being used for having children and to obey the men in the caliphate or even becoming sex slaves.

The articles in the magazines portraying the living conditions remain scarce, with only one article aiming to boast its effort to offer education. This might be because, the living conditions would damage the propaganda objective of the magazines and would discourage its followers to travel to the caliphate. Nevertheless, Violence within the caliphate is applied to create a homogeneous ummah and strengthens the revolutionary objective of the group which complies with the rule of the Qur'an. Hence, violence within the caliphate clarifies who is included in the revolutionary process and filters the ummah from the population who do not embody the formation of the Islamic state or who can be forced to comply with the rule of the caliph.

Conclusion

The rise of ISIS and its rapid increase of influence in North-Eastern Syria in this civil war has been remarkable. Upon entering the Syrian civil war in 2011, ISIS constructed a stronghold in Raqqa and controlled its population from this city. During the Syrian civil war and the formation of the Caliphate in 2014, ISIS expanded its territory and its strict control over the population. In order to understand this drastic evolution and expansion of the organisation, a social revolutionary perspective is useful as it enhances the understanding of the groups' use of violence to accomplish its revolution. By evaluating the use of violence, this analysis gave a unique perspective on ISIS's process of forming an Islamic State. Process tracing enabled an in-depth analysis on ISIS's development and how violence has enabled the organisation to manifest and develop in Iraq and Syria. In addition, the use of primary sources strengthens the analysis of how violence contributes ISIS's revolution.

The literature on ISIS has differentiated three themes in the literature on ISIS. The first one being the historical context of the organisation. Tracing the foundation of the organisation goes back to both fundamental differences between Al-Qaeda and ISIS in which the latter adopted a more violent strategy within the Middle East. At the same time, the literature also traces the origins of ISIS to the American invasion in Iraq. The second debate focuses on the explicit use of violence in relation to their ideological message against enemies. The last debate, focused on how ISIS presents itself and how propaganda is used in relation to the actual dire harsh control of the organisation within their caliphate. The remainder of the literature review considered the literature of social revolutions and especially those studies focused on the unfolding of social revolutions in the Middle East. In the Middle East, revolutions are escalating into civil wars and paired with mass violence against the resisting groups.

The historical context on the evolution of ISIS considered the development of the organisation between 2003-2014. Within this chapter, the formation of the organisation as a gradual process in which the organisation became frustrated within Al-Qaeda's structure of focusing against the enemy in the West rather than on the Shia regimes or unjust corrupt regimes in the Middle East. In addition, the lack of action against ethnic groups such as the Shias and the Sunni formation of Al-Qaeda created a rift between ISI and Al-Qaeda. At the same time, the Iraq War in 2003, a weak Shia government was formed and started marginalising the Sunni majority. Hence, ISI incorporated the Sunni communities and tribes

and conducted attacks against the Shia control to expand its control. ISI exploited the lack of Shia state control and chaos as it expanded its territory and influence for its sectarian Sunni agenda. The ideological roots were already present when ISI was part of Al-Qaeda, but the context in which ISI could freely develop from Al-Qaeda was exploited in the aftermath of the Iraq war as ISI exploits chaos to take control of the regional tribes. Hence ISIS developed as an interplay between its rift with Al-Qaeda and the lack of state control in Iraq. This exploitation of chaos was later also the ideal context in which ISIS entered the civil war in Syria in 2011.

In the third chapter, the role of violence against out-groups was considered. Firstly, the use of violence as an Islamic-revolutionary element was considered by evaluating the fundamental jihadist book of Naji. Naji has theorised when and how the ummah can be constructed by using violence. In this book, Naji explains that jihadist strategies should focus on exhausting the enemy and in the long term expels the enemy from the jihadist territory enabling the groups to create the caliphate. In ISIS's perception, the use of violence is legitimised as it would offer salvation to the Sunnis living under control of the apostates and crusaders. By shedding a harsh division between ISIS and its enemies, it legitimises the use of violence and create this vision in which violence functions to protect the caliphate from its enemies. At the same time, Islamic out-groups are targeted by ISIS, because these groups would have lost the truth sense of believing and by claiming that it apostacy can only be retaliated defeating the unjust Islamic groups. The creation of this boundary between the enemy and ISIS, the revolutionary group creates a common enemy which needs to be defeated by the caliphate, and strengthens ISIS's identity by emphasising the enemies lurking to defeat the ummah.

The last chapter focused on the projection of ISIS' internal community and the stark contrast beyond their propaganda and western intelligence reports and news reports. In the issues of *Dabiq and Rumiya*, ISIS presents that life within the caliphate is a paradise for every dedicated Muslim and that it would be the moral obligation of like-minded Muslims to join the caliphate. In its magazine, ISIS repeatedly creates this image on how the living conditions and its society presents this image in which living within the caliphate would be a glory. ISIS actively pursues the teachings of the Quran and the Sharia. The Caliphate uses violence to correct, but also to shape the behaviour of their community. Hence, by using violence, the organisation shapes the ummah to embody ISIS's revolution. In addition, violence also filters the ummah to create this internal division on who is included and accepts the rule of ISIS and who is an apostate and should be excluded. While violence, is justified as the

organisation considers it as a religious punishment to apostates, it also filters its community on who is a dedicated Muslim fitting with ISIS jihadist's roots and embodying its objective of strengthening the caliphate.

The revolution violently unfolds as it functions to differentiate ISIS from its enemies and project them as violent crusaders and apostates attempting to destroy the Islam. Hence, violence strengthens the internal cohesion and the ummah's dedication to the revolution of the organisation. At the same time, violence is also essential within the ummah as it serves to correct the behaviour of ISIS's followers, but also to homogenise and create a cohesive ummah from the subjects. The hypothesis that violence functions to protect and expand the caliphate, but also to filter its subjects into a dedicated group complying with ISIS's rule is correct. Therefore, the conclusion must be drawn that ISIS uses violence to consolidate and expand its caliphate by demonising its enemies which would legitimise its use of violence. At the same time, ISIS also uses violence to create a homogeneous revolutionary group who embodies ISIS's revolution, as they are forced to obey ISIS's rule and follow its strict interpretation of the Islam. Hence, violence against out-groups' functions to protect its Islamic State and even expand its control, and violence within the caliphate legitimises the rule of ISIS.

While this thesis focused on the evaluation of ISIS as a revolutionary group using violence to achieve its revolution, it also opens the possibilities for future research. Future research can focus on how ISIS tries to incorporate its foreign fighters into its revolution. In addition, future research should also focus on how other Islamic groups use violence and jihadist strategies to achieve their revolutions. Another potential research dimension could be how the states in the Middle East can prevent the outbreak of social revolutions and how they can incorporate the different religious groups into the political process. Lastly, the use of violence by revolutionary groups is largely overlooked and especially in the context of the escalation of violence during Civil Wars, and insurgencies. For that reason, scholars should also go deeper into the connection between social revolutions and other forms of resistance.

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