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**Security Council – The question of the
Islamic State**

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Forum: Security Council

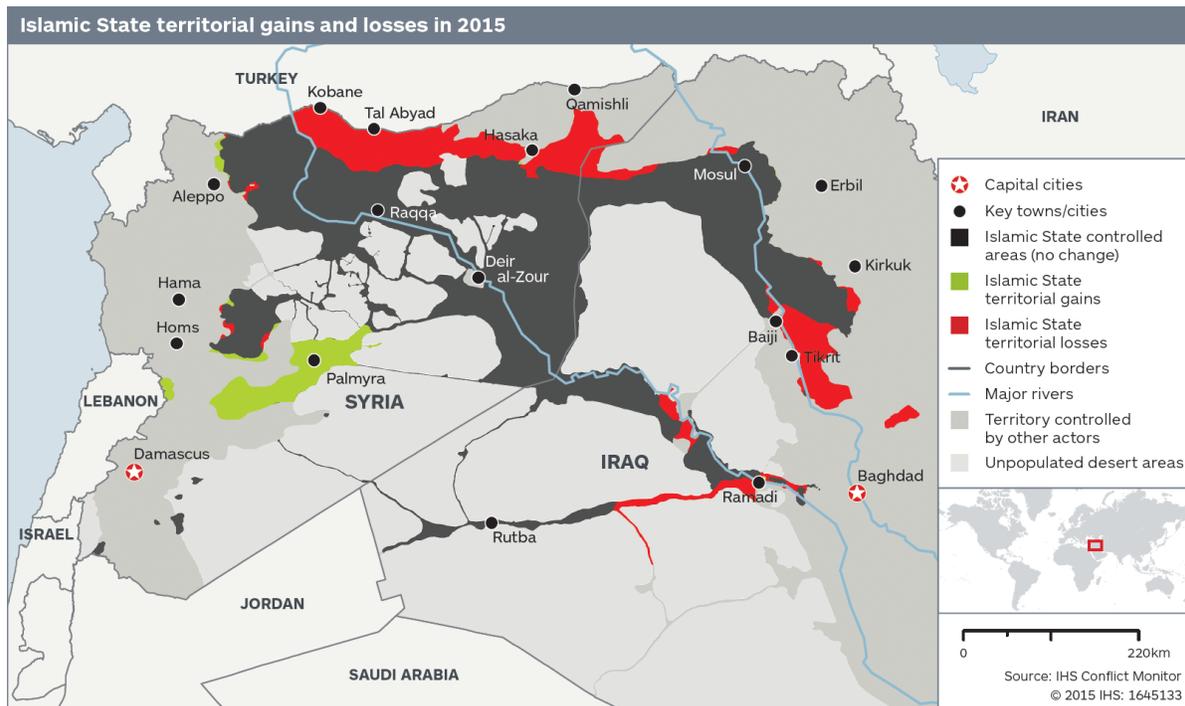
Issue: The question of the Islamic State

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Introduction

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is a terrorist organization that also operates as a pseudo state inside these countries. In 2014 the group formally declared the establishment of a caliphate (a state governed in accordance to Islamic Law). As a terrorist state, the objective of this organization is unclear; however ISIS claims to be entitled to govern all Muslim land. Most of the violence and destruction produced by ISIS happens within the Muslim world, often going unreported in the developed countries. Because of not stopping the group in its early stages, it has grown enough to acquire the capability of global terrorist attacks like the ones in Paris. ISIS has gained territory in Iraq and Syria with a combination of terrorism and guerrilla tactics. The group is responsible for various violations of human rights, such as rape, torture and indiscriminate executions.



Definition of key-terms

Terrorism:

The use of violence and intimidation in order to frighten or coerce the population, usually with the purpose of achieving a specific goal. Terrorism can be used to achieve any kind of goal, such as economic benefits, or with no specific objective (usually associated with anarchism). However it is mostly used in pursuit of a political or religious goal.

Jihad:

The literally translation is to “struggle” or “strive”. In the context of the Islamic State, Jihad is the “holy war” against the world to protect the Muslim religion. This interpretation is correct; however it is the most extremist part of Jihad.

Jihad is the inner struggle to become a better person at the eyes of Allah (God) and to expand Islam. This can be achieved in various ways, primarily by the hand, sword, tongue and heart. Jihad by the heart is the inner struggle between good and evil, in which good must prevail. Jihad by the tongue is the spread of Islam by means of lectures, speeches and debates. Jihad by the hand is taking what Islam preaches into action; being a charitable person, helping people in need, etc. Jihad by the sword is defending Islam in the battlefield.

Jihad by the sword can be used in limited occasions, the first one being in self defense and the second one to fight the evil and the unjust in the world.

Caliphate:

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, a Caliphate is “the political-religious state comprising the Muslim community and the lands and peoples under its dominion in the centuries following the death (632 ce) of the Prophet Muhammad. Ruled by a caliph (Arabic khalīfah, “successor”), who held temporal and sometimes a degree of spiritual authority”. At its peak, the empire of the Caliphate controlled the lands of modern Iran, the Middle East,

North Africa and Spain. The empire ceased to exist with the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258.

Sunni:

The biggest branch of the Muslim faith, comprising around 85% of the world's Muslim population. Sunnis believe that the first Caliph Abu Bakr was the rightful successor to Prophet Mohammed.

Shia:

Shia muslims comprise around 15% of the world's Muslim population. Shias believe that the fourth Caliph Ali bin Abi Thalib was the rightful successor to Prophet Mohammed, seeing Abu as an illegitimate successor. Ali was Mohammed's son-in-law.

Sharia:

Islamic Law based on the Quran and the Sunna. Sharia law dictates both private and public matters of individuals. These set of obligations and moral codes are considered to be Allah's command on how to behave and how to assess punishment.

General Overview

Iraq War and occupation

In the morning of March 20th, 2003 the USA and its coalition began the invasion of Iraq. The UN had been pressuring Saddam Hussein to stop the alleged program to acquire nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. After the September 11 attacks, former president George W. Bush determined that the sanctions imposed by the UN were futile, and that Iraq was supporting terrorist groups -amongst them Al Qaeda-. President Bush gave Saddam Hussein an ultimatum; leave the country in 48 hours. This move was condemned by Russia, France and Germany who saw this as a buildup to war. When Hussein failed to comply, the US, supported by the UK under Anthony Blair, Poland and Australia, started the invasion.

The military campaign was brief. On April 9 Baghdad was captured by the US. The Iraqi army was highly disorganized and demoralized, often choosing not to fight the coalition. This showed the lack of support of the dictatorial regime of Hussein. The coalition faced heavy resistance by the Republican guard (a paramilitary group connected to the administration of Hussein).

The US was now responsible for reconstructing and organizing Iraq, which they did poorly. As deplorable as Hussein's administration was, it kept internal problems under control. After the invasion, Iraq fell into chaos. Looting became common as law and order did not exist anymore. Religious and ethnic tensions erupted. Iraq under Hussein was ruled by a Sunni minority (of about 20% of the population) and oppressed the Shia majority (of about 80%). When the US took over, the situation turned around as the Shia majority controlled the government and started to oppress the Sunnis. The government was also highly corrupted and inefficient. Ex-governmental forces from the Hussein's administration and anti western extremists started fighting the US occupation forces. The US was trapped in a Middle Eastern conflict now, having suffered far more losses in the occupation than in the invasion. In 2006, tensions between Sunnis and Shias escalated into a civil war. Regional nations, mostly Iran and Saudi Arabia, started funding terrorist organizations to

gain influence in Iraq. The US began withdrawing from Iraq in 2007, finishing the process in 2011, claiming that Iraq had regain stability.

Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)

In October 7th, 2001, the US invaded Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban government and to capture Osama Bin Laden, being considered responsible for the September 11 attacks. Bin Laden escaped to Pakistan and commanded Al Qaeda from there. After the invasion of Iraq, radical islamists, nationalists, Hussein's ex party members and security forces, unemployed military personnel and anti western extremists form and join various resistance and terrorist groups.

In October 17th, 2004, a Sunni terrorist organization in Iraq, lead by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was fighting the occupation forces swore allegiance to Bin Laden and formed Al Qaeda in Iraq. They first fought the US forces, but soon enough they started targeting Shia Muslims, sparking the civil war. In 2006 the Sunni population of the AQI controlled territory rose up against AQI and Zarqawi was killed in June by a US airstrike. Abu Ayyub al-Masri assumed control and in October, 2006 he announced the creation of the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) with Abu Omar al-Baghdadi as its leader. In april, 2010 both al-Masri and al-Baghdadi were killed by a joint US-Iraqi operation and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi assumed the lead of ISI.

Syrian Civil war

The Arab Spring was a call for democracy in the Muslim world. This movement did not end up well in Syria. President Bashar al-Assad chose to crack down on demonstrators. On March 18th, 2011 security forces opened fire against protestors in the city of Dar'ā. This incited more protests which were also repressed by governmental forces. Al-Assad claimed that there would be reform in the country, but this was a move to calm the population. This did not work, and by the end of the month protests had reached Damascus. The European Union applied sanctions to make Assad stop the oppression. On November 12th, 2012 Syria was expelled from the Arab League. By February, 2011 the Syrian Civil War had begun. Syria was divided between Assad's supporters (mainly Shia Muslims), the opposition

(mainly Sunni Muslims), the Islamic extremists (such as Al Qaeda) and the Kurds in the north, who fought for independence.

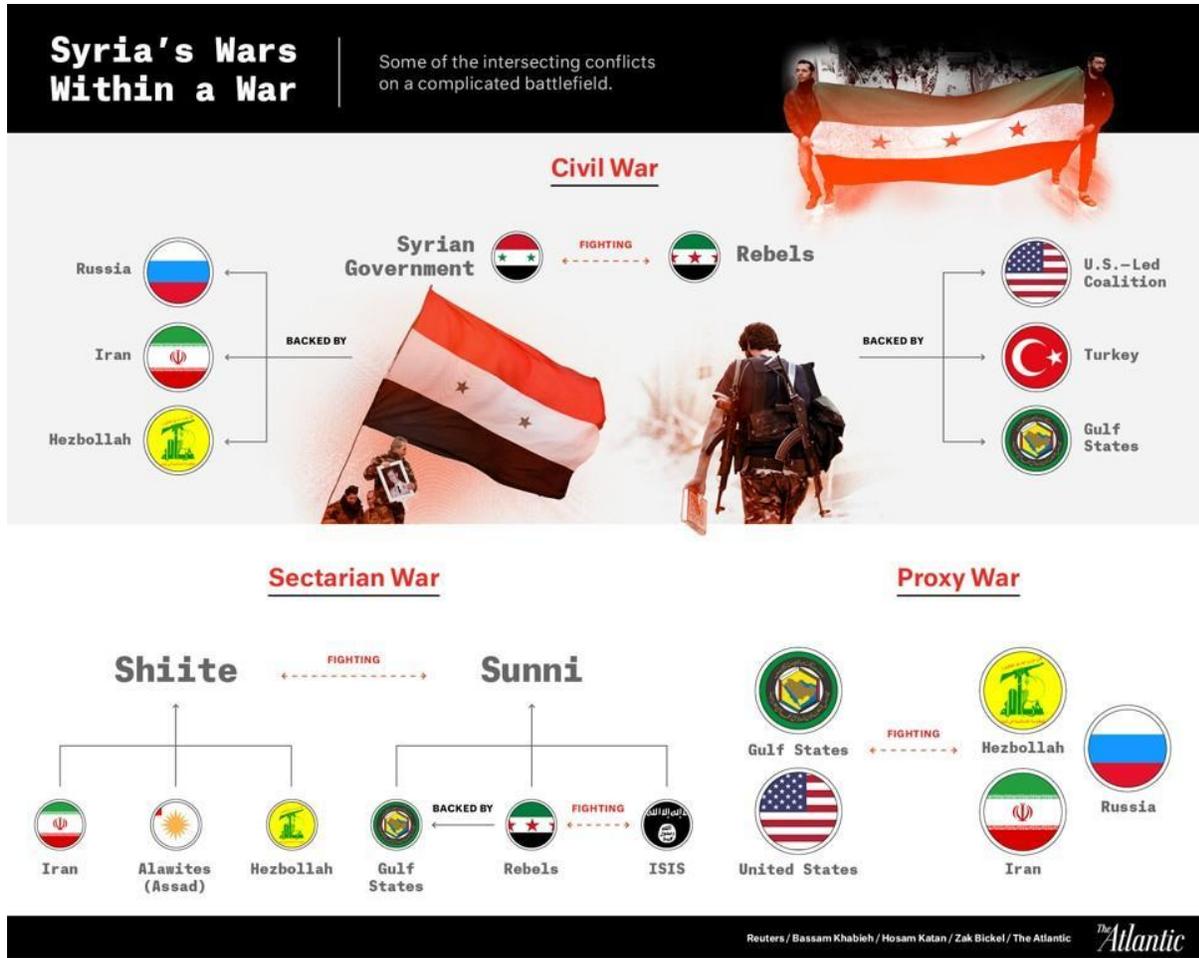
Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)

Seeing the instability in Syria, ISI launched an invasion of the country in April, 2013. Assad's forces did not stop them, as ISI could fight off the opposition forces. ISI declared the absorption of the al-Nusra front, and changed its name to ISIS. Al-Nusra was an Al Qaeda backed terrorist group. In February, 2014 Al Qaeda declared that ISIS was not a branch of its organization, al-Nusra opposed the annexation and the groups started fighting each other. ISIS quickly gained terrain in Syria. On June they launched another invasion, this time against Iraq. By June 10th, 2014 Mosul, the second biggest city in Iraq, had fell in the hands of ISIS. In June 29th ISIS declared itself a Caliphate, changing its official name to Islamic Sate (IS) and claiming to be the rulers of all Muslims.

The group's de facto capital is Al-Raqqah or Raqqa. As a terrorist organization, it is poorly organized. The group works as a pseudo state in the area they control. They collect taxes and impose law and order (Sharia law). Apart from taxes, another form of revenue comes from the pillage of cities captured, human trafficking and the sell of Oil through the black market.

Syrian Proxy War

One of the reasons why we don't see cooperation between the two main blocks, the Russian Federation with its allies and the United States of America with its allies, is because of the Syrian Civil War. Everyone is united against ISIS, but the case of Syria is a lot more complicated. There are a wide variety of combatants, and the outside nations have picked the one they like best and supported it. Russia, for example, is supporting the Assad's regime while the US is supporting the Kurds.



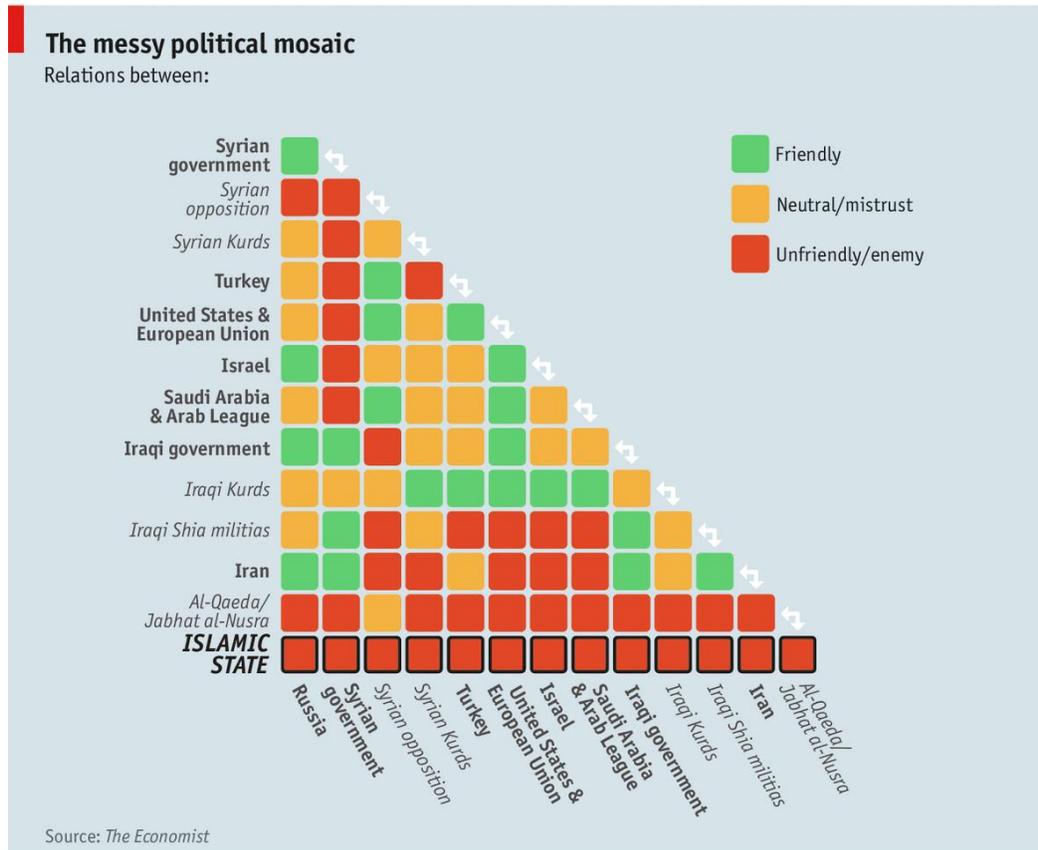
The Proxy War is between the US and Russia to see who will control Syria after the civil war ends. Saudi Arabia is supporting the Sunni rebels (they stopped supporting ISIS when it became too powerful and uncontrollable), while Iran supports the Shia government. Syria is now a fighting arena where everyone is betting for their favorite candidate, only worsening the situation.

The very messy political situation of the Middle East.

The proxy war in Syria and ISIS is the result of a very complicated mixture of love and hate between Middle Eastern nations and the global powers. First, we have the US and Russian rivalries that go back to the Cold War. We also have Saudi Arabia (backed by the US), a Sunni theocracy who is always fighting for influence over the area against Iran (backed by Russia), who is also a theocracy. Israel, as another example, makes all Muslim

nations feel uneasy, but as it is backed by the US they had to accept that Israel was going to stay. Russia and most of the Muslim community backs Palestine, who is not even recognized as a state. Allies back their allies' enemies.

Many nations also back terrorist and insurgent groups. Saudi Arabia, for example, sponsors Sunni terrorist organizations and has been compared to ISIS (which is a Sunni terrorist group) in several occasions, as they follow a similar version of Sharia law, which the international community has deplored many times. Saudi Arabia fights ISIS because they are rivaling their power and destabilizing the Middle East, not because the government believes that ISIS actions are wrong. The US has also sponsored terrorism; most notably she has trained Osama Bin Laden. The US has been fighting many of the organizations that Saudi Arabia supports and has also deplored the actions and beliefs of ISIS (which are also the beliefs of the Saudi government). The US and Saudi Arabia are ideologically opposed, and they back each other's enemies, yet they are allies. Middle Eastern relations are complicated. The US-Saudi alliance might be about Oil, which shows that alliances in this area are purely of convenience.



As result of the mess in the Middle East, the political situation looks roughly like this:

Major parties involved and their views

Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

Also known as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), or simply as Islamic State (IS). It is a terrorist organization and a self proclaimed Caliphate led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. It expands through Syria and Iraq, with its capital in Raqqa. It is far more extremist than other well known terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda, even utilizing violence against fellow Muslims. Its goal is to destroy western society and rule over the whole Muslim world, waging jihad against everyone who opposes them. The group is responsible for several terrorist attacks against European, Asian, American, African and Middle Eastern nations.

United States of America

The US has been highly involved in the Middle East since the foundation of Israel at the end of the Second World War. After September 11, 2001 the US under the Bush administration declared a worldwide War on Terror. In the 20th and 21st century, the US bombed or invaded Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and Syria. In 2014, the US resumed its participation in Iraq and Syria, leading a coalition whose members include two permanent Security Council Members, The Fifth French Republic and the United Kingdom. The coalition mainly focuses on bombing strategic ISIS targets. The US is also supporting the rebel groups in Syria, mainly the Kurds. The US is at odds with Russian Federation as she is backing the Assad Government, enemy of the rebels.

Russian Federation

Russia has also been a major player in the Middle East, many times clashing with the West (US and its allies). Russia has mainly supported nations which were enemies of the US supported nations, for example Syria and Iran. This is because of the established sphere of influence of both countries. On October, 2015 Russia started a bombing campaign against ISIS. Furthermore, she has declared that the US-led bombings are illegal as the UN

has not authorized them and neither the Syrian government has. Russia does have the authorization of President Assad to carry out bombing runs.

Syrian Arab Republic

Syria is in the middle of a civil war, while also being invaded by ISIS. President Bashar al-Assad is in a fragile position, fighting both the rebels and the Islamic State. His presidency is supported by Russia but opposed by the USA, most of the Arab community and the European Union. The Kurds are fighting for independence in the north, ISIS, government forces and rebels are fighting in the east and the government is trying to hold on to Damascus. Many Countries are aiding both sides of the conflict with money and military equipment, escalating the mayhem.

Republic of Iraq

Since the US invasion in 2003, Iraq was never been a stable nation. In 2006, tension between the Sunni minority and the Shia majority escalated into a civil war. Iraq became a fertile land for terrorist groups, with little governmental authority and religious tensions to exploit. AIQ was formed in western Iraq but remained small until 2014 when, after a successful invasion of Syria, they invaded Iraq (under the new name of ISI) and captured Mosul. Government forces were occupied with the civil war and were undertrained and demoralized, so they didn't pose a considerable opposition. In the northern part of the country, the Kurds have been fighting ISIS on their own and are advocating for independence, since the country is "split". The US is supporting Iraq in its fight against the terrorist organization, but the US also supports the Kurds, making the US-Iraqi relations a little bit weird.

Timeline of Important Events/Documents

Date	Description of Events
October 7, 2001	US invades Afghanistan following the events of 9/11.
March 20, 2003	Operation Iraqi Freedom begins, the US invades Iraq.
	Baghdad is captured by the USA.
April 9, 2003	Saddam Hussein captured by an U.S operation.
December 2003	al-Zarqawi swears allegiance to Bin Laden and forms al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).
October 17, 2004	
June 2006	Sunni population rises against AQI. U.S airstrike kills al-Zarqawi and al-Masri assumes control of AQI.
October 15, 2006	al-Masri announces the transition of AQI to Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) with Abu Omar al-Baghdadi as its leader.
	Sadam Hussein is executed.
December 30, 2006	US begins withdrawal from Iraq.
December 2007	al-Masri and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi are killed by a US-Iraqi operation. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi assumes leadership of ISI.
April 2010	
	Syrian Civil War begins.
February 2011	Syria is suspended from the Arab League.
November 12, 2011	Last US troops leave Iraq.
December 2011	ISI merges with the Nusra Front (al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria). ISI is renamed as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).
May 9, 2013	
	al-Qaeda cuts ties with ISIS.

February 2014	Mosul is captured by ISIS.
June 10, 2014	ISIS proclaims itself a Caliphate and it's renamed as Islamic State (IS). They declare themselves rulers of all muslims and announce al-Baghdadi as the Caliph Ibrahim.
June 29, 2014	
August 7, 2014	US president, Barack Obama, authorizes airstrikes against IS in Iraq.
August 19, 2014	American journalist, James Foley, beheaded by IS operative 'Jihadi John'.
March 12, 2015	Nigerian Islamist group, Boko Haram, pledges allegiance to IS.
May 20, 2015	IS captures Syrian city of Palmyra
September 30, 2015	Russia begins its military campaign in Syria.
November 11, 2015	Islamist militants carryout separate attacks in Paris, France. The raids brought the death of 129 civilians.
March 22, 2016	IS claims responsibility for the terrorist attacks in Brussels.

UN involvement

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Security Council Resolution targeting threats to international peace and security, 19 December 2014 (**S/RES/2195**)
- Security Council Resolution on the illicit funding of ISIS and al-Nusra via oil exports, traffic of cultural heritage, ransom payments and external donations, 12 February 2015 (**S/RES/2199**)
- Security Council Resolution on taking all necessary measures to prevent terrorist attacks committed by ISIS and al-Qaeda affiliates, 20 November 2015 (**S/RES/2249**)
- Monthly reports of the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee, established by the Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

In the Resolution 2195, adopted on December 19th, 2014 the Security Council emphasizes the importance of working collectively and calls upon the stabilization of border management to prevent the displacement of terrorist groups. It encourages information sharing among Member States and the work performed by the Counter-Terrorism Application Task Force. Furthermore, it advocates cooperation between nations to prevent terrorist from favoring from transnational organized crime.

On 12 February 2015, the Security Council unanimously adopted the Resolution 2199 drafted by the Russian Federation where it is reiterated that all direct or indirect trade of oil products with the Islamic State of Iraq Levant and the al-Nusra Front is considered as support of the mentioned groups. It also urges Member States to freeze all funds, economic resources and financial assets of ISIL and ANF and other individual groups associated to them. It reaffirms that ISIL and ANF are creating income from the illegal smuggling of objects of cultural heritage, thus it states that all Member States should take measures to

stop this kind of trade. Finally, it calls upon the blocking of terrorists from favoring from ransom payments and notes with great worry that external donations continue to find their way into the hands of ISIL and ANF.

Resolution 2268, drafted by France, was adopted following the events of 11/11 in Paris. It expresses its condolences to the victims of such attacks and reaffirms that those responsible must be held guilty. It also calls upon Member States that are able to, to take the measures needed and to boost their efforts to stop the flow of foreign terrorist fighters.

The international community also attempted to solve the question of the Islamic State but each nation has acted separately according to their own interests. On one hand, the US and its allies have conducted more than 8,216 airstrikes against ISIL in Syria and Iraq. The majority of them were aimed to Iraq and the US is, by far, the member of its coalition with the most airstrikes performed. Other members of the alliance, such as France and Jordan, have hit back the terrorist attacks on their land by bombing the Syrian city of Raqqa and by bombing an ISIL training center and ammunition depots respectively. On the other hand, the Russian Federation has started their military campaign against ISIL in Syria in September 2015. Russia has reported attacking ISIL targets but the U.S claims that the Russian airstrikes were directed to Syrian rebels. Moreover, Iranians and Kurds have attempted to stop ISIL on the ground by starting attacks in northern Iraq.

Possible Solutions

The situation can be divided into two main problems, the Syrian Civil War and ISIS. The two problems have interconnected each other to a degree in which they cannot be solved alone. This is because the same parties are involved in both conflicts, often dealing with the issues as if they were just one.

One possible solution would be for the UN to intervene militarily. Sending UN troops would put pressure to Russia and the US to work together. This would force them to finish their military operations, having to contribute to the UN mission instead. The mission should be divided in two, one for Syria and one for Iraq. In Iraq it would be a simple operation to destroy ISIS and then reconstruct the country, although the situation of the Kurdish independence should be considered. The mission in Syria would be much more complicated. First, the UN should force the rebel and governmental forces into a ceasefire in order to destroy ISIS. Then, the UN should investigate the Assad's regime crimes. Syria should be granted fair elections and reconstruction. Apart from the complications to achieve the goals, it should be considered that the US and Russia might not approve this plan because of their own strategic interests. A veto by one of these members would strike this option automatically.

If the first solution proves to be impossible to achieve, then the UN should at least try to make the Russian and US block work together, rather than compete. The Syrian Civil War would be impossible to solve by this mean, as the interests of both parties are opposite. But in the case of ISIS they can stand together. The US coalition and Russia should carry out joint military operations against the Islamic State. This option would not solve the Syrian Crisis though.

Regional powers should be incentivized to participate in solving the problem. Middle Eastern countries have not been as active as the world powers in fighting ISIS, although they have been the ones who suffered the most because of the Islamic State. Countries in the European Union claim to have a Refugee Crisis; however the ones who are really having a crisis are the bordering nations of Iraq and Syria. 150000 refugees have found asylum in the EU, while tiny Lebanon has hosted more than a million. This could potentially escalate the problem, spreading instability throughout the Middle East.

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