

Committee: Security Council

Issue: Extremism in the Middle East (ISIS)

Student Officer: Jakob Ollivier de Leth

Position: Deputy President

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INTRODUCTION

The Middle East has been plagued with many terrorist groups and organizations for decades. Many of these groups, like Taliban, Al-Qaeda and Hezbollah are feared by many people and governments around the world. But none of them has been as remarkable and terrifying as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which gained worldwide attention after massive land grabbing in Iraq and Syria in 2014. The Islamic State has been feared for almost 2 years now, because of its terrifying brutality, rapid expansion in the region and their call for a 'Jihad' against all enemies of the Islamic State. Those enemies are all people not willing to convert to Sunni Islam or those who will not accept Sharia law. When encountered with soldiers of the Islamic State in a newly conquered region, the people that will not consent will be beheaded or tortured. The Islamic State often posts videos of beheadings online and rumors of extreme torture methods have spread among the population of neighboring countries.

Worldwide, almost all countries do agree on that; the eradication of the Islamic State is an extremely important issue that needs to be solved sooner or later. The problem however, not for the first time in the Security Council of course, is that the Russian Federation and the United States of America totally disagree on how to resolve this issue. Many governments, including the government of the United States of America, are wary of using ground troops against the Islamic State, after the huge human cost of the invasions in Iraq and Afghanistan. A coalition, led by the United States of America, has bombed the Islamic State repeatedly in Iraq as well as Syria. This however is not a definite solution as the Iraqi and Syrian governments still suffer many losses and the war against the Islamic State continues as never before. The Middle East is on fire and the consequences are bigger than ever.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Jihad

(Among Muslims) a war or struggle against unbelievers. In other words, it is the Islamic version of a crusade. The group (ISIS) was founded as '*The Organization of Monotheism and Jihad*'. The Islamic State has called for all Muslims to pick up arms against all people that oppose the Islamic State.

Caliphate

A caliphate is a form of Islamic government that is led by a caliph. In 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was named the caliph of the Islamic State, which claims religious, political and military authority over all Muslims worldwide.

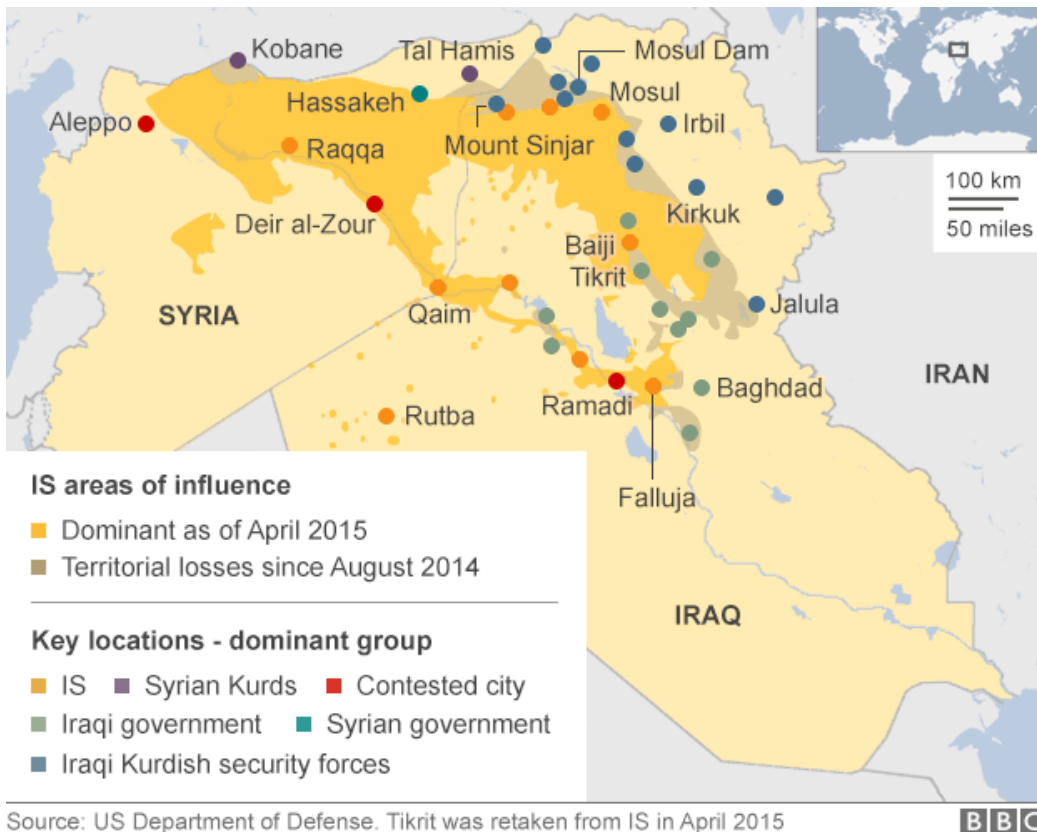
Extremism

Belief and support for ideas that are very far from what most people consider correct or reasonable. The Islamic State wants to implement Sharia law worldwide, which forbids women of showing any skin or hair in public and forbids all other religions or beliefs.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

After the attacks of the 11th of September 2001, the United States of America invaded Afghanistan in that year and Iraq in two years later, in 2003, to overthrow the Taliban government in Iraq and to prevent the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) by Saddam Hussein, who led a totalitarian regime in Iraq. A certain man, named Abu Masab al-Zarqawi, pledged allegiance to Osama Bin Laden, the leader of al-Qaeda, an organization formed during the Russian occupation of Afghanistan near the end of the 20th century. Abu Masab al-Zarqawi formed the al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) in 2002, which later created a sub-organization called the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). After a former US prisoner named Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi took control of ISI, long after Abu Masab al-Zarqawi's death in 2006, the organization rapidly grew in size and numbers and joined the side of the rebels during the Arab Spring in 2013. Whilst fighting President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi united his forces in Iraq and Syria and founded the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which later switched names to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and eventually to the

Islamic State (IS). At the end of 2013, the Islamic State started to attack Iraqi and Syrian cities and in June 2014, controlled cities like Kobani, Mosul and Raqqa. That month, the group proclaimed itself to be a (worldwide) caliphate and to have religious, military and political control over all Muslims. Currently the Islamic State has a population of over 10 million people, has been closing in on Baghdad rapidly and borders Turkey in the north.



Picture 1: The Islamic State, as of April 2015

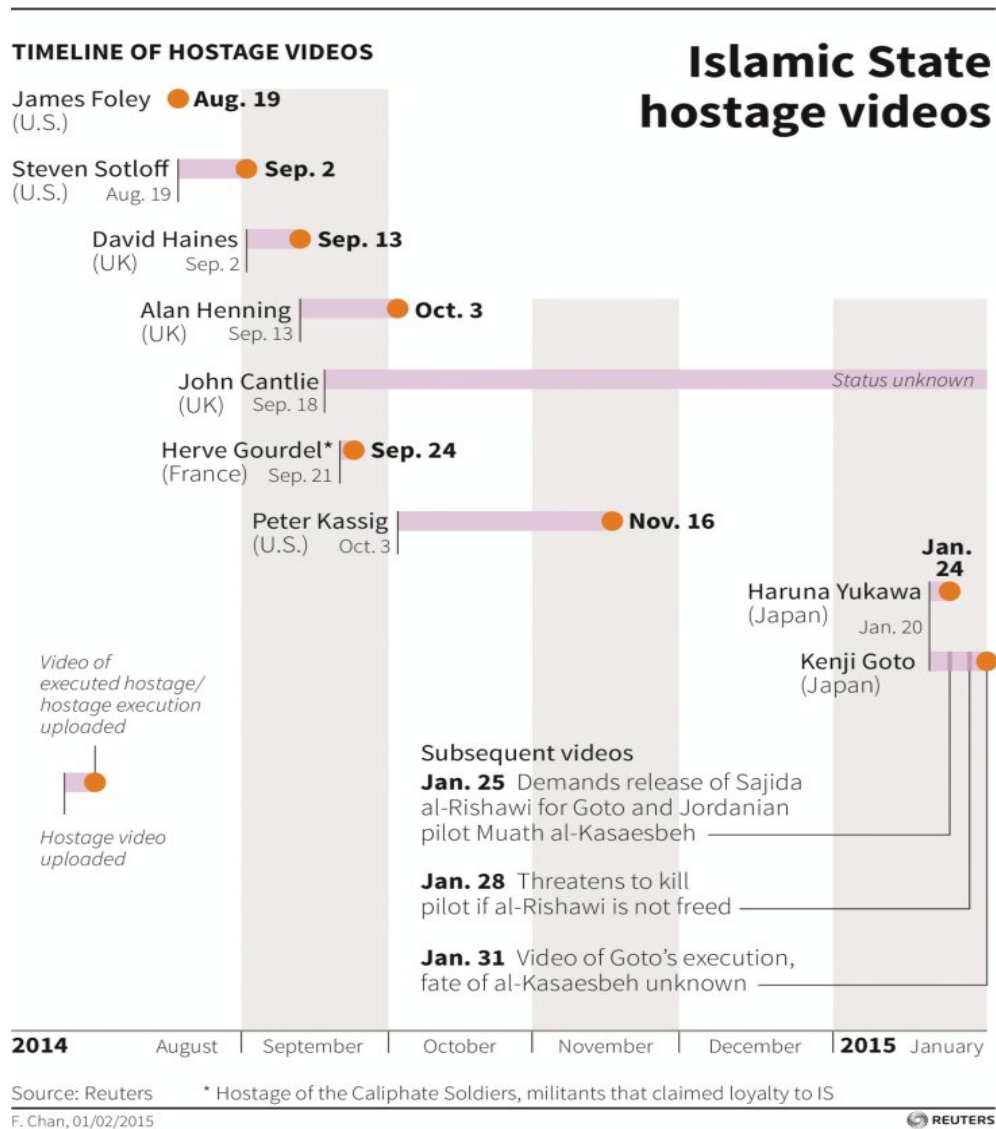
The Security Council

The reason why the issue of ISIS forms one of the most important issues on the agenda of the Security Council is because of three reasons:

1. The armies of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Republic of Iraq have suffered crushing defeats against the Islamic State on multiple occasions. The work the coalition of the United States has done in Iraq since 2003 has been mostly undone in a very short period of time by the attacks of the often extremely motivated Jihadi fighters of ISIS.

2. The wars in Syria and Iraq have caused a massive humanitarian crisis, with millions of people fleeing to neighboring countries like Jordan and Lebanon. Both countries cannot handle this huge, ever growing wave of refugees and the refugees live in terrible conditions in refugee camps. Other large waves of more financially capable refugees travel through Turkey and Greece to somehow cross the border between Serbia and Hungary to arrive in the European Union's greater economies like Germany, France or the United Kingdom. The local population does not welcome them very often however and this has led to massive protests in the European Union, either in favor or against the hosting of refugees.
3. What however may be the most terrifying aspect of the Islamic State is their call for a Jihad -the Islamic interpretation of Holy War- against all enemies of the Islamic State. This includes citizens of members of the coalition that currently bombs the Islamic State in Iraq and members of the media. This has resulted in multiple terrorist attacks; most notably the attacks on the Charlie Hebdo headquarters in Paris in January 2015. The Islamic State has also called for young people to travel to the Islamic State to fight against its enemies in exchange for a place in heaven. Thousands of mostly men have already travelled to Syria and often return to Europe or North America with even more radicalized opinions.

This has made the question of ISIS one of the most important issues to be solved right away by the United Nation's most important Council: the Security Council. Why the Security Council hasn't found a definitive solution to the problem has been caused by the ongoing conflict between the United States of America and the Russian Federation. In the Security Council the two veto-powers disagree on many subjects and as a result the Security Council often struggles to find a solution of any kind for issue.



Peshmerga

The Peshmerga are the military forces of the autonomous region of Kurdistan. The leader of Iraqi Kurdistan, as the region is formally called, is also the formal head of the Kurdish Forces.

The Peshmerga has played a role of importance in a number of wars and operations. They helped the coalition capture Saddam Hussein in 2003 and played a key role in operation Neptune, in which the American Special Forces killed Osama Bin-Laden.

The exact size of Peshmerga forces is unknown, but estimates range from 80,000 soldiers to 250,000 soldiers.

The Peshmerga has been one of the only reliable military forces for the coalition. The Iraqi army has proven weak and vulnerable, up to thousands of soldiers easily

surrendered after fights with IS. Currently, the Peshmerga forces are relatively low on weaponry and ammunition, but still have the potential to defeat IS on the northern front. On many occasions the Peshmerga defeated IS and are currently still trying to recapture Mosul. On an earlier occasion, the Peshmerga recaptured Kobani, which was a massive blow to the Islamic State. 'The battle of Kobani' occurred from the 13th of September 2014 to the 15th of March 2015. The Peshmerga eventually recaptured Kobani with the help of air strikes by the United States.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

United States of America

The United States of America currently only contributes in the fight against ISIS with air strikes. No ground troops actively fight against ISIS on Iraqi or Syrian territory, but US military personnel does aid the Iraqi military with training and materials.

After the US troops left Iraq in 2011, Iraqi society quickly collapsed. Religious minorities, who were oppressed during the reign of Saddam Hussein and otherwise held in check by the American army, rebelled against the government. After the Arab spring started in Syria in 2011, many groups fought the government violently, including the terroristic Al-Nusra front and later the Islamic State. After a cry of help from the Iraqi government in 2014, the United States of America and the United Kingdom started with the bombing of the Islamic State with drones -unmanned planes that fly high up in the sky- as well as with manned aircraft. Ground personnel also flew to Iraq in small amounts to assess Iraqi forces and the threat posed by IS. The United States of America has also been supplying the Peshmerga with weapons and food since the defeat of the Peshmerga in August 2014. The same month, the United States of America began bombing IS positions in Iraq and started dropping humanitarian aid for the civilian fleeing IS. There has been critic on the United States of America by multiple sides. Many people believe the United States has caused even more casualties, refugees and victims than necessary. Others have been saying the only way IS can be quickly defeated is by intervention of the United States military by land. They have, however, not done so because they do not want to contribute to an invasion on such a massive scale like the one in 2003. The United States of America would also like to refrain from paying such huge sums of money and human life, like they did in the Iraqi war.

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation is currently increasing its military presence in the Middle Eastern region particularly throughout Syria. Unlike the USA, the Russian Federation does not believe that spending copious amounts of money on air attacks against IS in the region is helping or gaining any positive result, even though Russia is currently increasing its troops and military expenditure against IS. The government has claimed that so far attacks that have been made against IS have been “very modest” in their outcome so they don't believe that the USA's current method in combating extremist militant forces in the region is helping to end the spread of terror. The Russian government says that they are increasing their military presence in the area so that if an attack does occur then they can counter attack, however, the government also denies the idea that they may be working to build a military air base in the region. Russia has also now proposed talks with the USA regarding how the two states should proceed in this matter; these talks were allegedly proposed as a response to Washington's concern over the Russian Federation's increasing military presence - as mentioned earlier. The main problem with Russia's increased weaponry in the region is the fear (from states such as Israel) that the weapons will somehow get into extremists hands, making the extremist militants more powerful. The fear of the USA is that Russia will not use the weaponry to fight IS but rather to gain more power. These talks have also been proposed to sort out the existing issues within Syria. Putin so far has been supporting Assad's government financially insisting that without the Russian government's funding the refugee crisis in Europe would be worse. The Russian government claims that by supporting Assad they are helping to fight ISIS forces within the state, the US agrees on this and believes that supporting smaller Syrian organizations will prove more beneficial to the war against extremism in the area. Russia currently continues to support Assad and increase their military presence in the region, but does not yet spend as much money on the situation as the US.

The Arab states of the Persian Gulf

The Arab States of the Persian Gulf include the states of Kuwait, Saudi-Arabia, Bahrain, Iraq, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. A number of states have been complimented by the international community as well as criticized heavily.

Although never proven or admitted, many people believe a number of these states have financed terroristic groups like IS and Al-Nusra (the Syrian department of Al-Qaeda), mostly out of hatred towards the Syrian government.

What is a fact however, is that the Saudi Arabian and the Qatari governments have never liked the Assad regime, and have probably just made wrong choice in allies. The global threat IS has become, however, has most likely stopped any nations that supported IS, directly or indirectly, with supplying humanitarian aid.

The refugee crisis, caused by the IS and the ongoing war in Syria, has led to thousands of migrants. Very few however have been accepted into countries like the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar leading to massive criticism, especially from European governments. Those governments currently deal with around 6000 refugees daily and have asked other countries to take in more refugees. The United States of America responded and will take in 6000 refugees, but many of the aforementioned countries took in very little to none. These countries however have supplied other countries like Lebanon and Jordan, where currently millions of refugees have fled to, with at least 800 million USD in form of humanitarian and financial aid.

Many of these countries are part of the United States led coalition that utilizes air strikes against IS. These countries also refuse to use land forces and are extremely weary of helping the Syrian regime or the Peshmerga in any way. They do however provide the countries that take part in the coalition with places to land and refuel their airplanes and coalition ships are allowed to enter territorial waters of these countries.

Nations in U.S.-led coalition against IS



Sources: Reuters; U.S. Department of State

Staff, 08/10/2014



TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
1932	Iraq becomes independent
1979	Saddam Hussein becomes president of Iraq
1990 – 1991	The first Gulf war
2001	Terrorist attacks happen in the United States, president George W. Bush declares ‘war on terror’
2002	Abu Masab al-Zarqawi forms Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)
2003	The invasion of Iraq by the United States led coalition ends Saddam Hussein’s rule
2006	The formation of a new democratic government in Iraq, led by Nouri al-Maliki
2009	The United States announces it will have withdrawn all of its troops by the end of August 2010. The United States is the last country of the coalition to do so.
2010	Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi takes control of ISIL
2011	All United States led troops have left Iraq.
2011	The Arab spring occurs, fighters loyal to ISIL join the rebel front in Syria
2012	Massive Sunni protests against Shia-led government in Iraq
2011 – 2014	ISIS utilizes the civil war to rapidly expand in Syria and Iraq
June, 2014	The group declares itself a caliphate, with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as caliph (head of the caliphate)

September, 2014	The United States announces an anti-IS coalition, including the United Kingdom, France and Canada. Numerous Arab nations will support the coalition.
October, 2014	An Islamist gunman kills a soldier in Ottawa, Canada.
November, 2014	According to Iraqi officials al-Baghdadi was injured in an air strike.
7-11 January, 2015	Multiple terroristic attacks take place in France killing more than a dozen people. One of the terrorists mentions in a video his attack was in the name of IS.
February, 2015	ISIS posts a video on the internet of ancient artifacts being destroyed by militants.
March, 2015	A combination of Shiite militias, US air strikes and Iraqi troops reconquer the strategic city of Tikrit.
May, 2015	The Islamic State captures Palmyra, an ancient city in the middle of Syria. Later, the group proceeds to destroy many ancient ruins and artifacts found there.
June, 2015	ISIS claims responsibility for a terrorist attack that happened in Tunisia, where 38 people died, and a suicide bombing on the same day in Kuwait, which killed 25 Shiite worshippers.

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Security Council Report (S/PRST/2014/14) – 28 July 2014

The Security Council prohibits illicit oil trade with terrorists in Iraq and Syria, to minimize their source(s) of income.

Security Council Resolution 2170 (S/RES/2170) – 15 August 2014

Security Council condemned the recruitment of foreign soldiers by terrorist groups, i.e. IS and Al-Nusra.

Security Council Resolution 454 (S/2015/454) – 18 June 2015

Seventy-one member states that stated the situation in Syria is getting worse, sent letter to the Security Council to state their outrage at the use of weapons such as barrel bombs.

Security Council Resolution 2178 (S/RES/2178) – 24 September 2014

Improved the terrorist framework while also obliging UN member states to take the necessary counter-terrorism measures.

Human Rights Council Resolution 29/L. 4 (A/HRC/29/L.4) – 2 July 2015

Human Rights Council resolution on the terrible humanitarian situation in Syria.

French Resolution to the Security Council (S/2014/348) – 22 May 2014

Draft resolution by France to refer Syria to the ICC. It was co-sponsored by 65 member states and vetoed by China and the Russian Federation. All other Security Council members voted in favor of the referral.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

There have been multiple attempts to solve the problem of IS, but many have been inutile or will take too long to clearly make a difference. The bombing of the United States and her coalition partners have helped ground troops fight IS, but they still haven't defeated them indefinitely or are clearly not on the winning side.

Other problems regarding IS include the international refugee problem and Jihadist fighters travelling to the Middle East. Security Council Resolution (S/RES/2170) condemned the recruitment of foreign soldiers by terrorist groups, but many countries e.g. Turkey have not made enough effort to stop the recruitment of fighters in the Middle East. As many of these fighters travel through Turkey on their way to the Middle East, Turkey has the potential to play an essential role to stop the recruitment of these fighters, but has failed to do so yet.

In September 2015 the leaders in the European Union agreed on an aid package worth 1.1 billion USD and also decided to relocate 120,000 refugees among the countries member of the European Union. Although the agreement itself can be seen as a success, it is by no means a permanent solution. It is up to the United Nations to find a permanent solution regarding the location, where these refugees are to stay, and try to avoid further refugee waves in the future.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

There are various ways to solve the issues of ISIS. It is important to note that member states' views on the issue are extremely different and therefore it is crucial for the Security Council to reach a consensus. At least all P5 members do agree on eradicating IS as soon as possible, but how and what comes after is a whole different matter. IS could be defeated on land with the help of foreign soldiers, which seems to be the tactic of the Russian Federation lately, but the way the international community will handle the regime of Assad and the huge waves of refugees is an evenly important matter. A list of different issues that have to do with IS during the session of the Security Council include:

- the international refugee crisis
- the smuggling of weapons
- the funding of terrorism
- young Muslims traveling to the Middle East to become Jihadists

International cooperation is actually the key. All of these issues could be resolved quickly if states imply strict border control and other methods to imply control on their citizens. Many however disagree entirely and see the methods the government could utilize as a breach of their privacy. This has been very evident with the NSA in the United States, which caused international outrage among citizens and governments. Nonetheless, citizens will lose some of their privacy in the fight against IS.

It is also very important for Muslim immigrants to integrate into the society they currently live in. If they do not have ample opportunities to integrate, they become vulnerable to the IS propaganda developing extremist ideas and actions within the international community.

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