ILLICIT ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF IRREGULAR WARFARE GROUPS: A CASE STUDY OF THE ISLAMIC STATE (IS) AND THE RESPONSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA in Political Studies in the Department of History and Political Studies at Nelson Mandela University

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DEDICATION

In addition to my lovely son Hlelolenkosi, supportive fiancée Monica, and my humble mother Lindiwe. I dedicate this work to the strength and enduring spirit of the people of the Middle East who in the past few decades their communities and families have been ravaged by wars and oppression.

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ILLICIT ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF IRREGULAR WARFARE GROUPS: A CASE STUDY OF THE ISLAMIC STATE (IS) AND THE RESPONSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

ABSTRACT

This study is about the illicit economic activities (especially oil smuggling) of the Islamic State (IS) and the response of the international community (UNSC, national governments, and non-State actors) from 2014 until 2021. The context of the study is the ongoing Syrian civil war and the IS Caliphate, in Syria and Iraq. Through Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) as a critical approach to terrorism studies the study investigates the contribution of oil smuggling to the military strength of the IS. The study evaluates the effectuality of the force-based counterterrorism strategies deployed by the international community against the IS. Ultimately, the study develops a CTS-oriented approach to understanding how actions can be taken to counteract similar global terror threats in the future. The IS is a global Salafi Islamic irregular warfare group that originates from the Middle East. In June 2014, the IS proclaimed a Caliphate (Islamic state) in the Middle East, only for it to be dismantled by the US-led coalition forces and local Kurdish forces in 2019. The study applies qualitative documentary research. It utilises both primary and secondary sources. The research findings reveal that oil smuggling was a significant source of income for the IS only for a short period of time (early 2014 till late 2015). However, few other economic activities of the IS were consistent in generating income throughout. Furthermore, no evidence suggests that illicit oil trade profits of the IS were used to strengthen the military capacity of the organization. Instead, data revealed that the IS relied heavily on military weapons seized from its opponents on the battlefield including weapons from the US that were meant for the local Kurdish forces. The findings further reveal that while military force (mainly airstrikes) by the international community significantly reduced IS's oil production and smuggling activities, they at the same time also exacerbated social challenges such as the refugee crisis, damage to infrastructure and loss of innocent civilian lives.

Key Terms: Counterinsurgency, Coalition Forces, International Community, Irregular Warfare Groups, Critical Terrorism Studies, Middle East, Syria and Iraq.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AUMF	Authorization for Use of Military Force
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CTS	Critical Terrorism Studies
CJTF-OIR	Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve
CTF	Countering of Terrorism Financing
EU	European Union
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FARC	Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces
FSA	Free Syrian Army
IS	Islamic State
ISI	Islamic State of Iraq
IDP	Internationally Displaced Persons
IIIM	International Impartial and Independent Mechanism
IIPE	Illicit International Political Economy
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
KRG	Kurdish Regional Government
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSS	National Security Strategy
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PKK	Kurdish Workers Party
RSIM	Rajah Solaiman Islamic Movement
SOHR	Syrian Observatory for Human Rights
STRIVE	Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism

TA   Thematic Analysis

UN   United Nations

US   United States

UNSC   United Nations Security Council

UNSG   United Nations Secretary-General

UNODC   United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UAE   United Arab Emirates

UK   United Kingdom

UNICEF   United Nations Children's Fund

UNAMI   United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq

WMD   Weapons of Mass Destruction

YPG   People's Protection Unit

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.

1.1. Introduction

Irregular warfare groups across the globe owe their existence to various political circumstances including, amongst other factors, the influence of radical ideologies, petroleum/energy politics, politics of marginalization, and funding and maintenance by violent states to carry out warfare. Some seek to collapse undesired political systems that undermine and misrepresent the political interests of specific social groups in societies, whilst others exist to protect the interests of certain governments and to maintain the status quo. Scholarly literature has perceived and recorded different irregular warfare groups in various ways, some being understood as terrorist or insurgent organizations and others as freedom fighters. Despite the stark comparison, the bottom line is that they all sought/seek to achieve political goals.

Different irregular warfare groups exist to achieve various political goals set by them and sometimes for reasons only known to them. They rely on military aggression to achieve their political goals. They carry out attacks against their oppositions (governments and sometimes the public) in an attempt to achieve their political aims. Some irregular warfare groups seek to prove their legitimacy to the local population by providing the rule of law and sometimes social welfare services where it is absent and agitate for their political interests. By so doing, they seek to capture the hearts and minds of the local population since they believe that their success and existence depend on the positive relationship with the local population (Kiras 2007:187). Military coercion requires a huge sum of funds and resources, as a result, it has become prevalent for irregular warfare groups to venture into various illicit economic activities. Such activities include amongst others illegal tax collection, human trafficking, drug smuggling, illicit oil, gold and diamond trade, money laundering, and extortion of funds and resources from the public and private sector to fund their military operations. In many instances, irregular warfare groups derive large profits from illicit economies and use the cash to strengthen their military capacity and carry out military operations against their oppositions (Felbab-Brown 2010:3).

The study is based on the case of the Islamic State (IS) also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a global Salafi Islamic irregular

warfare group that originates from the Middle East which is probably the most radical and ambitious militant organization of the twenty-first century so far. This is because, unlike other non-state militant organizations, the IS does not seek to change the political status quo of a specific country. Instead, it holds a long-standing political ambition to establish a caliphate (Islamic state) that will rule over all Muslim societies especially in Syria and Iraq. The group has also assumed responsibility to eliminate Western religion, culture, education and influence in the region. The first attempt to create a caliphate was seen in 2006 in Iraq, followed by a successful establishment in 2014 in Iraq and Syria under the name the "Islamic State" led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the caliph or leader (Laub 2016:2). The origins of the organization date back to the late 1990s following the release of its founder Abu Musab al-Zarqawi from prison in Jordan. Since the 1990s the group has evolved in terms of size, military strength, and economic viability. It had been reborn several times under different administrations until it became the Islamic State (IS) in 2014. The IS reached its peak in 2014 as it controlled hundreds of square miles of territory in Syria and Iraq including the major Iraqi city of Mosul as its main economic hub. The group suffered a major pushback from Western countries led by the United States. By early 2019 it had suffered major military setbacks and lost control of all of its territory reducing it to a smaller but significant force capable of carrying out small scale terror attacks in Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere (Humud and Blanchard 2020:10).

The study focuses on the illicit economic activities of the IS with special attention to the role of oil smuggling within the broader economic survival of the organization. The study utilises Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) as a critical approach to terrorism studies to assess the effectiveness of the violent counterinsurgency strategies and policies pursued by the international community including the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) against the IS. Ultimately the study develops a CTS oriented approach to understanding how actions can be taken to counteract the IS and similar global terror threats in the future.

1.2. Background to the Problem.

There is a long-standing hypothesis that provides that insurgent and criminal organizations thrive in areas where there is a combination of political instability, poor governance, and socio-economic inequality. For instance, Ban Ki-moon former United Nations Secretary General (*cited in* Keefe 2013:102), argued that the failure by authorities to police their borders create a decisive strategic advantage for criminal groups and terrorists. This is because

terrorist and criminal networks are very skilled at taking advantage of institutional weakness on the ground. Antonia Maria Costa, former head of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (*cited in* Keefe, 2013:102), argued that "There are so many forgotten places, out of government control, too scary for investors and tourists. These are the places where smugglers, insurgents, and terrorists operate". The origin and political history of the IS vindicates and complements this hypothesis.

The arrival of the Arab Spring in late 2010 and the eruption of the Syrian civil war in 2011 energized the then Islamic State of Iraq (now Islamic State) and reinvigorated the traditional objectives of the organization to "expand and professionalise" (Gunes and Lowe 2015:8). Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi a then leader of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) was attracted by the Syrian civil conflict. As a result, he sent one of his trusted men Abu Muhammad al-Jowlani, a then chief of operations in Ninawa- an area formerly controlled by the ISI in Iraq- to establish a branch in Syria. Jowlani arrived in Syria in August 2011 and began to connect with local jihadi cells across the country and eventually established a jihadist group that became known as Jabhat al-Nusra. The organization became successful and operated similar to the ISI and al-Qaeda. Despite the declaration of the newly formed Nusra as the branch of the ISI by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Jowlani as the leader of Nusra turned his back against ISI and denied any connection to the organization. He declared Nusra an independent militant organization and the main opponent of the Syrian government. Consequently, the ISI (now Islamic State) had to re-establish and cement itself in the Syrian civil conflict (Gunes and Lowe 2015:8).

By late 2012 the then ISI had established a loosely integrated yet thriving economy primarily based on confiscated oil from the Middle East, Syria and Iraq in particular. In an attempt to realise financial self-sufficiency, the organization tapped into an illicit economy characterised by a variety of economic activities. Such activities amongst others include abduction for ransom, oil smuggling, tax collection, extortion of money, and resources, and appropriation of agricultural produce, and control of energy, and water supply (Stergiou 2016:13). Watkin (2014:500), emphasises that despite other illicit economic activities, oil smuggling had been a major source of income, constituting approximately 70% of the group's total income. This followed the capturing of sixty per cent of the Syrian oil as well as the other seven oil producing fields in Iraq in 2014. Stergiou (2016:10), provides that the group had established an extensive and embedded network of middlemen in neighbouring countries such as Turkey,

Lebanon, and Jordan as well as within the Syrian republic. Lister (2014:6), states that prior to achieving financial viability, the organization had initially relied on subsidies and donations. The donations and subsidies came from the group's sympathizers and associates from the Gulf region to ensure the survival and functionality of the organization until finally becoming financially self-sufficient in 2006. Lister (2014:6) claims that between 2006 and 2009 under the name the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), the organization had managed to generate approximately $2 billion through various illicit economic activities.

According to Pierini (2016:6), after the realisation by the international community that there is a positive relationship between the Islamic State's illicit economic activities and the extent to which it had participated in the Syrian civil conflict and the capturing of territory in the Middle East. The powerful governments of the world, the United States in particular, and a few other Western states initiated a global anti-Islamic State campaign known as Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) in 2014. The campaign sought to exterminate the IS and obliterate its economy in Syria and Iraq specifically oil trade through military actions mainly airstrikes. However, Lister (2014:38) suggests that military aggression, especially airstrikes proved inadequate and ineffectual in eliminating a guerrilla warfare group that operate within communities and amongst civilians with a labour-intensive economy. As a result, the United States and partners in the region ultimately mobilized ground forces to defeat the IS in its strongholds. However, the organization has proven resilient and almost unconquerable in that several countries in West and North Africa have reported the resurgence of the IS in their regions including Mozambique in Southern Africa (Cafarella, Wallace, and Zhou 2019:14).

Of concern to the study, therefore, is the lack of extensive and detailed studies on the effectiveness of the force-based counterterrorism strategy that had been deployed by the international community including the UNSC against the IS. Through the lens of CTS, the study assesses the effectuality of the violent counterterrorism strategy deployed by the international community against the IS both in the short and long term; and ultimately develops a CTS oriented approach to understanding how actions can be taken to forestall similar global terror threats in the future.

1.3. Problem Statement

Military intervention as a counterterrorism strategy has become predominant in the international system in recent years. The prevalence and dominance of military intervention as the main approach in the global fight against terrorism has overshadowed the possibility of alternative counterterrorism strategies, especially non-violent counterterrorism approaches. This is because the force-based counterterrorism strategy is normalised and widely practised by the world's powerful governments and international organizations such as the United States (US) and the United Nations (UN) at a global level (Stern 2010:100). The presence of the IS and many other powerful irregular warfare groups such as al-Qaeda in Syria and Iraq since the onset of the Syrian civil conflict has attracted significant attention from different state actors in the global system including superpowers such as the United States and Russia. Ever since the onset of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the IS has encountered a tremendous amount of military violence from the international community spearheaded by powerful countries such as Russia, the United States, a few Arab states and many other Western states. Despite the amount of military violence especially in a form of airstrikes endured by the IS since 2014 after the organization declared a caliphate in the Middle East, the organization has proven irrepressible (Cafarella *et al* 2019:47). Regardless of several claims by the United States to have defeated the IS in Syria and Iraq following the loss of much of its leadership including the death of its former leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, loss of territory and large membership the IS has managed to resurface and recruit outside of Syria and Iraq. The government of Mozambique has recently confirmed the presence of the IS in the Cabo Delgado region in Mozambique. The organization is believed to have recruited about 14 000 to 18 000 fighters since it endured a military setback in Syria and Iraq in 2019 (Cafarella *et al,* 2019:47).

Given this omission in the literature on the implementation and effectiveness of counterterrorism policy, the study's research problem is that there is not much written about the effectiveness of the currently dominant force-based counterterrorism strategy. Furthermore, there is also no adequate actions taken by national governments to translate research findings and recommendations into counterterrorism policy framework to address conditions that enable the IS and other irregular warfare groups to flourish.

1.4 Aim of the Study

Through the lens of CTS, the study seeks to assess the effectuality of the force-based counterterrorism strategies and policies pursued by the international community including the UNSC against the IS especially its economic activities. Ultimately, the study develops a CTS oriented approach to understanding how actions can be taken to counteract similar global terror threats in the future.

1.5. Objectives of the Study

The study pursues the following objectives, endeavouring to:

- Evaluate and describe the role played by illicit economic activities especially oil smuggling in strengthening the military capacity of the IS.

- Assess through the lens of CTS the effectiveness of counterterrorism strategies and policies adopted by the international community including the UNSC against the IS in the Middle East, Syria and Iraq in particular.

- Formulate a CTS orientated approach to make a significant contribution to the broader academic debate on "terrorism" and the IS in particular by understanding and addressing the conditions that engender radicalisation and "terrorism".

- Explore Countering of Terrorism Financing (CTF) strategies as part of the broader CTS approach to target the IS economy and the financing of "terrorism" in general.

1.6 Research Questions

The study addresses the following primary question:

- How did illicit economic activities, especially oil smuggling sustain the IS in Syria and Iraq since the onset of the Syrian civil conflict 2011 till 2021, and how effective was the response of the international community to the phenomenon?

Linked to the primary question, the study addresses the following secondary questions:

- What actions were taken by the international community including the UNSC to eliminate the IS in the Middle East, Syria and Iraq in particular?

- How effective are the counterterrorism strategies and policies implemented by the international community including the UNSC against the IS? And what are the efficient strategies and policy recommendations offered by the CTS approach?

- How did illicit economic activities of the IS especially oil smuggling contribute to the military strength of the organization?

- What has the international community, the UNSC in particular done to destroy the economy of the IS in Syria and Iraq?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The majority of studies on the IS and its involvement in the Syrian civil conflict tend to focus on amongst other things the reasons for the organization's involvement in the civil war, the organization's sources of income, the relationship of the organization with other irregular warfare groups and the response of the international community. The significance and originality of this study lie in the fact that it does not only investigate and discuss the illicit economic activities of the IS and the response of the international community. But through the lens of the CTS approach, the study evaluates the powerfulness and potency of the counterterrorism strategy deployed by the international community including the UNSC against the IS. As well as a design, the CTS orientated approach contributes to the broader academic debate on the fight against the IS, by addressing the conditions which enable the organization to flourish. The study brings a new dimension in the way in which the relationship between the economic activities of the IS and its military strength and existence is presented and understood. It also introduces a new dimension to the debate on the fight against the IS and global terrorism in general by evaluating the role of the international community and how the violent strategies and policies have affected IS itself and its economic activities, the livelihoods and human rights of ordinary people and international law.

Through a detailed and systematic analysis of the Islamic State's illicit economic activities, especially oil smuggling as the major source of income for the IS and a thorough assessment of the response of the international community. The study contributes to the literature or debate on the war against the IS and the formulation of effective counterterrorism policy and strategies to counteract similar global terror threats in the future. The study is unique and original in that through the lens of CTS it develops an efficient and methodical approach that

contributes to the fight against the IS and global terrorism in general by addressing conditions in which radicalisation and terrorism emerge.

1.8. Preliminary Literature Review

This section provides a summary of the literature that is significant to the study. Such literature ranges from literature on irregular warfare groups, illicit economic activities in general, the IS and its illicit economic activities, the response of the international community on IS, and its economic activities, as well as seminal literature on policy recommendations. Such literature includes amongst others DeFronzo (2015), Felbab-Brown (2010), Andreas (2011), Keefe (2013), Elvidge (2016), Kiourktsoglou and Coutroubis (2016), Brooke-Holland and Mills (2014), United Nations Secretary-General (2020), Stern (2010), and OSCE (2014). Extensive literature review occurs later in the study in chapter two.

1.8.1 Seminal Literature on Irregular Warfare Groups

Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements is an attempt by DeFronzo to describe and analyse the development of several revolutions and discover their essential features. DeFronzo (2015) investigates the contribution of twentieth-century major revolutions to revolutionary strategies and practices as well as their interactions and reciprocal effects on the larger world environment. He begins by analysing the universal theories of revolution and simultaneously attempts to establish the defining features of revolutions as well as the moral conduct of social movements. He pays special attention to the major revolutions of the twentieth century such as the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, the Cuban Revolution, and the Iranian Revolution. He discusses how these four major revolutions shaped and inspired other revolutions in different corners of the world. DeFronzo (2015) concludes that all revolutions and revolutionaries of the twenty-first century drew inspiration from those of the twentieth century. For instance, the emergence of Islamic revolutionary movements in the Middle East is rooted in Islamic resurgence which resulted from the Iranian revolution.

In her book, entitled *Shooting Up: Counterinsurgency and the War on Drugs,* Felbab-Brown (2010) utilises the case studies of Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) in Peru, Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) in Colombia, and the Taliban in Afghanistan to demonstrate a nexus between illicit drug economies of irregular fighters and military conflicts. She synchronously uses these case studies to reveal the deficiency of narcoterrorism

orientated global counterinsurgency policies in combating irregular warfare groups in different regions. She emphasises that irregular fighters or criminal organizations establish illicit economies that are labour intensive by nature, therefore, creating economic opportunities for local individuals, establishing a strong bond with the communities. The bond ultimately makes it difficult for the governments to defeat the insurgency through military aggression, this is because communities often provide safe havens and withhold information. She, therefore, concludes by recommending a counterinsurgency policy that will make it difficult for irregular warfare groups to create social support in local communities. The study benefited from Felbab-Brown's contribution on issues relating to the financing of irregular warfare groups in general and the relationship of irregular fighters with local communities.

1.8.2 Illicit Economic Activities

In his article, entitled *Illicit Globalization: Myths, Misconceptions, and Historical Lessons,* Andreas (2011) discuss illicit economic activities by global criminal groups as an old phenomenon with different facets and categorisations. Andreas (2011) illicit and semi-illicit economic activities of criminal organizations include but are not limited to: trading of special minerals (gold and diamonds), weapons, wildlife, human beings, human organs, and drugs. Globalization has influenced licit and illicit global markets in many ways, for instance, the trade of certain goods such as alcohol was regarded as illicit trade in the 1800s in some parts of the world. Due to globalization, the illicit global market has expanded over time and it continues to compete intensely with the licit global market. Andreas (2011) views the phenomenon as an ongoing battle between the global criminal groups and the states, and the states are continuously on the losing side of the battle whilst state power and sovereignty are shrinking. Andreas's work benefited this study with its exceptional articulation of the dynamics of illicit global markets, therefore helping the study to develop an operational definition of illicit economic activities of insurgent organizations based on the context of the study.

In *The Geography of Badness: Mapping the Hubs of the Illicit Global Economy,* Keefe (2013) initiates a very critical discussion and provokes important questions about the geography of illicit global economies. He investigates the main venues of illicit global economic activities and simultaneously establishes the factors that contribute to such a phenomenon. Keefe (2013) argues that issues such as state capture, a rogue state, and criminal state, tribes and

kingship networks, informal economy, poverty, corruption, borderlands and breakaway states. As well as partial state degradation amongst other things are the major factors contributing to illicit global economic activities by insurgents or criminal organizations. Keefe (2013) further argues that several areas are dominating venues of specific illicit economic activities. For instance, Turkey is situated at the crossroad of Europe and Asia with ready access to Russia and the Middle East, therefore, it has become the world's grand bazaar. It is an official meeting point for illicit global traders of goods such as narcotics, nuclear goods, arms, human beings, oil and gold, and diamonds amongst other things. Keefe (2013) distinguishes between the hubs and havens of illicit global economies, for instance, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a developed and politically stable country serves as an instrumental facilitation point for criminal organizations. Whilst insurgent organizations are likely to flourish in fragile countries such as Nigeria and Afghanistan where there is poverty and political instability. The logic and understanding of the operation and facilitation of irregular warfare groups demonstrated in Keefe's work helped this study to provide an explanatory analysis of why the IS operated successfully in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan since its formation in the 1990s and moved to Syria following the outbreak of the Syrian civil conflict in 2011.

1.8.3. The Islamic State and its Economic Activities

Shapiro and Elvidge (2016) contributed to the debate by arguing that many Middle Eastern-based insurgent organizations including the IS tap into illicit oil trade and use the profits to fund terrorist operations. Therefore, accurately measuring their oil production might help efforts to address such threats by providing a tool for assessing their long-term economic potential and may help to inform reconstruction strategies in conflict-affected areas. The study uses satellite data to ascertain the amount of oil captured by the IS in areas under the control of the organization both in Syria and Iraq. The study estimates a production that peaked at 33,000 barrels per day in July 2014, then fell to an average of 19, 000 barrels per day in 2015. Shapiro and Elvidge's research is imperative to this study as it enabled this study to assess and describe the significant role played by oil in sustaining the IS in Syria and Iraq from early 2014 till late 2015.

The ISIS export gateway to the global crude oil market, is an attempt by Kiourktsoglou and Coutroubis (2016) to uncover how the IS utilised some of the oil terminals in the South-East

Mediterranean Sea as export gateways to smuggle oil into the global crude oil market. They use satellite images to show the crude oil loading terminals that geographically fall within or border the IS-controlled territories. The study also investigated tanker trucks that operated around the suspected terminals to establish their pattern from the period July 2014 to February 2015. Kiourktsoglou and Coutroubis's work benefited this study since one of the responsibilities of this study is to describe the complex and clandestine nature of the IS's oil smuggling network in the Middle East and simultaneously identify entities that were buying oil from the IS.

1.8.4 The Response of the International Community

In the report entitled, *ISIS: the military response in Iraq and Syria,* Brooke-Holland and Mills (2014) state that a huge global anti-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (now Islamic State) military campaign was initiated in early 2014 by the international community to fight the group both in Syria and Iraq. The United States was the first country to conduct airstrikes against ISIS both in Syria and Iraq, it started in Iraq in August and Syria in September. The campaign was soon joined by US Arab partners such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Qatar, they launched several airstrikes in Syria on the 23rd of September. While countries such as Denmark, Belgium, France, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Australia and Canada were reluctant to participate militarily in Syria, instead they conducted airstrikes in Iraq on 26th September. Brooke-Holland and Mills (2014) state that Turkey a country that borders both Iraq and Syria dispatched its military to join the campaign both in Syria and Iraq in 2014. Military actions were limited to air operations in support of local forces providing reconnaissance, surveillance and attack capabilities. Airstrikes targeted heavy weapons, armed vehicles such as armed pick-up trucks, and the ISIS fighters engaged in combat fire with local ground forces. Due to the inefficacy of airstrikes especially when used against irregular fighters, by late 2014 there was a need for ground combat. The dilemma prompted a debate about the need for 'boots on the ground' or land forces. There was widespread resistance from participating members especially European nations and Australia to deploy ground troops. The UK, Canada, Australia and France explicitly dismissed the idea of deploying ground combat forces in Syria and Iraq. However, the UK deployed non-combat army trainers to northern Iraq and announced at the beginning of November 2014 that a small number of

advisers would be deployed to Iraqi headquarters and the US Congress announced its decision to consider military deployment both in Syria and Iraq in the near future.

Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy 2020 is a report of the United Nations Secretary-General on progress made in the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, including recommendations for the future. The report focuses on terrorism in general, however, it covers much of the actions that were taken by the United Nations against the IS in Syria and Iraq after its defeat in March 2019 as well as future actions to be taken against the organization as it threatens to resurface in developing countries. United Nations Secretary General (2020) states that following the loss of territorial control by the IS, the United Nations has managed to secure admissible evidence to ensure prosecution for terrorist crimes, upholding the rights and needs of victims and rehabilitating liberated communities. As well as to protect and de-radicalize thousands of men, women and children with suspected links to the IS currently in camps and detention facilities, including foreign terrorist fighters and their dependents. United Nations Secretary-General (2020) states that new technologies, such as crypto-currencies and mobile payment systems, offer new easy ways for terrorists to move money. Hence the UNSC has mandated the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to protect financial systems from terrorist take over to discourage the financing of terrorist organizations. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Development Programme, in joint partnership with the European Union, launched the Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism (STRIVE) which is a programme to support member states in central and South-East Asia. The United Nations supports several integrated assistance counter-terrorism initiatives to fight the resurgence of the IS in North, Central and West Africa.

1.8.5. Seminal Literature for Policy Recommendation.

In her article entitled *Mind over Martyr: How to De-radicalize Islamist Extremists,* Stern (2010) acknowledges that Islamic terrorism is a societal challenge but rejects the narrative that the so-called "Islamic terrorism" has become the greatest threat to global peace and stability in the twenty-first century. Instead, she holds the view that "terrorism" is a social construct and can be deconstructed, de-radicalization of the so-called "Islamist terrorists" and their

potential recruits is undoubtedly possible. She regards Saudi Arabia as the pioneer state in the rehabilitation of terrorists. Stern (2010) submits that since 2004, more than 4000 former terrorists have gone through Saudi Arabia rehabilitation programmes and graduates have been reintegrated into mainstream society much more successfully than ordinary criminals. Stern (2010) holds a view that the model of de-radicalisation and disengagement that had been adopted by Saudi Arabia which is guided by humanitarianism and public diplomacy is the kind of approach that ought to be adopted by the international community at large. The Saudi Arabian programme is based on psychological counselling, vocational training, art therapy, sports, and religious re-education and so on. Stern (2010) insists that as much as Islam is believed to be the main source of terrorism in the Middle East, part of the solution should come from within Islam as a religious ideology and from Islamic scholars, who can refute this ideology with arguments based on theology and ethics. Global superpowers such as the United States should adopt this approach to intensify the fight against global terrorism. Stern's position is premised on the idea that powerful countries like the United States should not kill their way to victory in the struggle against global terrorism. Instead, Stern (2010) states that although military coercion is a very important part of the strategy against terrorism, the main goal should be to stop the terrorist movements from growing by denying them membership. Counter-terrorism policy should begin to address factors that push and attract young people to terrorist movements, such issues include unemployment, identity crisis and no sense of belonging, socio-economic marginalization, and so on.

Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach is a handbook published by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2014. OSCE (2014) holds a view that global terrorism at all times should be combated in compliance with the rule of law, and international human rights. A progressive counter-terrorism policy should be based on a community policing approach, an establishment of police-public partnership for proactive problem solving can yield tangible and durable contributions to broader strategic efforts to prevent terrorism. OSCE (2014) states that the fight against terrorism cannot be limited to traditional military and law enforcement responses, there is an overwhelming need to address various socio-economic, political and other factors including violent separatism and extremism which engender conditions in which terrorist organizations recruit and win

support. OSCE (2014) suggests that countering terrorism and protecting human rights should be regarded as mutually reinforcing goals, therefore, a multidimensional approach that will consist of politico-military aspects of security, protection and promotion of human rights. As well as economic development and environmental sustainability should form inextricable parts of progressive counter-terrorism policy. OSCE (2014) concludes that is imperative for the international community, UNSC, in particular, to avoid violation of international human rights standards and the identification of terrorism with any nationality, religion or race because it undermines the effectiveness and legitimacy of global efforts against terrorism. While this section provided a summary of significant literature, an extensive review of all literature that is critical to the study occurs in chapter two (literature review). The following section discusses the theoretical framework of the study.

1.9 Theoretical Framework: Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS)

While Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) as an approach to terrorism studies is covered in detail in chapter two (literature review), this section provides an overview of the CTS as an approach to terrorism studies. CTS is utilised in this study to analyse and problematize the phenomenon in question (illicit economic activities of the IS and the response of the international community). The study examines the phenomenon from a self-reflective point of view, which then allow the researcher to engage with the subjectivity of the IS. This theoretical framework does not only help to test the effectiveness of the dominant force-based counterterrorism strategy that had been used frequently against the IS and other irregular warfare groups in contemporary history. But it also helps the study to develop a counterterrorism strategy that is not solely based on military intervention but a multidimensional approach that resonates with various conditions which engender terrorism and radicalisation. The strategy concentrates on how to combat the IS illicit economic activities, oil smuggling in particular. This is done by exploring and evaluating critical Countering of Terrorism Financing (CTF) initiatives as part of the broader CTS approach that can be considered by the international community to expunge the IS.

CTS is a research orientation or scholarship that adopts a self-reflective critical approach to the study of terrorism. It is inspired by the Frankfurt School of critical theory and Aberystwyth School of critical security studies. It applies a critical theory approach that is rooted in counterhegemonic theory to the study of terrorism drawing from the early work of critical

academics such as Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman (Jackson, 2016:23). CTS seeks to understand terrorism as a social construct or a label that is reserved for specific acts of violence committed by specific social groups through a variety of political, legal, and academic processes. CTS seeks to understand and critique dominant forms of counterterrorism (Jarvis, 2009:6).

According to Biersteker and Eckert (2008:293), CTS as a critical framework for terrorism studies provides that military intervention is a very important element of counterterrorism efforts, however, it must be understood as part of the broader and comprehensive counterterrorism strategy. Military force should be a secondary response to acts of "terrorism", it should be deployed occasionally as a last resort where it is necessary. This is because force-based counterterrorism sometimes can be a self-defeating exercise. After all, it perpetuates the very same thing it seeks to control (violence). Stern (2010:97) argues that the weakness of violent counterterrorism is that it is ignorant of the languages, cultures, and histories of the context in which "terrorism" emerges. Counterterrorism policy should begin to address factors that enable "terrorist" movements to flourish, such factors include amongst others unemployment, lack of identity, no sense of belonging, and social and economic marginalization. Stern (2010:97) contends that a meaningful counterterrorism policy should address the existential social problems by providing services such as psychological counselling, vocational training, art therapy, sports, and religious re-education to those designated as "terrorists" and potential recruits, especially the youth. Stern (2010:108) stresses that Islamic contribution is critical to the process of de-radicalisation since Islam is believed to be the main source of "terrorism" in the Middle East. Part of the solution should come from within Islam as a religious ideology and from Islamic scholars who can refute this ideology with arguments based on theology and ethics. The CTS will be discussed in detail in chapter two.

1.10 Proposed Research Methodology

This section provides a brief description of the research methodology that is adopted in the study. In this section critical components of the research methodology are discussed while the comprehensive description of this research methodology is provided in chapter three of the study. This study is an unobtrusive or non-reactive qualitative research with a single case

study research approach. Yin (2003:34) defines single case-study research as an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident. The study investigates the role played by illicit economic activities, especially oil smuggling in sustaining the IS in Syria and Iraq during the period 2014 till present. As well as assessing the effectiveness of counterinsurgency policies and strategies pursued by the UNSC and national governments against the IS through the lens of CTS as an approach to terrorism studies.

This study is documentary research which is the research conducted through the use of official documents or personal documents as sources of information (Ahmed 2010:2). The study derived data from primary sources such as speeches, diaries, minutes and letters. And secondary sources such as laws, constitutions, policy documents, official government documents, web pages, and research reports of both the IS and the international community (NGOs, national governments, and the UNSC). Syria and Iraq remain volatile and inaccessible to researchers, journalists and many other professionals, hence, documentary research was suitable for this study.

This study serves three major purposes, which are to describe, explain and analyse a social behaviour observed which is the illicit economic activities of the IS from 2014 till present and the response of the international community. Hence, the study adopts a holistic case design with two units of analysis. The descriptive part of the study chronicles the illicit economic activities of the IS and the response of the international community and demythologise the entire phenomenon by addressing the What, Where, When and How questions. The explanatory part of the study focused on addressing the why questions. For instance, addressing the question of why the international community responded to the illicit economic activities of the IS in a way it did. Whilst the analytical part of the study through the lens of CTS analyses and evaluates the effectiveness of counterterrorism strategies and policies pursued by the international community against the IS. As well as formulates a CTS orientated approach to understanding how actions can be taken to counteract the IS and similar global terror threats in the future.

In social research there is nearly no limit to what or who can be studied, the most typical unit of analysis is individual people, however, other units of analysis in social research include

social groups, organizations and social interactions. The major entities that are studied in this study are the Middle Eastern-based irregular warfare group officially known as the Islamic State (IS) and the international community (non-state actors/NGOs, national governments, and the UNSC). The units of observation are illicit economic activities of the IS and the response of the international community towards the IS. With regards to samples and sampling techniques, the study adopts a holistic single-case design with two units of analysis which are the IS and the international community that will be studied through a deliberate and scientific approach.

This study adopts thematic analysis as a tool of analysis that involves identifying, analysing and interpreting patterns of meaning or themes within the qualitative data set Yin (2003:43). Through the use of thematic analysis, the study sieves and filters the available primary and secondary data and therefore, analyses it through the lens of CTS to create a new and original analysis of the phenomenon (illicit economic activities of the IS and the response of the international community). As well as formulates a CTS based approach to understanding how actions can be taken to forestall global terror threats in the future.

A set of specific qualities have been pursued to ensure a good quality of scientific enquiry, this includes precision, accuracy, and most importantly reliability and validity. Woodside (2010:32) argues that although in social research precision is not always necessary or desirable, it is very crucial especially during the operationalization of concepts, however, it should be guided by the understanding of its degree required. This study pursued precision to produce quality descriptions and explanatory analyses. Woodside (2010:32) states that accuracy is another important factor in qualitative research, it is a special requirement for description and explanation, it is the state of being correct than being more specific (precise). It is important not to confuse precision or specificity with accuracy. For instance, saying that the IS, formerly known as the ISIL was founded in 1999 is more precise/specific than saying that it was founded in the late 1990s. While saying that the founder of the IS, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was born in the Middle East is more accurate than saying Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was born in Iraq. This is because Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was born in Jordan, therefore, the less specific description, in this instance, is more accurate and a better reflection of the truth. These qualities were pursued to ensure a credible and reliable study.

Reliability is another important quality of research measurement; it is a matter of whether a particular technique applied repeatedly to the same object yields the same result each time (Babbie 2016:51). To ensure reliability and replicability, the following techniques were employed: Test-retest, a method of making the same assessment or measurement more than once to confirm the consistency of the results. Split-half method, a technique used to make more than one assessment of a complex social concept, whereby a set of questions that are designed to assess a phenomenon/concept are divided into two and expected to yield the same results. And the use of established measures, which is a method of using measures that have proven their reliability in previous research, for instance, the use of theoretical logic that has been used in previous research and proven reliable (Babbie 2016:51-6).

The single case-study research approach has always been subject to several criticisms most commonly being the issue of validity and generalisability. The main strategy that has been used to increase the validity and generalisability of the study is the strategic selection of the case study or sample (IS). The organization had been strategically selected as a sample due to its representativeness of other irregular warfare groups at least in the Middle Eastern region. Woodside (2010:37) states that the benefits that come with a strategic selection of a case include but are not limited to the empirically rich evidence, context-specific, holistic accounts, and contribution or the ability of theory-building and, to a lesser extent theory-testing, all these factors will provide rich insight about the phenomenon and other related cases.

Since this study is non-reactive qualitative research relying on documentary research as the only data collection method. The study avoids many ethical issues such as informed consent, protection from harm and so on that are common concerns for other data collection methods, especially in reactive research. Although the study relied on the following sources for data: official documents, speeches, laws and constitutions, letters, diaries, minutes, and research reports. The study observed the general rules of social research such as confidentiality, privacy and anonymity. For instance, in cases where the study examines a letter as a source of data, the letter is obtained legally and ethically, the identities and privacies of the writer and recipient of the letter are protected if necessary. As the general principles of scientific research dictate, the study collected data legally, analysed it, and reported the findings honestly to discover what is so, rather than attempting to support a favoured hypothesis or personal agenda.

This methodology is best for this study in that unlike generalising methods, it provides a thick description that allows for a thorough analysis of the complex and particularistic nature of a distinct phenomenon under study. The approach is best for this study because it is context specific, offers a holistic account of the studied phenomenon, and contributes to theory building and to a lesser extent theory testing. Most importantly this approach was adopted because Syria and Iraq remain war zones and inaccessible to researchers, journalists and many other professionals, therefore, this approach offered me an opportunity to study the phenomenon from a distance through documentary research. The research methodology will be discussed extensively in chapter three of the study.

1.11 Personal Plan

The study was conducted in South Africa at the Nelson Mandela University under the faculty of History and Political Studies (January 2020 to December 2021). The research project is guided by the university's research ethics and research committee provisions of social research. The researcher did not manipulate the findings, data was obtained legally and ethically, analysed and findings are reported honestly to discover what is so, rather than attempting to support a favoured hypothesis or personal agenda.

1.12 Budget

This study was funded by the National Research Foundation (NRF) of the Republic of South Africa through a scholarship worth R90 000 per annum with an additional R10 000 research visits allowance annually. It also received the Postgraduate Research Scholarship (PGRS) award of R55 000 per annum from the Nelson Mandela University Research Development (RD) Department.

1.13 Limitations of the Study.

The clandestine and academically isolated nature of the research topic, (illicit economic activities of the IS and the response of the international community) resulted in the limitations of the study. The study used documentary research as the only data collection method, this is because Syria and Iraq remain war zones with little or no access for researchers, journalists and other professionals. Therefore, the study solely relied on currently existing primary and secondary data. Gathering information on the illicit economic activities of the IS was one of the greatest challenges of the study that ultimately contributed to the limitations of the study

since much of the information was highly classified. Since I was unable to do fieldwork due to the ongoing conflict in Syria and Iraq, this topic deserves a non-unobtrusive research enquiry in future that will use various data collection methods including interviews, questionnaires and so on for a further exploration of the topic.

1.14 Conclusion.

It was highly impractical for this study to capture and exhaust the entire dynamics of the phenomenon under study, since the enquiry relied on documentary research for data collection, therefore, limiting itself to the currently available data. However, through a detailed and systematic analysis of IS's illicit economic activities, especially oil smuggling and a thorough assessment of the response of the international community. This study contributes to the literature or debate on the war against the IS and the formulation of effective counterterrorism policies and strategies to counteract the IS and similar global terror threats. This study is unique and original in that through the CTS framework it develops an efficient and methodical approach that contributes to the fight against the IS and global terrorism in general by addressing conditions in which radicalisation and terrorism emerge. Due to a variety of reasons including the clandestine nature of the topic, limitations of case study research as a methodology, and documentary research as a data collection method. This study could not exhaust the topic under study (illicit economic activities of the IS and response of the international community). Therefore, more different qualitative scientific enquiries are necessary to broaden the discussion. Research designs and methodologies that will enable the use of data collection methods such as interviews, structured questionnaires and so on are much needed for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a review of critical literature on irregular warfare groups and their illicit economic activities in general. Special attention is placed on the IS itself, its economic activities, and the response of the international community to its activities in the region. Part of this literature focuses on the financing of irregular warfare groups in general as well as their nature, conduct, and behaviour. Whilst some pay attention to the dynamics and categorization of militant organizations ranging from criminal groups, drug cartels, insurgent groups, and revolutionary armed forces. Such literature includes amongst others, DeFronzo (2015), Felbab-Brown (2010), Kiras (2007), Rid and Hecker (2009), and Clarke (2015). The establishment of the caliphate (de facto state) by the IS in the Middle East in 2014, in Syria and Iraq in particular, and the economic activities of the organization generated many debates and studies. Most of these studies concerned themselves with various economic activities of the IS such as tax collection, extortion of money and resources, appropriation of agricultural produce, control of water and energy supply, abduction for ransom, and fundraising through social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Some studies partly focused on investigating the amount of oil owned by IS and the overall economic prospects of the organization. Such studies include amongst others, Laub (2016), Watkins (2014), Lister (2014), Shapiro and Elvidge (2016), Kiourktsoglou and Coutroubis (2016), Crane (2015), Taub (2015), Ipek (2017), Hansen-Lewis and Shapiro (2015) and Stergiou (2016). However, these studies lack detailed and systematic analyses of how illicit economic activities, specifically oil smuggling had strengthened the military capacity of the IS and sustained the organization in Syria and Iraq from 2014 till the present.

Part of this chapter concentrates on the response of the international community, special focus and emphasis are given to the United Nations, the United States, and a few European nations including the Russian Federation as they are regarded as the main actors of the response to the IS. Over the years both Trump and Obama's administrations have used U.S. military power to confront the so-called "Islamic terrorism". A coalition of 68 countries was engaged in international efforts to counter ISIS (now Islamic State), the United States had led airstrikes against IS in Iraq from 8 August 2014 and the operations were extended into Syria by the end of September 2014. A massive global anti-IS military campaign was initiated in

early 2014 by the international community to fight the IS both in Syria and Iraq. The United States was the first country to conduct airstrikes against IS both in Syria and Iraq, it started in Iraq in August and Syria in September 2014. The campaign was soon joined by U.S. Arab partners such as the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Qatar, they launched several airstrikes in Syria on the 23rd of September. While countries such as Denmark, Belgium, France, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Australia, and Canada were reluctant to participate militarily in Syria, instead they conducted airstrikes in Iraq on 26th September. Turkey, a country that borders both Iraq and Syria dispatched its military to join the campaign both in Syria and Iraq in 2014. Military action was limited to air operations in support of local forces providing reconnaissance, surveillance, and attack capabilities. Airstrikes targeted heavy weapons, armed vehicles such as armed pick-up trucks, and the IS fighters engaged in combat fire with local ground forces.

Various reports of the UN Security General and other entities of the UN system highlight widespread international law and human rights violations by the Syrian government security forces, the Military Intelligence Directorate, and the Military Police. According to the reports, the violations include arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, extreme torture, sexual violence, and death in detention amongst other things. Several cases of economic and social rights violations by the Syrian regime have also been recorded, this includes the appropriation and seizing of land, property, and houses by the members of the Syrian National Army. The lack of access to water, electricity, and fuel is also more prevalent in the Syrian Arab Republic. According to the reports, a considerable number of civilians had suffered sexual violence, torture, and abduction at the hands of the Syrian National Army Military Police officials. Such cases remain unresolved as citizens claim that all relevant institutions in Syria are aware of the situation and some high-profile officials are implicated.

CTS-oriented literature that contributes to policy recommendations includes amongst others Stern (2010), OSCE (2014), Biersteker and Eckert (2008), and Jackson (2016). The literature shares the view that "terrorism" at all times should be combated in compliance with the rule of law, and international human rights. Progressive counter-terrorism policy and strategies based on a community policing approach, an establishment of police-public partnership for proactive problem solving can yield tangible and durable contributions to the broader strategic efforts to prevent terrorism. The fight against the so-called "global terrorism" cannot

be limited to traditional military and law enforcement responses. There is an overwhelming need to address various socio-economic, political, and other factors including violent separatism and extremism which engender conditions in which "terrorist" organizations recruit and win support. Whilst countering insurgency and protecting human rights are regarded as mutually reinforcing goals, a multidimensional approach that will consist of politico-military aspects of security, protection, and promotion of human rights. As well as economic development and environmental sustainability should form inextricable parts of a progressive counterinsurgency policy. This then suggests that meaningful and progressive counterterrorism work does not cease when the irregular warfare group is defeated militarily in the short run. An effective counterterrorism strategy requires community investment after the defeat to ensure the non-resurgence of the irregular warfare group and local support.

Analyses through the lens of CTS of the potential evolution of counterinsurgency strategies and policies over the years show that violent counterinsurgency policies and strategies are currently dominant in the global system as compared to the non-violent counterinsurgency approach. There is ample evidence suggesting that the United States is the pioneer of violent counterinsurgency strategies, it is also unequivocally true that violent counterinsurgency is at the centre of the U.S. foreign policy especially towards the Middle East and Asia (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:11). By virtue of being a global superpower, politically, militarily, and economically, the United States has contributed to the promotion and normalization of violent counterinsurgency strategies in the international system (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:11). CTS as a theoretical framework is applied deliberately and extensively in this study to evaluate the effectiveness of violent counterterrorism strategy pursued by the international community against the IS and ultimately formulate an approach to counteract the IS and similar global terror threats. In addition, it demonstrates how violent counterterrorism strategies destabilize the international system, create, and prolong conflicts especially in weak and fragile states and finally demonstrate how violent counterterrorism strategy compromises the authority and legitimacy of the UNSC and further contributes to the violation of international law and human rights standards. To consolidate the themes and findings of the study, significant primary sources are catalogued towards the end of this chapter, however, the section entails only the primary sources, data analysis occurs from chapter four onwards. The sources mainly are reports of the UN Secretary-General and

several entities of the UN system as well as official documents of national governments. The ensuing section briefly provides seminal literature on irregular warfare groups and their illicit economic activities in general.

2.2. Seminal Literature on Irregular Warfare Groups

Literature is abundant on irregular warfare groups and their economic activities. Such literature includes amongst others, DeFronzo (2015), Felbab-Brown (2010), Kiras (2007), Rid and Hecker (2009), and Clarke (2015). Part of this literature focuses on the financing of irregular warfare groups in general as well as their nature, conduct, and behaviour. Whilst some pay attention to the dynamics and categorization of militant organizations ranging from criminal groups, drug cartels, insurgent groups, and revolutionary armed forces.

Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements is an attempt by DeFronzo (2015), to describe and analyse the development of several revolutions and discover their essential features. He investigates the contribution of twentieth-century major revolutions to revolutionary strategies and practices as well as their interactions and reciprocal effects on the larger world environment. He begins by analysing the universal theories of revolution and simultaneously attempts to establish the defining features of revolutions as well as the nature of revolutionary movements. He pays special attention to the major revolutions of the twentieth century such as the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, the Cuban Revolution, and the Iranian Revolution. He discusses how these revolutions shaped and inspired other revolutions in different corners of the world. He concludes that all revolutions and revolutionaries of the twenty-first century drew inspiration from those of the twentieth century. For instance, the emergence of Islamic revolutionary movements in the Middle East is rooted in the Islamic resurgence which resulted from the Iranian revolution. De Fronzo's work is a very significant analysis of the major revolutions and revolutionary movements and their reciprocal effects on other societies. However, his limitation is that despite the close relationship between irregular warfare and revolution he neglects to discuss irregular warfare groups explicitly. Instead, he focuses on movements that at least in hindsight can be seen as revolutionary movements as they succeeded in transforming their societies. Nonetheless, the link between irregular warfare and revolution is a very controversial one, this is especially true in regions such as the Middle East which has a long history of "terrorism" and as a result often identified with terrorism. The line between irregular warfare and a revolution is very thin

especially during the premature phase, however, factors such as the scope or rather the activities, objectives, principles and behaviour of the organization can help to determine whether is an irregular warfare group or a revolutionary movement. A revolutionary movement is in many ways similar to a democratic establishment, it is a movement of the people by the people for the people and most importantly for the greater good.

In her book, entitled *Shooting Up: Counterinsurgency and the War on Drugs,* Felbab-Brown (2010) utilises the case studies of Sandero Luminosa (Shining Path) in Peru, Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) in Colombia, and the Taliban in Afghanistan to demonstrate a nexus between illicit drug economies of irregular fighters and military conflicts. She simultaneously uses these case studies to reveal the deficiency of narcoterrorism orientated global counterinsurgency policies in combating irregular warfare groups in different regions. She emphasises that irregular fighters or criminal organizations establish illicit economies that are labour intensive by nature, therefore, creating economic opportunities for local individuals and that often results in a strong bond with the local communities. The bond ultimately makes it difficult for the government forces to defeat the insurgents through military actions because communities often provide safe havens and withhold information from authorities. Felbab-Brown (2010) therefore, concludes by recommending that counterinsurgency policymakers should pursue policies that will make it difficult for irregular warfare groups to create social support in local communities. The study benefits immensely from Felbab-Brown's contribution on issues relating to the financing of irregular warfare groups in general and the relationship of irregular fighters with local communities. Therefore, enabling the study to critically assess the IS's relationship with the local communities and its economic survival at large.

In his book titled *Irregular Warfare: Terrorism and Insurgency,* Kiras (2007), argues that insurgent organizations are different from terrorist organizations in that they seek to change the undesired political status quo by launching large scale attacks against their opponents (government officials and institutions and sometimes the public). They constantly seek to prove their legitimacy to the local population and generate popular support since they believe that their existence and success are dependent on the local population. This is evidenced by the nature and behaviour of historical guerrilla/revolutionary movements such as that of Ernesto Che Guevara and Mao Zedong. On the other side, Kiras (2007), understands a terrorist

organization as an enterprise that is not guided by a vision of state/federal state creation, self-rule, and determination. No attempt is made to demonstrate legitimacy to local communities, no representation of the interests of local communities, and therefore, no support from local communities. As compared to insurgent organizations, terrorist organizations do not need large financing since they often undertake small scale attacks and lack the capacity and resilience to prolong the struggle. Kiras (2007) concludes that however, the common element is that the conundrum faced by the governments is to maintain the rule of law, morality, and legitimacy in the process of eliminating the threats of insurgent and terrorist organizations. The traditional strategy of eliminating terrorists and insurgents is to isolate them both politically and physically, although the process is slow and depends on the cultural and political context. Kiras' work is critical to this study in that it informs the study about the difference that exists between terrorist organizations and insurgent organizations or revolutionary movements. The consciousness and awareness about terrorist and insurgent organizations generated by Kiras' work help the study to painstakingly problematize the IS and create the context for the study.

War 2.0: Irregular Warfare in the Information Age, is an attempt by Rid and Hecker (2009) to describe how digital technology has affected irregular warfare over the years. Their central argument is that digital technology has levelled the battlefield for irregular fighters (insurgents or terrorists). Rid and Hecker (2009) state that in the past few years, irregular fighters (insurgents or terrorists) and regular fighters (conventional armies) have been fighting asymmetrical wars, whereby there was a huge imbalance of military strength between the two. Technology has now increased the options for irregular fighters by giving them a relative advantage more than it has for governments and armies. Rid and Hecker's work is significant to the study since part of the study's responsibility is to demonstrate how the IS members use digital technology to launch psychological warfare against their opponents and to advance their political agenda. Rid and Hecker further provide that irregular fighters have utilised telecommunication over time first as a target, then as a weapon, and lately as a platform. However, the ultimate territorial defeat of the IS in Iraq and Syria in 2019 by the US-led coalition forces alongside local Kurdish forces have resulted in the organization moving into more encrypted communications.

In his book entitled *Terrorism Inc.,* Clarke (2015), uncovers the financing of terror and insurgent organizations. The book's subtitle, *The Financing of Terrorism, Insurgency, and Irregular warfare* is the main subject of each chapter in which he traces the financial structure of the Provisional Irish Republic Army, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Hezbollah and Hamas, Afghan Taliban, al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (now the Islamic State). He acknowledges the dynamics of irregular warfare groups and the variety of their scopes. He, therefore, recommends tailored policies that will target each terror group individually. Clarke's work also investigates the rise of non-state actors in a post-Cold War era, specifically the spread of radical ideas in unstable states and porous borders that provide safe havens for terror and criminal organizations. He concludes by discussing how September 11, 2001, terrorist attack had changed the nature of terror financing legislation and action. He points out that President Bush signed Executive Order 13224, which effectively blocked finances with persons who commit, threaten to commit, or support terrorism. Resolution 1373 was adopted by the UN Security Council which compelled all UN member states to outlaw any suspected terror finances, freezing funds, and assets among other provisions. Clarke's work enables the study to imagine and formulate a counterinsurgency policy and strategy through the lens of the CTS approach that will target the IS and its economic activities.

Irregular warfare groups are different and complex and they undoubtedly form one of the most controversial topics in social sciences. This section did not exhaust the dynamics of irregular warfare groups, however, it has managed to discuss the complexities and dynamics that are most relevant to this study and therefore, contribute to the contextualization of the studied phenomenon. The section covered issues such as the link between irregular warfare groups and revolutions. The distinction between insurgency/revolution and terrorism. Contribution of modern technology to the struggle of irregular warfare groups, the financing of irregular warfare groups and counterinsurgency policies against irregular warfare groups and their economies. The following section focuses on illicit economic activities of irregular warfare groups, the introduction looks into the broader concept of illicit economic activities and the geography of illicit global markets. Whilst the remainder of the section pays attention to the IS and its economic activities, such activities include amongst others tax collection, extortion of money and resources, appropriation of agricultural produce, control of water and energy supply, abduction for ransom, and fundraising through social media platforms.

2.3. Illicit Economic Activities.

In his article, entitled *Illicit Globalization: Myths, Misconceptions, and Historical Lessons,* Andreas (2011) discusses illicit economic activities by global criminal groups as an old phenomenon with different facets and categorisations. Illicit and semi-illicit economic activities of criminal organizations include but are not limited to the trading of special minerals (gold and diamonds), weapons, wildlife, human beings, human organs, and drugs. Globalization has influenced licit and illicit global markets in many ways, for instance, the trade of certain goods such as alcohol was regarded as illicit trade in the 1800s in some parts of the world. Due to growing globalization, the illicit global market has expanded over time and it continues to compete intensely with the licit global market. Andreas (2011) views the phenomenon as an ongoing battle between the global criminal groups and the states, and the states are continuously on the losing side of the battle whilst state power and sovereignty are shrinking. Andreas's work benefits the study with its exceptional articulation of the dynamics of illicit global markets, therefore helping the study to develop an operational definition of illicit economic activities of insurgent organizations based on the context of the study.

In *The Geography of Badness: Mapping the Hubs of the Illicit Global Economy,* Keefe (2013) initiates a very critical discussion and provokes important questions about the geography of illicit global economies. He investigates the main venues of illicit global economic activities and simultaneously establishes the factors that contribute to such a phenomenon. He argues that issues such as state capture, a rogue state, and criminal state, informal economy, poverty, corruption, borderlands, and breakaway states, as well as partial state degradation amongst others are the major factors contributing to illicit global economic activities by insurgent or criminal organizations. He further argues that several areas are dominating venues of specific illicit economic activities. For instance, Turkey is situated at the crossroad of Europe and Asia with ready access to Russia and the Middle East and it has become the world's grand bazaar. It is a meeting point for illicit global traders of goods such as narcotics, nuclear goods, arms, human beings, oil and gold, and diamonds amongst other things. He distinguishes between the hubs and havens of illicit global economies, for instance, the United Arab Emirates, a developed and politically stable country serves as an instrumental facilitation point for criminal organizations. Whilst insurgent organizations are likely to flourish in fragile countries such as Nigeria and Afghanistan where there is poverty, political instability and so

on. The logic and understanding of the operation and administration of irregular warfare groups demonstrated in Keefe's work helps this study to provide an explanatory analysis of why the IS operated successfully in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan since its formation in the 1990s and moved to Syria following the outbreak of the Syrian civil conflict in 2011. The ensuing section provides brief literature on the IS and its illicit economic activities.

2.4. The Islamic State and its Economic Activities

The establishment of the caliphate (de facto state) by the IS in the Middle East in 2014, in Syria and Iraq in particular, and the economic activities of the organization generated many debates and studies from scholars of international relations in general and security studies in particular. Most of these studies concerned themselves with various economic activities of the IS such as tax collection, extortion of money and resources, appropriation of agricultural produce, control of water and energy supply, abduction for ransom, and fundraising through social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Some studies partly focused on investigating the amount of oil owned by the IS. Such studies include amongst others, Laub (2016), Watkins (2014), Lister (2014), Shapiro and Elvidge (2016), Kiourktsoglou and Coutroubis (2016), Crane (2015), Taub (2015), Ipek (2017), Hansen-Lewis and Shapiro (2015) and Stergiou (2016). However, these studies lack detailed and systematic analyses of how illicit economic activities, specifically oil smuggling had strengthened the military capacity of the IS and sustained the organization in Syria and Iraq from 2014 till the present.

Shapiro and Elvidge (2016) contributed to the debate by arguing that many Middle Eastern based irregular warfare groups including the IS tapped into illicit oil trade and used the profits to fund terrorist operations. Therefore, accurately measuring their oil production might help efforts to address the threat they pose by providing a tool for assessing their long-term economic potential and may help to inform reconstruction strategies in conflict-affected areas. The study uses satellite data to ascertain the amount of oil captured by the IS in areas under the control of the organization both in Syria and Iraq. The study estimates a production that peaked at 33,000 barrels per day in July 2014, then fell to an average of 19, 000 barrels per day in 2015. However, Ipek (2017:409) argues that oil smuggling as a source of income only benefited the IS for a short period (early 2014 to late 2015) as the production of oil in IS-controlled territories declined significantly following the attack on IS assets and oil fields by the US-led coalition forces coupled by the organization's lack of capacity for sustainable

production of oil. Vianna de Azevedo (2020:48), adds that following the territorial defeat of IS in Syria and Iraq, the group began relying heavily on criminal activities such as human trafficking, sex work, fraud, and so on benefiting from the Al Hawl refugee camp in northern Syria. Nonetheless, Shapiro and Elvidge's research is significant to the study in that it helps the study to assess and describe the role played by oil in sustaining the IS in Syria and Iraq from 2014 till the present.

The ISIS export gateway to the global crude oil market, is an attempt by Kiourktsoglou and Coutroubis (2016) to uncover how the IS utilised some of the oil terminals in the South-East Mediterranean Sea as export gateways to smuggle oil into the global crude oil market. They use satellite images to show the crude oil loading terminals that geographically fall within or border the IS-controlled territories. The study also investigated tanker trucks that operated around the suspected terminals to establish their pattern from the period July 2014 to February 2015. Kiourktsoglou and Coutroubis's work benefits the study since part of the study's responsibility is to describe the complex and clandestine nature of the IS's oil smuggling network in the Middle East and simultaneously identify entities that were sourcing oil from the IS.

In her study entitled, *The Role of Oil in ISIL Finances,* Crane (2015) looks at the role played by oil in financing the IS. She claims that revenues from sales of crude oil and refined oil products are the largest profits for the IS. She argues that the IS uses oil revenues to enhance its military capacity. This is a vital observation since it supports one of the study's main preconceived ideas that the illicit oil trade was the IS's biggest source of income. However, findings of the study suggest otherwise, for instance, Ipek (2017:409) demonstrates that oil smuggling was not necessarily the major source of income for IS, instead, it only contributed a large percentage to the organization's total income between early 2015 and mid-2016. Jeffrey (2021:11) adds that there is no evidence suggesting that there was a clear positive relationship between the then increasing oil smuggling revenues and the military strength of IS during the period 2014 and 2015. Instead, data shows that IS has relied heavily on military weapons that it confiscated from its opponents when engaged in military battles, however, some military weapons came from the US although were not meant for the IS but ended up in the hands of IS jihadist fighters. Crane (2015) further emphasizes that the tactic of targeting oil loading facilities and heavy trucks hauling crude oil and refined oil by the US-led coalition forces is

useful to reduce the income of the organization. Crane's work creates an interesting gap in that it fails to realise that the targeting of the IS's oil infrastructure and trucks by airstrikes does not necessarily translate to the defeat of the IS fighters on the ground. Instead, it guarantees the disruption of the livelihood of local communities and potentially boosts support for the IS.

In their study entitled, *Understanding Daesh Economy*, Hansen-Lewis and Shapiro (2015) analyse the IS as an economic entity. They hold a view that analysing the economic prospects of the organization is very crucial in that it will inform a universal decision on how to counteract the IS. Their work demonstrates that the amount of productive activities in areas controlled by the IS is small and the institutions are inimical to sustained growth. The study also dismisses the idea that the organization's ideology can enable the group to manage an extractive autocratic economy with historically unprecedented efficiency, hence the long-run economic prospects of the organization are poor. According to Hansen-Lewis and Shapiro (2015), an extractive autocratic economy is a very unsustainable economy, it is based on autocratic principles. It is interested in extracting resources and careless about the rehabilitation of the environment. In other words, it is a non-inclusive and slavery economy, in most cases, the labour force works without any remunerations and against its will and the participants are not guaranteed property rights and financial security. Hansen-Lewis and Shapiro's work is very significant to this study in that it is part of the literature that exposed the IS's lack of viable long term economic strategy which then minimised the staying power of the group leading to an early defeat of the organization in late 2018 or early 2019 in Syria and Iraq by the US-led coalition.

In his study entitled, *ISIS Political Economy: Financing a Terror State,* Stergiou (2016) looks at the phenomenon from an aspirational state creation point of view. He views the IS not as a mere marginalized irregular warfare group but as a powerful and unrelenting militant organization that has demonstrated the potential for state administration on a small scale in Syria and Iraq. He emphasizes that the creation of the caliphate (Islamic state) by the organization in 2014 was a significant political victory that distinguished the IS from other irregular warfare groups like al-Qaeda. Despite the temporary victory and the creation of the caliphate by the organization, the IS has not been widely supported by the general Arab populations, it was mostly embraced by those it had recruited. Therefore, as far as a

nationalist movement is concerned at least in theory would mean that the IS was only successful at the insurgency level. Therefore, the interpretation of the IS by Stergiou as a powerful and unrelenting militant organization that has the potential for state administration is phantasmagorias and delusional. Nonetheless, Stergiou's work is beneficial to this study in that it discusses various illicit economic activities of the IS which are the primary focus of the study, the study will benefit immensely from Stergiou's research. Collectively with other comprehensive sources, Stergiou's work will help to formulate an account of how the IS's economy looked like at its peak.

This section has discussed the concept of illicit economic activities in general and paid special attention to the illicit economic activities of the IS also known as ISIS/ISIL. Illicit economic activities of the IS include amongst other things tax collection, extortion of money and resources from local communities, appropriation of agricultural produce, control of water and energy supply, abduction for ransom, and fundraising through social media platforms. Given the threats posed by the IS in many parts of the world, the Middle East in particular. The following section concentrates on the response of the international community, special focus and emphasis are given to the United Nations, the United States, and a few European nations including the Russian Federation as they are regarded as the main actors of the response to the IS.

2.5. The Response of the International Community.

2.5.1. President Barack Obama's Administration.

John Forbes Kerry was an American politician and diplomat who served as the United States Secretary of State from 2013 to 2017 under the administration of former President Barack Obama. Appearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of the Representatives in September 2014 for a hearing titled "The ISIS threat: weighing the Obama Administration's Response". Kerry stated that after the ISIL (now Islamic State) launched its first major offensive in Northern Iraqi against the Iraq government forces in early 2014, President Obama was left with no choice but to begin launching airstrikes against IS to protect American personnel and prevent major catastrophes. Such as the fall of the Haditha dam or the maintenance of the Mosul dam, and also to boost the Iraqi Security Forces and the Kurdish forces that were regarded as moderate fighters at the time. According to Kerry, the United

States was aware that any strategy against the IS was only going to succeed if it has a strong and inclusive government in Iraq. The U.S. government was committed to helping Iraqi regain its sovereignty, the United States was pleased to have learnt that Iraq was no longer isolated by its neighbours and its relations with neighbouring states were improving. Saudi Arabia had announced that it will reopen its embassy in Baghdad. Kerry also stated that the U.S. government continued to play a preeminent role in fighting the terrorists, however, the ground combat was done by the moderate opposition, which was Syria's best counterweight to extremists like IS. The United States also continued to deliver humanitarian assistance and to make a difference for the people on the ground so that they do not get sucked in by the money and resources of the IS. Also, the United States made efforts to reject the insulting distortion of Islam that IS was spreading. Kerry stated that he was very impressed to learn that Saudi Arabia's top clerical entity, 21 clerics, unanimously came out and declared that terrorism is a heinous crime under sharia law. More importantly, declared that IS had nothing to do with Islam and that it is the order of Satan. Kerry stated that this is vital because preventing any individual from joining IS and getting to the battlefield in the first place is the most effective measure that can be taken. Kerry also emphasised that the United States was in the progress of launching a global anti-IS campaign that will seek to degrade and ultimately defeat the IS both in Syria and Iraq. Kerry indicated that he was looking forward to attending a gathering in New York at the U.N. Security Council at a session that was aimed to build up the coalition even more and to get even more specific about commitments from each country as to what they are going to do. The United States had more than 50 countries contributing in one way or another, with a specific understanding of what those countries will do. Some promised to provide ammunition, help with the delegitimizing, engage in de-financing, in military assistance, some in training and assistance, and others in kinetic activities. John Kerry concluded by stating that the house of representatives voted to authorise the former U.S. President Barack Obama to equip and train moderate Syrian opposition (the Free Syrian Army). Kerry further states that this move was a significant part of Obama's fight against the IS.

The National Security Strategy (NSS) of former President Barack Obama issued in February 2015, states that the United States had undertaken a comprehensive effort to degrade and ultimately defeat the IS which is why the United States led an international coalition to work

with the Iraqi government and strengthen its military to regain its sovereignty. Joined by the United States allies and partners, including multiple countries in the region, the United States had employed its unique military capabilities to arrest IS's advance and to degrade their capabilities in both Iraq and Syria. Obama's NSS document states that the United States had worked with partners to train and equip a moderate Syrian opposition to provide a counterweight to the terrorists and the brutality of the Assad regime. According to Obama's NSS document, the United States remains the only solution to the Syrian civil war, it will facilitate an inclusive political transition that responds to the legitimate aspirations of all Syrian citizens. The NSS document affirms that the United States will also continue to support Iraq as it seeks to free itself from sectarian conflict and the scourge of Islamic extremism. The United States support is tied to the Iraqi government's willingness to govern effectively and inclusively and to ensure the elimination of IS and other extremist groups within the Iraqi borders. This requires professional and accountable Iraqi Security Forces that can overcome sectarian divides and protect all Iraqi citizens. The NSS document of Obama discloses that the United States had learnt significant lessons from the past decade from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars in terms of the military strategy against the terrorists on the ground. It further states that the United States will move away from the costly and dangerous traditional military engagements such as large-scale ground wars. The U.S. military will now pursue a more sustainable approach that prioritises targeted counterterrorism operations, collective action with responsible partners and increased efforts to prevent the growth of violent extremism and radicalisation that increase threats. However, the document also makes clear that the United States realises that it cannot rely solely on military power to counteract global terrorism. In a long run, it would have to cooperate with other countries to counter the ideology that gives birth to violent extremism than rather solely focusing on removing terrorists from the battlefield. Furthermore, the US will also work to address the underlying conditions that can help foster violent extremism such as poverty, inequality, and repression. This includes supporting alternatives to military force and more initiatives that will create greater economic opportunities for women and disaffected youth. Help build the capacity of the most vulnerable states and communities to defeat terrorists locally. The United States will train and equip local partners and provide operational support to gain ground against terrorist groups. This will include efforts to better fuse and share information and technology as well as to support more inclusive and accountable governance. This document is interestingly

critical to the study in that it provides at a minimum lip service the Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) perspective on fighting global terrorism, therefore, clearly exposing the contradiction between the language and the actions of the United States against terrorism.

2.5.2. President Donald Trump's Administration.

The National Security Strategy (NSS) of the United States of America issued in December 2017, is an official document of the United States where the administration of President Donald Trump discusses the U.S. national security strategy concerning various security challenges facing the country. Under the sub-section entitled *Defeating Jihadist Terrorists,* the document states that Jihadist terrorist organizations, the ISIS (now Islamic State) in particular present the most dangerous terrorist threat to the Nation. According to the NSS document, the United States of America, alongside its allies and partners, is fighting a long war against IS who is advancing a totalitarian vision for a global Islamist caliphate that justifies murder and slavery, promotes repression, and seeks to undermine the American way of life. Priority actions to be taken to disrupt terror plots includes amongst other things enhancing intelligence and sharing critical information with foreign partners. Giving frontline defenders including homeland security, law enforcement, and intelligence professionals the tools, authorities, and resources necessary to counteract Islamic terrorism. The document further states that the U.S. military and other operating agencies will take direct action against the IS networks and pursue them regardless of where they are. The anti-IS global campaign signifies that the United States will enable partners and sustain direct action campaigns to destroy the IS and their sources of support, making it harder for them to plot against the United States. According to the NSS document, time and territory allow the IS to plot attacks, therefore, the United States will act against sanctuaries and prevent their re-emergence, before they can threaten the U.S. homeland. The U.S. defence will go after their digital networks and work with private industry to confront the challenge of terrorists and criminals going dark and using secure platforms to evade detection. The security strategy direction of Trump's administration and that of the former President Barack Obama are slightly different in that unlike Obama, Trump did not preach a non-violent counterterrorism strategy and implemented the opposite. Instead, he prioritised national security over global peace and stability by emphasizing the security of the U.S. homelands and borders through violent means. Whilst during Obama's tenure the NSS and the foreign policy at large was informed by the perception that the world needs a stronger

United States of America for global peace and stability. Hence, the NSS of Obama was not solely focused on safeguarding the homelands and borders instead it was focused on maintaining the global hegemonic position of the United States in the global system while simultaneously safeguarding America and its citizens through military aggression whilst in theory non-violent security strategy was promoted.

The National Strategy for Counterterrorism of the United States of America (2018) is an official document of the United States on the strategy to combat terrorism (Islamic extremism in particular) published by the White House in 2018 under the leadership of President Donald Trump. The White House (2018) affirms that the counterterrorism strategy adopted by the U.S. government places America first, it is concerned with the protection of homelands, building strong borders, and strengthening security at all ports of entry into the United States as well as protecting the country's critical infrastructure. The White House (2018) emphasizes that although the United States has liberated nearly all territories once controlled by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria the policy remains to focus on Islamic terrorism with main targets being ISIS (now Islamic State), al-Qaeda, and Iran. Iran is regarded by the United States and Israel as the major sponsor of terrorism in the Middle East. The main goal of the U.S. policy is to prevent terrorists from acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and prevent them from exploiting new digital technologies as well as to thwart their ability to recruit and radicalize online and through other means. The White House (2018), states that due to limited resources and options, the United States will prioritize terrorists with the ability and intent to harm the U.S. vital national interests, such targets include mainly the IS, al-Qaeda, and Iran. The United States will continue to strengthen and maintain a partnership that will assist to degrade and maintain persistent pressure against international terrorism. This includes military and intelligence operations overseas, law enforcement actions at home and abroad, diplomatic engagements, and the pledge of financial assistance. This document is crucial to the study in that it identifies the attitude that informs the military aggression and selfishness that defines the foreign policy of the United States, especially towards the Middle East. Furthermore, it demonstrates the extent to which the United States is prepared to use violence as the main tool against those regarded as terrorists without considering possible socioeconomic conditions that could push and attract civilians to "terrorism".

In the Congressional Research Service report entitled, *Armed Conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. Response*, Humud and Blanchard (2020), provide that since 2014 following the establishment of a caliphate (de facto state) in Syria and Iraq by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (now Islamic State). The U.S. foreign policy towards Syria has always prioritized counterterrorism operations against the IS which sought to direct external attacks from areas under the group's control in Northeast Syria. Humud and Blanchard (2020), state that since 2015, the U.S. forces deployed to Syria and Iraq have trained, equipped, and advised local partners under the special authorization from Congress and have worked primarily with the local partners to retake nearly all areas formerly held by the IS both in Syria and Iraq. As of February 2020, a large number of U.S. troops remained in Syria and Iraq. However, it is fair and reasonable to argue that the deployment of the U.S. troops to Syria was not only meant to eradicate the IS, but it was also a strategic move by the Trump administration to back up the Free Syrian Army (FSA) against the Russian-backed Assad regime. Humud and Blanchard (2020), state that in early 2018, the Trump's administration emphasised that the major objectives of the U.S. policy towards Syria are to conquer the IS, achieve a political settlement to the Syrian civil war and force the withdraw of Iranian-commanded forces in the Syrian civil war. By 2019, the US-led anti-IS military campaign known as Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), re-captured the IS's final territorial strongholds in Syria and Iraq in March 2019 and assassinated the IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in October 2019. By early 2020, the Trump administration refocused its operation to cooperating with Turkey and recalled U.S. forces to return to the U.S. soil because the U.S. authorities believed that the IS was defeated in Syria, however, a relatively small U.S. force was kept in place to monitor the situation.

2.5.3. United Nations

In the *tenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat (2020).* The United Nations Secretary-General states that the IS continues to conduct economic activities in certain areas in Iraq and it has also increased its activities and presence in some parts of the Syrian Arab Republic. Outside of Syria and Iraq, the IS remains reliant on inspired attacks to demonstrate its relevance while it is simultaneously working to re-establish its former capacity to direct complex international operations. Due to their large number, foreign terrorist fighters remain a serious challenge

and will continue to pose a short, medium and long-term threat to global peace and stability. UN Secretary-General (2020) states that the IS continues to stretch to different corners of the world including Africa in countries such as Libya, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Somalia, Egypt, Lake Chad, Nigeria, Mozambique and Central Africa. European member states of the United Nations also noted that in Europe IS members continue to use various online platforms and encrypted internet applications to connect, recruit and radicalize. In Europe, there is also a growing threat posed by terrorists or radicalized prisoners that are set to be released in 2020. In Asia, the IS had been expelled from its Afghan headquarters in Nangarhar Province following the severe military pressure that they received from the Afghanistan security forces and the Taliban fighters towards the end of 2019. UN Secretary-General (2020) states that however, the Afghan government has arrested about 1400 IS fighters with different nationalities including Afghans. According to the UN Secretary-General (2020) report, despite the general reluctance amongst the UN member states to repatriate citizens that are stranded in refugee camps in Syria and Iraq, there have been considerable efforts by some member states to repatriate stranded citizens. There are several initiatives and programmes to improve international cooperation within member states that have been put in place, this includes the Accra Initiative, launched by Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. The initiative aims to address threats of terrorism and transnational organized crime in the region, facilitate the creation of a platform to exchange information and intelligence between the police, the gendarmerie and the security services. UN Secretary-General (2020), states that the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre is launching a joint project with INTERPOL for implementation in 2020 to facilitate the exchange of information on foreign terrorist fighters in Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East. And the implementation of the multi-agency United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme launched in May 2019 has begun in several pilot States. This report is crucial to the study in that it details the activities of the international community in the aftermath of the IS in the Middle East and different parts of the world. Therefore, conveniently enabling the study to assess the effectiveness of the policies and strategies pursued by the international community against the IS.

On the *Eleventh Report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by the Islamic State or ISIL to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of*

Member States in countering the threat issued on the 4th August 2020. The United Nations Secretary-General reports that despite the difficulties posed by the pandemic (COVID-19) the Office of Counterterrorism, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) continue to repatriate men, women, and children who are displaced by the ongoing military violence and terrorist actions of the IS in Syria and Iraq. UN Secretary-General (2020) states that despite the difficulties caused by jurisdictional, evidentiary, and human rights challenges there are continuing efforts by the UN member states to prosecute members of IS and its affiliates. The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by the IS in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) has identified a range of new evidentiary sources for use by domestic authorities in the prosecution of IS members. However, a joint report of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in January 2020 highlighted ongoing challenges in the prosecution of IS members and their affiliates in Iraq. Including lack of fair trial standards, overreliance on confessions (often tainted by allegations of torture) and the insufficient distinction between the seriousness of different offences. According to the UN Secretary-General (2020), the United Nations entities continued to support efforts by member states affected by IS across the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe to develop comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, not only for returning foreign terrorist fighters and their families but also for local supporters and affiliates. Member States continued to take a variety of legal and policy measures to prevent and disrupt terrorist financing. UN Secretary-General (2020) states that the progress made includes the adoption of legislation on countering the financing of terrorism, the preparation of national risk assessments through multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms, and the introduction of asset-freezing measures. Challenges frequently cited by States include the integration of financial intelligence into counterterrorism efforts, the lack of enhanced and specialized investigative and enforcement capabilities, and the lack of legal frameworks to keep pace with the rapid evolution in financial tools and terrorism-financing methods. This report is critical to this study since it details the actions of the United Nations in the aftermath of the IS in countries affected by IS violence. This report collectively with other relevant sources helps the study in formulating a comprehensive account of the response of the international community towards the IS.

Analytical Brief: The Prosecution of ISIS-Associated Women (2019), is an official document prepared by the United Nations Security Council-Counter Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED). The document concentrates on the challenges involved in the prosecution of women who are associated with the IS and have participated in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraqi conflict. The document was prepared by CTED under Security Council resolution 2395 (2017) which recognizes the roles played by women as victims, supporters, facilitators, or perpetrators of terrorist acts and requests the Member States to develop comprehensive, tailored, and gender-sensitive prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration (PRR) strategies. According to the UN Secretary Council-CTED (2019) women have played complex roles within the IS and are subjected to different situations by the organization including sexual and gender-based violence as well as human trafficking. However, the majority of member states do not thoroughly investigate women who returned from the Iraqi and Syrian conflict based on the notion of women-victimhood. Some member states indicated that it has been difficult to prosecute women associated with the IS if the crimes committed in the war zones have not been proven. The UN Secretary Council-CTED (2019) states that unfair prosecution of women caused by a broad interpretation of the term membership is common. For instance, courts have convicted women for simply being family members of alleged IS fighters or performing basic services and tasks such as household chores. Some investigative strategies lack adequate analysis of the degree of women's agency under IS's repressive gender norms. For instance, some women have been prosecuted for living with their families in houses previously captured and subsequently allocated to them by IS. Some of the charges lied against women reflects gender bias, for instance, some women have been charged with parental abduction of minors and neglect of the duty of care and education towards their children while there is no evidence of men charged with such crimes. UN Secretary CouncilCTED (2019) further states that however, women, in general, receive lenient charges than men and this is caused by the lack of thorough investigation but over-reliance on the gender stereotypes relating to the notion of female victimhood. This report is crucial to the study in that it creates a basis for the study to question whether women involved in terrorist acts deserve a different treatment or not, it allows the study to carefully assess whether it is justifiable for counterterrorism policies and strategies to be sex tailored and gender-specific or not.

Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy (2020) is a report of the United Nations Secretary-General on progress made in the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, including recommendations for the future. The report focuses on terrorism in general, however, it covers much of the actions that were taken by the United Nations against the IS in Syria and Iraq after its defeat in March 2019 as well as future actions to be taken against the organization as it threatens to resurface in developing countries. UN Secretary-General (2020) states that following the loss of territorial control by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (now Islamic State). The United Nations has managed to secure admissible evidence to ensure prosecution for terrorist crimes, upholding the rights and needs of victims and rehabilitating liberated communities. As well as to protect and de-radicalize thousands of men, women, and children with suspected links to the IS currently in camps and detention facilities, including foreign terrorist fighters and their dependents. UN Secretary-General (2020), states that new technologies, such as crypto-currencies and mobile payment systems, offer new easy ways for terrorists to move money. Hence the United Nations Security Council has mandated the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to protect financial systems from terrorist take over to discourage the financing of terrorist organizations. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Development Programme, in joint partnership with the European Union, launched the Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism (STRIVE) which is a programme to support member states in central and South East Asia. The United Nations supports several integrated assistance counter-terrorism initiatives to fight the resurgence of the IS in North, Central, and West Africa. This report is at the centre of this study since it details the response of the United Nations in different countries across the globe after the ultimate defeat of the IS in Syria and Iraq in 2019.

2.5.4. European Nations

In the report entitled, *ISIS: the military response in Iraq and Syria,* House of Commons Library (2014), states that a massive global anti-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (now Islamic State) military campaign was initiated in early 2014 by the international community to fight the IS both in Syria and Iraq. The United States was the first country to conduct airstrikes against IS both in Syria and Iraq, it started in Iraq in August and Syria in September 2014. The campaign was soon joined by U.S. Arab partners such as the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi

Arabia, Jordan, and Qatar, they launched several airstrikes in Syria on the 23rd of September. While countries such as Denmark, Belgium, France, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Australia, and Canada were reluctant to participate militarily in Syria, instead they conducted airstrikes in Iraq on 26th September. House of Commons Library (2014) states that Turkey a country that borders both Iraq and Syria dispatched its military to join the campaign both in Syria and Iraq in 2014. Military action was limited to air operations in support of local forces providing reconnaissance, surveillance, and attack capabilities. Airstrikes targeted heavy weapons, armed vehicles such as armed pick-up trucks, and the IS fighters engaged in combat fire with local ground forces. Due to the inefficacy of airstrikes especially when used against irregular fighters, by late 2014 there was a need for ground combat. The dilemma prompted a debate about the need for 'boots on the ground' or land forces. There was widespread resistance from participating members especially European nations and Australia to deploy ground troops. The UK, Canada, Australia, and France explicitly dismissed the idea of deploying ground combat forces in Syria and Iraq. However, the UK deployed non-combat army trainers to Northern Iraq and announced at the beginning of November 2014 that a small number of advisers will be deployed to Iraqi headquarters and the US Congress announced its decision to consider military deployment both in Syria and Iraq in the near future.

The section provided a synopsis of the response of the international community against the IS and its economic activities, it discussed and compared the response of President Trump's administration to that of former President Barack Obama. Examines the response of the United Nations and a few European Nations that are regarded as main actors in the event. Given the militaristic and aggressive nature of the general response of the international community to the IS and its economic activities, the following section concentrates on the international law and human rights violations perpetrated by the members of the international community, Syria and Iraq in particular in the pursuit of counterterrorism strategies and policies.

2.6. Counterterrorism and Human Rights.

The United Nations, Counterterrorism, and Human Rights: Institutional Adaptation and Embedded Ideas (2007) is a scholarly article by Rosemary Foot to examine the relationship between counter-terrorism efforts and the protection of human rights. She pays special attention to al-Qaeda and the Taliban as they were the main irregular warfare groups in the

international system at the time of her writing. She evaluates the resilience of the human rights norm in the counter-terrorist era through examining the record of two of the UN Security Council's counter-terrorism committees- the Council's AI Qaeda/Taliban Sanctions Committee and the Counter-Terrorism Committee, established under Resolutions 1267 and 1373 respectively. She argues that these two Committees have played critical roles in sharpening state awareness of some of the methods deemed necessary to prevent or reduce the incidence of terrorist attacks. However, the procedures of these two bodies have also had negative consequences for the protection of human rights, a dangerous outcome in light of the argument that terrorism often thrives in conditions of political oppression and humiliation. She argues that the procedures of the two committees damaged human rights standards including fair trials, privacy, freedoms of association and religion or belief. Foot (2007) states that however, there has been a renewal of attention to human rights. The renewal has led to some recapturing of past UN commitments to human rights and human security. However, It also shows that the return to this focus on rights has not received explicit support from China, Russia, and the United States. The outcome was criticised by the United Nations officials, human rights NGOs, and some Middle Eastern states. Using the United Nations as a platform, they made the argument that a failure to ensure that anti-terrorist measures follow human rights standards would be counterproductive. As a result, committee procedures have evolved and now give greater attention to the human rights consequences of counter-terrorist action.

Countering Terrorism, Protecting Human Rights (2007) is a manual book of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The manual book provides that since its origin in 1975, OSCE has taken a comprehensive view of security. The human dimension of security, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the promotion of strong democratic institutions and rule of law is considered to be as important for the maintenance of peace and stability as are the politico-military and economic dimensions. Following the tragic terror events of 11 September 2001, countries throughout the OSCE region intensified their efforts to counter global threats of terrorism and violent extremism. Recognizing the need for mutual co-operation, the 56 OSCE participating states came together at a ministerial conference in Bucharest at the end of 2001 to agree upon a collaborative, international approach to tackling the threat, which they enshrined in a Plan of Action. Noting that the

newly heightened security environment puts at risk several fundamental rights and freedoms, including the rights to a fair trial, to privacy, and the freedoms of association and religion or belief. OSCE (2007) states that participating States pledged under the Plan of Action to fully respect international law, including the international law of human rights, in the development and implementation of their counter-terrorism initiatives. It was understood that poorly conceived counter-terrorism policies and practices, especially those that are drafted too broadly or applied too forcefully, can compound resentment and therefore be counterproductive. The manual aims to familiarize states' senior policymakers with the fundamental human rights standards they are obliged to adhere to under international law when formulating strategies to combat terrorism and extremism. Although it has been developed to supplement a three-day training course, it is formulated as a working manual, a standalone reference for policymakers and counter-terrorism practitioners. This document is critical to the study in that it provides the basis for assessing whether the signatory states of the OSCE have lived up to the principles of OSCE. For instance, member states such as Australia, the United States and Canada have betrayed the principles of OSCE by deploying troops to the US-led coalition in Syria and Iraq.

Human Rights, the United Nations, and the Struggle against Terrorism (2003) is a document of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, it focuses on the relationship between human rights and terrorism. The document provides that the United Nations Secretary-General has a unique role to play in reminding states that whilst combating terrorism they must respect human rights otherwise, the effort will be self-defeating. The Secretary-General should uphold the legitimacy and credibility of the United Nations in the struggle against terrorism and one way to do this is by being a leading advocate of human rights, democracy, and equitable trade and development. This would prevent the United Nations from being identified with a particular country's approach or counterterrorism strategy, which could otherwise undermine its independence and standing. The document states that the Secretary-General is the most credible and potentially effective messenger in the world today to promote human rights, especially during dangerous times. According to the document, states that do not allow their residents freedom of expression, association or assembly, and that control power without allowing citizens a free choice in who governs them, are themselves encouraging terrorism. Such violations create legitimate grievances that

terrorists then exploit to advance unlawful agendas which further damage human rights. States that respect human rights and basic democratic principles, however, must not subvert these freedoms in the search for security. This is not only counterproductive but also justifies the existence of authoritarian states to crack down further on peaceful and legitimate opposition, increasing the danger for everyone in the process. There is an increasing need for the human rights community and security experts to consult, confer and learn from each other regularly. Their worlds have been too separate, to the detriment of both.

2.7. International Law and Human Rights Violations

The *Human Rights in the Administration of Justice in Iraq: trials under the anti-terrorism laws and implications posed to justice, accountability and social cohesion in the aftermath of ISIL (2020),* is an official report prepared by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The report details the human rights violations suffered by ISIL (now Islamic State) fighters and the Iraqi civilians suspected to have connections with the IS in the hands of the Iraqi judicial system. The trials were held in Iraq, a large number of individuals appeared in court for various crimes, and they were tried under various anti-terrorism laws including death penalties. The human rights violations occur within the context of the Iraqi government's attempt to combat the IS between 1 May 2018 and 31 October 2019. The main concerns in the report amongst other things are the violations of fair trial standards relating to equality before the courts and conduct of hearings in particular as a result of ineffective legal representation. Lack of adequate time and facilities to prepare a case and the limited possibilities to challenge prosecution evidence cumulatively placed the defendant at a serious disadvantage compared to the prosecution. The overreliance on confessions, with frequent allegations of torture or ill-treatment that were inadequately addressed by courts and that on their own constitute human rights violations, further contributed to the disadvantaged position of the defendants. Prosecutions under the anti-terrorism legal framework with its overly broad and vague definition of terrorism and related offences focused on association with or membership in a terrorist organization. Without sufficiently distinguishing between those who participated in violence and those who joined IS for survival or through coercion, and with harsh penalties that failed to distinguish degrees of underlying culpability. Under anti-terrorism laws, the death penalty is mandatory for a wide range of acts that do not meet

the most serious crimes threshold, which is necessary for imposing such a sentence. The overall findings also indicate the imposition of the death penalty following unfair trials. Practical restrictions on the publicity of hearings, lack of victim's attendance in the proceedings, and overreliance on a charge of membership of a terrorist organization limited the possibilities for victims and their families as well as the general public, to see the perpetrators being held to account, and failed to expose the full range of crimes committed. This report is crucial to the study since it details the human rights violations by the Iraqi government towards civilians and IS members, it is central to the study in that it exposes the weakness and ineffectiveness of the biased and inconsiderate counterterrorism strategy pursued by some actors in the international community. It helps to further emphasise the need for an alternative counterterrorism strategy. Hence, the study aims to formulate a CTS oriented counterterrorism approach that will counteract "terrorist" acts and simultaneously protect and promote international law and human rights.

In the report submitted to the Human Rights Council in accordance with resolution 43/28, *the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic* presents its findings based on investigations conducted from 11 January 2020 to 1 July 2020. The report highlights widespread international law and human rights violations by the Syrian government security forces, the Military Intelligence Directorate, and the Military Police. The violations include arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, extreme torture, sexual violence, and death in detention amongst other things. The report has also recorded several cases of economic and social rights violations by the Syrian regime. Concerns regarding access to water, electricity, and fuel are prevalent in the Syrian Arab Republic. The report states that according to the interviewees apart from the rapidly deepening economic and currency crisis and the outbreak of the global pandemic (COVID-19) which resulted in deepening poverty and socio-economic inequalities. The Syrian government has contributed immensely to the violations of economic and social rights of the Syrian population particularly in areas that were formerly controlled by terrorist groups. This includes the appropriation and seizing of land, property, and houses by the members of the Syrian National Army. According to the report, a considerable number of civilians had suffered sexual violence, torture, and abduction at the hands of the Syrian National Army Military Police officials. Such cases remain unresolved as the interviewees' claims that all relevant institutions in Syria are aware of the situation and

some high-profile officials are implicated. This report is critical to the study in that it underscores the limitations of the Syrian government's counterterrorism strategy in its fight against the IS and other irregular warfare groups on Syrian soil. Therefore, provides the basis for critiquing the Syrian government's counterterrorism policy and strategy against global terrorism and also validates CTS as a critical counterterrorism approach or strategy that is advanced by the study.

A Call for Accountability and Protection: Yezidi Survivors of Atrocities Committed by ISIL (2016), is a report by the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The report concentrates on the atrocities committed by the ISIL (now Islamic State) towards the Yezidi community in Iraq. According to the report, the IS swept across northern Iraq, systematically targeting members of the Yezidi community killing and capturing thousands of residents in the village located in Ninewa Governorate. Tens of thousands of residents fled first to Sinjar Mountain while others fled towards the Dohuk Governorate of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I). Thousands made their way to Mount Sinjar with up to 35 000 to 50 000 individuals trapped on the Mountain surrounded by IS. Some, however, were abducted, or killed by IS before they could reach safety. Those who managed to survive the initial onslaught reported that usually as soon as they were intercepted by IS, they were told to convert to Islam or be killed. Those who refused were killed immediately, often in front of the other captured Yezidi. Those who complied under this extreme duress were nonetheless subjected to severe ill-treatment and sexual violence. After IS advanced into and captured Sinjar city as well as surrounding Yezidi villages, IS members killed scores of Yezidi civilians. Mass killings of Yezidi along with other acts of violence perpetrated by IS members appear to have been committed as part of a systematic pattern of similar conduct carried out with the intent to destroy the Yezidi as a group. After the capture of thousands of Yezidi civilians, IS systematically separated the men from the women and children. Often, after the women and children had been deprived of their liberty, IS would then take the younger girls away. Most girls under approximately eight years old would be left with their mothers, while those above that age were taken. Women with younger children, or those who were pregnant, were also subjected to sexual harassment, rape, or other conflict-related sexual violence. Although the report may seem on the margin of the study's focus (the economic activities of IS and the

response of the international community), it remains critical to the study in that it conveniently exposes the limitations of the IS in reaching out for community support beyond Sunni Muslim communities. Therefore, undermining its aspiration to create an Islamic state or a Caliphate that will care for and protect all Muslim and non-Muslim societies in the Middle East. Hence, the CTS approach maintains that progressive counterinsurgency strategies should strive to liberate all communities living under the authority of insurgent groups regardless of the nature of their relationship with the group.

The Right to Education in Iraq Part One: The legacy of ISIL territorial control on access to education (2020), is an official report by the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The report focuses on access to post-primary education for children and young adults who lived in areas under ISIL (now Islamic State) control between 2014 and 2017. The key findings indicate that children and young adults who lived in areas controlled or influenced by IS have accumulated a substantial gap in their academic knowledge due to years of missed education and also face challenges in obtaining the civil documentation required to enrol in formal schooling. As such, in the post-conflict context, children from these communities continue to experience a range of barriers to their access to education. After missing years of education under IS, these children are now young adults and further disadvantaged by the insufficient number of schools which tend to be underequipped and with inadequate teaching hours. Those residing in camps also suffer from movement restrictions and a lack of civil documentation. Many children who were not in school when living under IS control are now young adults, making them too old to attend mainstream schools and are left with no alternative options. These challenges are creating a marginalised generation of children and young adults, many of whom are or will be entering adulthood without any post-primary schooling. UNAMI observed that feelings of resentment and exclusion amongst Iraqi youth can have a direct impact on the country's journey towards peace and reconciliation. Perceived discrimination, including lack of access to education, can serve to undermine the legitimacy of the government amongst already marginalised communities. If the current system is perceived to be unjustly impacting children and youth from these communities, the Iraqi authorities risk feeding the IS narrative of defending a particular community and helping to expand the IS recruitment base. In short, the implications

of these educational shortcomings resonate with the long-term goal of sustainable peace. This then suggests that meaningful and progressive counterterrorism work does not cease when the irregular warfare group is defeated militarily in the short run. An effective counterterrorism strategy requires community investment after the defeat to ensure the non-resurgence of the irregular warfare group and local support. In the case of the IS, this is especially true for Sunni areas of Western Iraq where the IS allied with local Sunni leaders who had broken away from the Shi'a led government in Baghdad to help create the caliphate.

2.8. US-led anti-Islamic State Military Campaign

ISIS/Daesh: the military response in Iraq and Syria (2017), is a briefing paper prepared by Claire Mills on behalf of the House of Commons Library. She states that a coalition of 68 countries was engaged in international efforts to counter ISIS (now Islamic State), the United States had led airstrikes against IS in Iraq from 8 August 2014 and the operations were extended into Syria by the end of September 2014. Military action in Iraq was conducted at the request of the Iraqi government, hence, coalition partners provide a firm legal basis for operations. Military operations in Syria were not at the request of the Assad government and were conducted without the UN Security Council resolution specifically authorising such action. However, participants have expressed the view that such operations are legally justified based on the collective self-defence of Iraq, and the individual self-defence of participating nations. The dynamics of the military campaign in Syria were very complex as the IS had increasingly lost territory, operations to retake Mosul and Ragga had been conducted and regional actors such as Turkey have made efforts to secure spheres of influence in the region. Russia's participation and support for the Assad regime complicated the situation in Syria making the line between the campaigns to defeat IS and the Syrian civil conflict even more blurry. To build the capacity of local forces on the ground, offensive military action in Iraq and Syria had focused largely on-air operations in support of those local forces, providing intelligence, reconnaissance, surveillance, and attack capabilities. This report is significant to the study, from a force-based counterterrorism perspective one might argue that this report demonstrates the capacity of military intervention to denigrate the strength and capacity of the IS or insurgent groups in general to hold territory. However, the CTS approach exposes the limitations of military intervention such as the disregard for state sovereignty, international law and human rights. Furthermore, the report demonstrates that military

intervention can complicate and prolong conflicts as well as reproduce more "terrorist' threats, the case of the United States and Russia's military involvement in the Syrian civil conflict is a perfect example in this regard.

In his research paper entitled *How the War Against ISIS Changed International Law* (2016), Scharf argues that in an effort to destroy ISIS (now Islamic State), beginning in August 2014, the United States supported by a handful of other Western and Arab countries, carried out thousands of bombing sorties and cruise missile attacks against IS targets in Iraq and Syria. Iraq had consented to the military intervention in its territory, but Syria had not, and Russia blocked the UN Security Council from authorizing force against IS in Syria. The United States used several legal arguments to justify its airstrikes, including the right of humanitarian intervention, Responsibility to Protect (R2P), the right to use force in a failed state, and the right of hot pursuit, before finally settling on self-defence. Scharf (2016) argues that the use of force in self-defence has traditionally not been viewed as lawful against non-state actors or "terrorists" operating within the third party's territory unless they are under the effective control of that state. But the United States argued that in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks by al Qaeda, such force can be justified where a government is unable or unwilling to suppress the threat posed by non-state actors operating within its borders. This view was not, however, initially accepted by Russia, China, or even the United Kingdom. But that changed in the aftermath of IS attacks against a Russian jetliner and Paris stadium and concert hall in 2015, leading to the unanimous adoption of the UN Security Council resolution calling on States to use all necessary measures to fight IS in Syria without offering a legal basis for military action. Scharf (2016) argues that the authorization of military intervention by the UN Security Council without any legal grounds was a fundamental paradigm shift that will have broad and longterm implications for international law. This report is critical to the study in that it demonstrates the shift in international law to justify and allow for more liberal use of military violence against irregular warfare groups. The report also helps to demonstrate how the incident contributes to the factors that undermine the authority and legitimacy of the UN Security Council and the United Nations at large and leave the international law and human rights vulnerable to violations by UN member states.

In his paper entitled *The US Campaign against the Islamic State (2014),* Martin Zapfe argues that the US-led campaign against the IS in Syria and Iraq is full of internal contradictions. To make sense of the campaign, it is imperative to analyse the military campaign both in Syria and Iraq separately. While both countries constitute one single stage of operations for Inherent Resolve, there is a considerable difference between the two in terms of the nature of the adversary, the countries involved, US strategy, and the politico-military dynamics of the respective conflicts. Although the United States has stated clearly that its ultimate goal is to see Bashar al-Assad being deposed that goal seemed to be slowly diminishing. Zapfe (2014) argues that this is because, since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the United States has refused to intervene openly in the conflict. Former President Obama saw no way of using U.S. troop deployments to exert a decisive influence on the course of what is both a civil war and a proxy war and is wary of a "mission creep" into the conflict. Thus, Washington has so far limited itself to providing training and equipment, both limited in scope, to a small number of "moderate" rebels, as well as supporting the diplomatic process, which was a failure at the Montreux conference in 2014. According to Zapfe (2014), in Iraq, the United States aimed at shaping the course of the war, whilst in Syria was not the case, the struggle against the IS in Iraq is a continuation of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which continued after the United States' retreat in December 2011. The parties involved and apart from a few exceptions, their motivations remained largely the same as in 2006 and 2007, the most intense period of the U.S. occupation. Zapfe (2014) argues that there is no doubt that the United States carried a special responsibility for the country, moreover, in terms of international law, this operation is based on an explicit request by the Iraqi government in Baghdad. This solid political and legal basis has cleared the way for an international coalition that also included several Western partners including Canada, the UK, France, Denmark, and Germany with varying degrees of involvement. However, Arab states participation is very limited. Given the Shi'iteled government in Baghdad and the presence of Iranian military advisors, the involvement of the Syrian Coalition would in any way be quite improbable. Unlike in Syria, there is a political objective to the mission in Iraq that could potentially be shared by all parties and factions opposed to the IS. A reformed and functioning, federal Iraqi state within its international borders and free from an existential threat from the IS essentially, an improved status quo compared to 2011, furthermore, unlike in Syria, the IS in Iraq was not a purely military threat. Zapfe (2014) states that the advance of the IS in the summer of 2014 and its

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deeply entrenched support in Sunni strongholds such as Fallujah can largely be attributed to the Sunni-backed revolt against the Shi'ite led central government in Iraq. Thus, the key to success for the United States was a sound compromise and power-sharing agreement involving the various population groups in Iraq. This article is important to the study in that it helps the study to compare and contrast the dynamics of US involvement and attitude both in Syria and Iraq. However, it should be noted that there was some shift in the U.S. policy and attitude after it was written when the threat of the IS was much greater. The United States abandoned its mission of regime change in Syria to concentrate on destroying the IS in close cooperation with the Russians. The Trump administration largely maintained the Syria policy inherited from the Obama administration.

In the report of the Congressional Research Service (CRS) by Kathleen McInnis entitled *Coalition Contributions to Countering the Islamic State* (2016). McInnis (2016) argues that in terms of the legal basis for the coalition, several United Nations Security Council Resolutions, in particular, 2170, 2178 and 2199 call on UN member states to take a variety of steps. To include coalition activities such as countering terrorist financing, assisting with humanitarian relief, countering the IS messaging and assisting with stabilization support. Although these fall short of explicitly authorizing the use of military force against the IS. Some coalition participants have cited the Iraqi Government's letter to the United Nations Security Council requesting defence assistance and stating that Iraq faces threats from the IS safe havens in Syria as a further legal basis for participating in the military coalition. McInnis (2016) argues that with regards to the U.S. participation in the military campaign, some observers have argued that a new Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) is required. However, the Obama administration maintained that it already had the necessary legal basis to prosecute the campaign through the 2001 AUMF (P.L. 107-40), and the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (2002 AUMF; P.L. 107-243). Even so, U.S. administration officials underscored that the military campaign is only one part of the overall effort to counter the IS, asserting that success depends upon the ability to make progress in non-military areas. Such as to shrink the recruitment base of terrorists through safeguarding individuals that are vulnerable to terrorist recruitment and to deradicalize those that have succumbed to terrorist appeal. Intelligence information sharing to restrict the movement of foreign terrorist fighters, maintain a well-functioning global network that will minimise

terrorism financing and so on. This report is important to the study in that it reveals that there is a general awareness of ideas that can serve as alternatives to the violent counter-terrorism strategy even amongst the U.S. government officials that are currently the primary implementors of violent counter-terrorism strategies. This report together with other similar reports through the lens of CTS help to gauge the extent to which general thinking of the international community concerning counterterrorism strategy and policy has evolved.

2.9. Seminal Literature for Policy Recommendations

In her article titled *Mind over Martyr: How to De-radicalize Islamist Extremists (2010),* Jessica Stern acknowledges that insurgency has become one of the urgent societal challenges in the world, however, she rejects the narrative that the so-called "Islamic terrorism" has become the greatest threat to global peace and stability in the twenty-first century. Instead, she holds the view that "terrorism" is a social construct and can be deconstructed, de-radicalization of the so-called "Islamist terrorists" and their potential recruits is undoubtedly possible. Stern regards Saudi Arabia as the pioneer state in the rehabilitation of terrorists. She submits that since 2004, more than 4000 former terrorists have gone through Saudi Arabia rehabilitation programmes and graduates have been reintegrated into mainstream society much more successful than ordinary criminals. Stern (2010) argues that the model of de-radicalisation and disengagement that had been adopted by Saudi Arabia which is guided by humanitarianism and public diplomacy is the kind of approach that ought to be adopted by the international community at large. The Saudi Arabian programme is based on psychological counselling, vocational training, art therapy, sports, and religious re-education. Stern (2010) suggests that as much as Islam is believed to be the main source of terrorism in the Middle East, part of the solution should come from within Islam as a religious ideology and from Islamic scholars, who can refute this ideology with arguments based on theology and ethics. Global superpowers such as the United States should adopt this approach to intensify the fight against global terrorism. Stern's position is premised on the idea that powerful countries such as the United States cannot kill their way up to victory in the struggle against global terrorism. Stern (2010) further argues that although military coercion is a very important part of the broader strategy against "terrorism", the main goal should be to stop the "terrorist" movements from growing by denying them membership. Counterinsurgency policy should begin addressing factors that push and attract young people to terrorist movements, such issues include unemployment,

identity crisis, and no sense of belonging, social and economic marginalization, and so on. Stern's work is very crucial to this study since it is part of the broader CTS framework that guide/inform the critical and non-violent counterterrorism policy and strategy developed by the study.

Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach (2014), is a handbook of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). OSCE (2014), departs from the view that global terrorism at all times should be combated in compliance with the rule of law, and international human rights. A progressive counter-terrorism policy based on a community policing approach, an establishment of police-public partnership for proactive problem solving can yield tangible and durable contributions to the broader strategic efforts to prevent terrorism. OSCE (2014) states that the fight against the so-called "terrorism" cannot be limited to traditional military and law enforcement responses, there is an overwhelming need to address various socio-economic, political, and other factors including violent separatism and extremism which engender conditions in which "terrorist" organizations recruit and win support. OSCE (2014) suggests that countering insurgency and protecting human rights should be regarded as mutually reinforcing goals, therefore, a multidimensional approach that will consist of politico-military aspects of security, protection, and promotion of human rights. As well as economic development and environmental sustainability should form inextricable parts of a progressive counterinsurgency policy. OSCE (2014) concludes that it is imperative for the international community, UNSC, in particular, to avoid violation of international human rights standards and the identification of terrorism with any nationality, religion, or race. Because it undermines the effectiveness and legitimacy of global efforts against terrorism. This handbook is critical to this study not only because it contributes to the CTS framework that is used in the study extensively, but also because it demonstrates that despite the widespread use of violent counterinsurgency strategies, some societies or communities support and promote non-violent and CTS oriented counterterrorism strategies across the globe.

ISIS's Persistent Threat and Aggravating Factors for Radicalization Today (2018), is a testimony by Dr Joshua A. Geltzer, a former Senior Director for Counterterrorism and National Security Council. He testified before the House Homeland Security Committee on "ISIS Post Caliphate:

Threat Implications for America and the West". Geltzer discusses the status of IS in Syria and Iraq in 2018 and emphasizes some factors that contribute to radicalization and terrorism in the United States and the entire global system. He argues that even though the IS caliphate in Syria and Iraq had been disintegrated the IS is not gone as yet. That, in itself, poses a continuing threat to the United States, one worsened by the current administration's inability to keep the United States key partners in the fight against IS. Moreover, despite the increasing pressure faced by the IS in physical space, the organization retained a significant foothold in virtual space and will utilize the global political capital (social support) that it has built through various social media platforms (internet) to continue to reach into the United States to recruit and radicalize followers. The threat is, unfortunately, also aggravated by factors of the U.S. current leadership's decisions, with both rhetoric and policies that are alienating key communities. Geltzer warns that IS could turn to new forms of attacks against American targets, including novel types of cyber operations, against which the United States appears to be lagging in its preparation. IS's growing ability to mobilize potential terrorists in the United States compounded by the rhetoric and policies of the current administration is making the problem worse. Donald Trump, as a presidential candidate and as a President, has persistently spoken about Islam and Muslims in ways that validate IS's attempt to portray the United States as waging war on religion (Islam) and its people. As a presidential candidate, Donald Trump said, "We have a problem in this country it's called Muslims", and he further called for a complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States, characterized Muslims as "sick people" and, regrettably, he has said much more along these lines. In addition to being appalling, this sort of language appears to validate IS's message and alienates key communities in the United States and abroad whose cooperation is vital to identifying those who might be vulnerable to IS's appeal and to intervening before such individuals turn to violence.

2.10. Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS)

Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) is an approach or a critical way of thinking about or studying "terrorism", it is a theoretical framework that is applied deliberately and extensively in this study to generate and add nuance to the findings of the study. It is used throughout the study to do the following: To evaluate the effectiveness of violent counterterrorism strategy pursued by the international community against the IS. To formulate an approach to

counteract the IS and similar global terror threats. To demonstrate how violent counterterrorism strategies destabilize the international system, create, and prolong conflicts especially in weak and fragile states and finally demonstrate how violent counterterrorism strategy compromises the authority and legitimacy of the UNSC and further contributes to the violation of international law and human rights standards.

CTS can also be understood as a research orientation or scholarship that adopts a self-reflective critical approach to the study of terrorism. It is inspired by the Frankfurt School of critical theory and Aberystwyth School of critical security studies. It applies a critical theory approach that is rooted in counter-hegemonic theory to the study of terrorism drawing from the work of early critical academics such as Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman (Jackson 2016:23). CTS seeks to understand terrorism as a social construction or a label that is reserved for specific acts of violence by specific social groups through a variety of political, legal, and academic processes. It seeks to understand and critique dominant forms of counterterrorism (Jarvis 2009:6).

According to Biersteker and Eckert (2008:293) CTS as an approach to terrorism studies provides that military intervention is a very important element of counterterrorism efforts, however, it must be understood as part of the broader and comprehensive counterterrorism strategy. Military aggression should be a secondary response to acts of "terrorism", it should be deployed occasionally as a last resort where it is necessary. This is because force-based counterterrorism sometimes can be a self-defeating exercise. After all, it perpetuates the very same thing it seeks to control. Stern (2010:97) argues that the weakness of violent counterterrorism is that it is ignorant of the languages, cultures, and histories of the context in which terrorism emerges. Counterterrorism policy should begin to address factors that enable terrorist movements to flourish, such factors include amongst others unemployment, lack of identity, no sense of belonging, and social and economic marginalization. Stern (2010:97) contends that a positive counterterrorism policy should address the existential social problems by providing services such as psychological counselling, vocational training, art therapy, sports, and religious re-education to those designated as terrorists and potential recruits, especially the youth. Stern (2010:108) stresses that Islamic contribution is critical to the process of de-radicalisation since Islam is believed to be the main source of terrorism in the Middle East. Part of the solution should come from within Islam as a religious ideology

and from Islamic scholars who can refute this ideology with arguments based on theology and ethics. Biersteker and Eckert (2008:293) state that the tendency of characterising the efforts against terrorism as a war, for instance, "war on terror" by the United States is counterproductive and self-defeating because it legitimizes the "terrorist groups" and ironically works to their advantage in the global competition of ideas by implying that they are equivalent to the adversary. Biersteker and Eckert (2008:296) state that CTS recommends that powerful governments of the world, the US, in particular, should consider enhancing intelligence sharing and increasing police and judicial cooperation rather than trying to lead a global war effort. A global networked threat requires a global networked response.

According to the CTS approach, a progressive counterterrorism policy that is likely to yield global peace and stability and curb terrorism is one that creates room for negotiations. It should be driven by the knowledge that is based on the willingness and desire to engage with the subjectivity of those designated as terrorists. This can only be achieved through a proper understanding of how acts of terrorism become possible. Counterterrorism policymakers should break the stigma or taboo that surrounds terrorism and allow themselves to take a "terrorist's" subjectivity literally (Jackson, Murphy, and Poynting, 2010:230). The fight against terrorism cannot be limited to traditional military and law enforcement responses, there is an overwhelming need to address various socio-economic, political, and other factors including violent separatism and extremism which engender conditions in which "terrorist" organizations can recruit and win support (Stern 2010:97).

Drawing from critical theory the CTS approach provides that the most effective way to avoid violent counterterrorism (state terrorism) is to prioritize the security of individuals, not the state. The individual ought to be the primary referent to be secured. As such, the emphasis is not on how the state can be made much more secure, but how the rights and liberties of individuals can be preserved (Jackson *et al* 2010:233). Hence, CTS rejects the notion that a trade-off between liberty and security is necessary, this view represents a false dichotomy (Jackson 2016:73). The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) holds that global terrorism at all times should be combated in compliance with the rule of law, and international human rights (OSCE 2014:4). In fact, countering terrorism and protecting human rights should be regarded as mutually reinforcing goals, therefore, a multidimensional approach that will consist of politico-military aspects of security, protection, and promotion

of human rights. As well as economic development and environmental sustainability should form an inextricable part of critical counterterrorism policy (OSCE 2014:4).

CTS approach provides that in the pursuit of critical and progressive counterterrorism strategy it is important to bring the state back into the study of terrorism. The widespread use of violence against those regarded as "terrorists" by the states which can also be understood as state terrorism is one of the biggest contributing factors to the proliferation of terrorism (Gunning 2007:271). CTS provides that to ensure an effective counterterrorism policy the international community should begin examining and interrogating state terrorism and ensure that international law holds states accountable for state violence (Gunning 2007:271). Hence, two proponents of CTS Ruth Blakeley and Sam Raphael were involved in a collaborative research initiative to expose the use of extreme violence by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and its allies during the war on terror (Biersteker and Eckert 2008:291). The rejection and exposure of state violence towards those regarded as "terrorists" by powerful actors such as the United States is what makes CTS the most progressive and critical approach to the study of "terrorism" in that it is an accurate diagnosis of the contemporary security challenges that are commonly constructed and represented as "terrorism". For example, in all the countries where military violence had been pursued by the United States in the name of regime change, military intervention, or counterterrorism there has never been peace thereafter, the case of Libya regime change 2011, War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the search for nuclear weapons in Iran. As well as the decision by US President Donald Trump to keep Guantanamo Bay detention camp open which has sparked Islamic resistance throughout the Middle East provides a clear example of such. CTS provides that Countering of Terrorism Financing (CTF) must be an important element of the broader counterterrorism effort. The international community must develop CTF initiatives that will target irregular warfare groups that operate transnationally on a global scale. For instance, irregular warfare organizations that have a fixed territorial space from which resources are extracted in ways that approximate a state (e.g. quasi-taxes from the local population) are also prone to engage in kidnapping for ransom and extortion as means to finance their activities (Biersteker and Eckert 2008:297). Although military intervention remains an important aspect of counterterrorism strategy, however, it must be an occasional act that comes as a last resort (Stern, 2010:103). A global terrorist network that poses a global

threat to peace and stability requires a global response that consists of intelligence sharing, collective law enforcement, and effective global communication amongst other things (Biersteker and Eckert 2008:297).

Given the vulnerability of the international trade system to irregular warfare groups and criminal groups, e.g. goods and money laundering by irregular warfare groups to enter the licit international trade system. The CTS approach recommends that the international community creates trade transparency units to analyse, share, and track international trade data to identify anomalies and greater cooperation with the private sector victimized by diversion schemes should be explored, and enhanced priority placed on interagency cooperation and prosecution of trade diversion cases (Jackson 2016:508). CTS provides that since commodities such as oil, diamonds, gold, and so on represent a potential vehicle for the financing of terrorism especially in resource-rich but failing and fragile states with weak government and conflict zones. The international community should enhance global intelligence-gathering capabilities, particularly financial intelligence capabilities in such states where illicit trade flourishes and direct additional resources to understanding commodity networks and work with the commodity industries (especially gemstones) and NGOs to share information (Jackson 2016:510).

CTS is important to the study in many ways, but most importantly because it offers the study an opportunity to analyse the IS from a self-reflective point of view and allow the researcher to engage with the subjectivity of those regarded as terrorists (Islamic State). It also helps the study formulate an approach to understanding how actions can be taken to counteract the IS and similar global terror threats in the future. CTF as an important part of the CTS approach is critical to the study since it helps the study to formulate strategies that will target the economy of the IS and the financing of terrorism in general in the future.

2.11. Cataloguing

The table below is a catalogue of significant primary sources to this study that have been reviewed in the data analysis section. However, this section entails only the primary sources, data analysis occurs from chapter four onwards. These sources mainly are reports of several UN entities and official documents of national governments.

Source	Author	Title	Position	Significance
1. Report	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2020).	*The Human Rights in Administration of Justice in Iraq: Trials under the anti-terrorism laws and implication posed to justice, accountability, and social cohesion in the aftermath of ISIL.*	The Republic of Iraq is intentionally and deliberately violating international law and human rights in pursuit of counterterrorism strategies and policies.	It reveals that states are equally capable of facilitating terrorist violence. Violation of international law and the national constitution is equivalent to terrorism.
2. Report	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2016).	*A Call for Accountability and Protection: Yezidi Survivors of Atrocities Committed by ISIL.*	The ISIL (now Islamic State) is a terrorist organization. It violated international law, human rights, and the constitution of Iraq.	This source demonstrates that the IS has devastated innocent communities and destroyed livelihoods in Iraq and Syria.
3. Report	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2020).	*The Right to Education in Iraq Part One: The legacy of ISIL territorial control on access to education.*	The livelihood and education of children in Iraq have been affected immensely by the presence of the IS. The Iraq regime is also playing a role in blocking access to education in Iraq	This report captures the extent to which the conflict in Syria and Iraq has affected almost all areas of life and also demonstrates how social challenges within the humanitarian crisis context have interacted in a certain fashion to create long term challenges

4. Testimony	Dr Joshua Geltzer (2018).	*ISIS's Persistent Threat and Aggravating Factors for Radicalization Today.*	Geltzer believes that there are factors that contribute to the growing terrorism threats against the U.S. This includes President Trump's hate speeches and attitude towards Muslim society as well as U.S. policies.	This source is significant because it's a U.S. perspective on the factors contributing to growing terrorism threats against the U.S. Most importantly because this testimony comes from a senior U.S. government official.
5. Paper (Analytical Brief)	United Nations Security Council Counter Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (2019).	*Analytical Brief: The Prosecution of ISIS-Associated Women.*	Women play various roles in the IS. Some are members whilst some are victims. The judiciary systems of many countries have not found comprehensive, tailored and gender-sensitive prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration (PRR) strategies.	It shows how national governments are incapable or neglect to thoroughly investigate the role of women in terrorism and most importantly expose that national governments are still far from developing counterterrorism policies and strategies that resonate with the dynamics of "terrorism".

6. Briefing paper	House of Commons Library	*ISIS: the military response in Iraq and Syria.*	The Islamic State in Syria and Iraq was met with a collective global response. The US-led an airstrikes campaign both in Syria and Iraq and later joined by other countries.	It gives details about the aggressive and destructive counterterrorism strategies pursued by the international community under the leadership of the United States.
7. Paper	White House	*National Strategy for Counterterrorism of the United States of America.*	The U.S. is a global superpower and it has a responsibility to lead the war against global terrorism. In the pursuit of global peace, the U.S. pursues an aggressive foreign policy that prioritizes the safety of the U.S. and its citizens.	It demonstrates the self-centeredness of the U.S. and the values that inform the inconsiderate destructive counterterrorism policy of the U.S. which is centred around military violence.

8. Handbook	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2014	*Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach.*	Terrorism is bad and is a major threat to global peace. However, counterterrorism policies and strategies should be community-based and guided by international law and human rights standards.	It reveals that there is a political will in some societies and organizations to adopt non-violent counterterrorism strategies that aim to end terrorism and protect international law and human rights simultaneously.
9. Report	United Nations Secretary-General	*Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy.*	The United Nations is making progress in the implementation of the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy.	It reveals the inadequacy of the activities undertaken by the United Nations in the aftermath of the IS in Iraq and Syria.
10. Report	United Nations Secretary-General	*Eleventh report of the Secretary General on the threat posed by the Islamic State or ISIL to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat.*	Various United Nations entities are undertaking a range of efforts to support the Member States in countering the threat of the IS*.	It reveals that there is a political will within the United Nations to fight global terrorism and protect and rehabilitate areas that are most vulnerable to terrorist threats. However, there is still much to be done.

2.12. Conclusion

This chapter has briefly reviewed the literature on irregular warfare groups and their illicit economic activities in general, however, special attention has been paid to the IS and its economic activities and the response of the international community. Part of this literature focuses on the financing of irregular warfare groups in general as well as their nature, conduct, and behaviour. Whilst some pay attention to the dynamics and categorization of militant organizations ranging from criminal groups, drug cartels, insurgent groups, and revolutionary armed forces. The literature includes amongst others, DeFronzo (2015), FelbabBrown (2010), Kiras (2007), Rid and Hecker (2009), and Clarke (2015). The establishment of the caliphate (de facto state) by the IS in the Middle East in 2014, in Syria and Iraq in particular, and the economic activities of the organization generated many debates and studies. Most of these studies concerned themselves with various economic activities of the IS such as tax collection, extortion of money and resources, appropriation of agricultural produce, control of water and energy supply, abduction for ransom, and fundraising through social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Some studies partly focused on investigating the amount of oil owned by the IS and the overall economic prospects of the organization. Such studies include amongst others, Laub (2016), Watkins (2014), Lister (2014), Shapiro and Elvidge (2016), Kiourktsoglou and Coutroubis (2016), Crane (2015), Taub (2015), Ipek (2017), Hansen-Lewis and Shapiro (2015) and Stergiou (2016). However, these studies lack detailed and systematic analyses of how illicit economic activities, specifically oil smuggling had strengthened the military capacity of the IS and sustained the organization in Syria and Iraq from 2014 till the present.

Part of this chapter paid attention to the response of the international community, special focus and emphasis are given to the United Nations, the United States, and a few European nations including the Russian Federation as they are regarded as the main actors within the context of the ongoing Syrian civil war and the global response to the IS. Over the years both Trump and Obama's administrations have used U.S. military power to confront the so-called "Islamic terrorism". A coalition of 68 countries was engaged in international efforts to counter ISIS (now Islamic State), the United States had led airstrikes against IS in Iraq from 8 August 2014 and the operations were extended into Syria by the end of September 2014. A massive

global anti-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (now Islamic State) military campaign was initiated in early 2014 by the international community to fight the IS both in Syria and Iraq. The United States was the first country to conduct airstrikes against IS both in Syria and Iraq, it started in Iraq in August and Syria in September 2014. The campaign was soon joined by U.S. Arab partners such as the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Qatar, they launched several airstrikes in Syria on the 23rd of September. While countries such as Denmark, Belgium, France, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Australia, and Canada were reluctant to participate militarily in Syria, instead they conducted airstrikes in Iraq on 26th September. Turkey dispatched its military to join the campaign both in Syria and Iraq in 2014. Military action was limited to air operations in support of local forces providing reconnaissance, surveillance, and attack capabilities. Airstrikes targeted heavy weapons, armed vehicles such as armed pick-up trucks, and the IS fighters engaged in combat fire with local ground forces.

Reports of the UN Secretary-General and other entities of the UN system highlighted widespread international law and human rights violations by the Syrian government security forces, the Military Intelligence Directorate, and the Military Police. The violations include arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, extreme torture, sexual violence, and death in detention amongst other things. The report has also recorded several cases of economic and social rights violations by the Syrian regime. Concerns regarding access to water, electricity, and fuel are prevalent in the Syrian Arab Republic. The report states that according to the interviewees apart from the rapidly deepening economic and currency crisis and the outbreak of the global pandemic (COVID-19) which resulted in deepening poverty and socio-economic inequalities. The Syrian government has contributed immensely to the violations of economic and social rights of the Syrian population particularly in areas that were formerly controlled by terrorist groups. This includes the appropriation and seizing of land, property, and houses by the members of the Syrian National Army. According to the report, a considerable number of civilians had suffered sexual violence, torture, and abduction at the hands of the Syrian National Army Military Police officials. Such cases remain unresolved as the citizens claim that all relevant institutions in Syria are aware of the situation and some high-profile officials are implicated.

Literature that influenced and shaped policy recommendations share the view that global terrorism at all times should be combated in compliance with the rule of law, and international human rights. A progressive counter-terrorism policy based on a community policing approach, an establishment of police-public partnership for proactive problem solving can yield tangible and durable contributions to the broader strategic efforts to prevent terrorism. The fight against the so-called "terrorism" cannot be limited to traditional military and law enforcement responses, there is an overwhelming need to address various socioeconomic, political, and other factors including violent separatism and extremism which engender conditions in which "terrorist" organizations recruit and win support. Whilst countering insurgency and protecting human rights are regarded as mutually reinforcing goals, a multidimensional approach that will consist of politico-military aspects of security, protection, and promotion of human rights. As well as economic development and environmental sustainability should form inextricable parts of a progressive counterinsurgency policy. This then suggests that meaningful and progressive counterterrorism work ought not to cease when the irregular warfare group is defeated militarily in the short run. An effective counterterrorism strategy requires community investment after the defeat to ensure the non-resurgence of the irregular warfare group and local support.

Analyses through the lens of CTS of the evolution of counterinsurgency policies and strategies show that violent counterinsurgency policies and strategies are dominant in the global system as compared to the non-violent counterinsurgency approach. There is ample evidence suggesting that the United States is the pioneer of violent counterinsurgency strategies, it is also unequivocally true that violent counterinsurgency is at the centre of the U.S. foreign policy especially towards the Middle East and Asia (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:11). By virtue of being a global superpower, politically, militarily, and economically the United States has contributed to the promotion and normalization of violent counterinsurgency strategies in the international system (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:11). CTS as a theoretical framework is applied deliberately and extensively in this study to generate and add nuance to the findings of the study. It is used throughout the study to evaluate the effectiveness of violent counterterrorism strategy pursued by the international community against the IS. To formulate an approach to counteract the IS and similar global terror threats. To demonstrate

how violent counterterrorism strategies destabilize the international system, create, and prolong conflicts especially in weak and fragile states and finally demonstrate how violent counterterrorism strategy compromises the authority and legitimacy of the UNSC and further contributes to the violation of international law and human rights standards. To consolidate the themes and findings of the study, significant literature has been catalogued in a table. The literature entails largely the reports of several UN entities and official documents of national governments.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides the overall strategy that has been used to carry out the study. It defines the concise and logical plan that had been relied on to tackle the established research questions through the collection, interpretation, analysis, and discussion of data presented largely in chapters four and five. The research design that has been adopted in this study is known as a systematic review. Bryman (2012:51) defines research design as a type of review that uses repeatable analytical methods to collect primary and secondary data and analyse it. It also provides a summary of current literature relevant to the research question. The research design can also be understood as a flexible research design because the study is based on a case study (Illicit economic activities of the IS and the response of the international community). This study is an unobtrusive or non-reactive qualitative research with a single case-study research approach. According to Bell (2010:8), a single case-study approach is particularly appropriate for individual researchers because it allows one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time scale. Yin (2003:34) defines single casestudy research as an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not evident. This study investigates the role played by illicit economic activities, especially oil smuggling in sustaining the IS in Syria and Iraq during the period 2014 till present. Simultaneously the study assesses the effectiveness of counterinsurgency policies and strategies pursued by the UNSC and national governments against the IS through the lens of CTS as a theoretical framework of terrorism studies.

The study uses documentary research conducted through the evaluation of official documents as sources of information (Ahmed 2010:2). The study derived data from primary sources such as speeches, diaries, minutes, testimonies, and letters. As well as from secondary sources such as laws, constitutions, policy documents, official government documents, web pages, and research reports of the international community (NGOs, national governments, and the UN system). Syria and Iraq remain volatile and inaccessible for researchers, journalists and many other professionals, hence, documentary research is suitable for the study. The study serves three major purposes, which are to describe, explain and analyse a social behaviour observed which is the illicit economic activities of the IS from 2014 till present and the response of the

international community. Hence, the study adopted a holistic single case-study research design with two units of analysis. The descriptive purpose of the study is to chronicle the illicit economic activities of the IS and the response of the international community and to demythologise the entire phenomenon by addressing all the what, where, when, and how questions. The explanatory part of the study focused on addressing the why questions. For instance, addressing the question of why the international community responded to the illicit economic activities of the IS in a way it did in Syria and Iraq. Whilst the analytical part of the study through the lens of CTS analysed and evaluated the effectiveness of counterterrorism strategies and policies pursued by the international community against the IS. And ultimately formulated a CTS orientated approach to understanding how action can be taken to counteract the IS and similar global terror threats in the future.

3.2. Research Methodology

This section describes how the study is systematically designed to ensure valid and reliable results that address the research questions and ensure the realisation of the research aim and objectives. It is a contextual framework for the study, a coherent and logical plan based on the epistemological and ontological views, beliefs, and values that informed the choices made by the researcher regarding how the study had to be conducted (Bell 2010:117). The methodology describes what type of data was collected, where it was collected (sampling design), how it was collected (data collection method), and how it was analysed (data analysis methods), as well as how it was presented and discussed mainly in chapters four and five. The methodology does not set out to provide solutions because it is not a method, instead, it is a framework that offers a theoretical perspective for understanding which methods and practices have been applied to the research questions at hand. The methodology represents the researcher's epistemological and ontological understanding of the studied subject (Bryman 2012:54). Furthermore, the methodology justifies the research design choices made by the researcher by describing how the chosen methods and techniques are the best fit for the research aims and objectives and how they provide valid and reliable results (Bell, 2010:118).

3.2.1. Data Sources and Collection Techniques

This study entails documentary research. Ahmed (2010:2) defines documentary research as the research conducted through the use of official documents or personal documents as sources of information. Syria and Iraq remain volatile and inaccessible to researchers, journalists and many other professionals, hence, documentary research was suitable for the study. The anti-IS Middle Eastern-based governments such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, and Iraq were consulted regarding the actions taken against the IS. Whilst the United States, NATO, Russia, and Iran received special attention since they played significant roles in global military response against the IS in Syria and Iraq. Sources of data consulted include primary sources such as speeches, diaries, minutes, and letters. Whilst secondary sources include laws, constitutions, policy documents, official government documents, web pages, and research reports of NGOs, national governments, and various entities of the UN system. To produce a reliable and qualitative study, secondary research was conducted to analyse the content before extracting it from the selected documents.

The following four-step approach was used to handle the data scientifically: Authenticity of the document, which involves checking whether the origin of the document is reliable, is the evidence genuine, are the intentions sincere and what the motives of creating the documents were. Secondly, the credibility of the document, which is checking the subjective and objective components that convinced that the source of information and the data is free from distortion and error. Thirdly, representativeness of the document involves checking whether the document represents a larger collection of the data point and whether it is an aggregation of the subject under study. Finally, the meaning derived from the document involves checking whether the findings are understandable and clear to be regarded as evidence and the examination of the document to understand its meaning and significance (Mogalakwe 2006:223-224).

3.2.2. Data Analysis Techniques

The study adopted Thematic Analysis (TA) as a tool of analysis. TA is about identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning or themes. Unlike content analysis, TA goes beyond counting words in a text, it explores explicit and implicit meanings within the data set (Yin 2003:43). Braun and Clarke (2012:57) defined TA as a method for systematically

identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across the data set. Through focusing on the meaning across the data set, TA allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences. Braun and Clarke (2012:57) add that identifying unique and idiosyncratic meanings and experiences found only within a single data item is not the focus of TA. The method, then, is a way of identifying what is common to the way a topic is thought of or written about and of making sense of those commonalities. What is common, however, is not necessarily in and of itself meaningful or important. The patterns of meaning that TA allows the researcher to identify need to be important in relation to the particular topic and research question being explored. The analysis produces the answer to a question, even if, as in some qualitative research, the specific question that is being answered only becomes apparent through the analysis. According to Boyatzis (1998:32), TA is a type of qualitative analysis that is used to analyse classifications and present themes (patterns) that relate to the data. It illustrates the data in great detail and deals with diverse subjects via interpretations. Marks and Yardley (2004:21) consider TA to be the most appropriate approach for any study that seeks to discover the unknown using interpretations. It provides a systematic element to data analysis and allows the researcher to associate analysis of the frequency of a theme with one of the whole content. This confers accuracy and intricacy as well as enhances the research's whole meaning. Qualitative research requires understanding and collecting diverse aspects and data. TA allows understanding the potential of any issue more widely.

Namey (2004:25) views TA as a method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) within qualitative data. TA is unusual in the canon of qualitative analytic approaches because it offers a method, a tool or technique, unbounded by theoretical commitments rather than a methodology (a theoretically informed, and confined framework for research). This, however, does not mean that TA is a theoretical, or, as is often assumed, realist or essentialist. Rather TA can be applied across a range of theoretical frameworks and indeed research paradigms. TA provides accessible and systematic procedures for generating codes and themes from qualitative data. Codes are the smallest unit of analysis that capture interesting features of the data relevant to the research question. Codes are the building blocks for themes or patterns of meaning, underpinned by a central organizing concept (a shared core idea). Themes provide a framework for organizing and reporting the researcher's

analytic observations. The aim of TA is not simply to summarise the data content but to identify, and interpret key, but not necessarily all features of the data, guided by the research question. Namey (2004:25), adds that in TA, sometimes the research question is not fixed and can evolve throughout coding and theme development. The emphasis is on producing rigorous and high-quality analyses, TA has in-built quality procedures such as a two-stage review process where candidate themes are reviewed against the coded data and the entire data-set.

3.2.3. Sampling Technique

The sampling technique that has been adopted in this study is a holistic single-case study design with two units of analysis which are the IS and the international community. Illicit economic activities of the IS and the response of the international community are the units of observation that had been studied thoroughly through a deliberate and scientific approach in chapters four and five (discussion and analysis chapters) respectively. Although the IS is different from other irregular warfare groups of the twenty-first century in terms of military strength, size, scope, goals and objectives. The group has been strategically selected as a case or sample due to its representativeness of other contemporary Middle Eastern-based irregular warfare groups in terms of military strategy, ideological orientation (Islam), opponents/targets and geographical location. The group has attracted overwhelming global attention following the establishment of a caliphate (Islamic state/de facto state) in the Middle East, Syria and Iraq in particular in 2014 and it had been declared one of the world's deadliest terrorist organizations by the UNSC (Stergiou 2016:12).

3.2.4. Validity and Reliability

A set of specific qualities had been pursued to ensure a good quality of scientific enquiry, this includes precision, accuracy, and most importantly reliability and validity. Woodside (2010:32) argues that although in social research precision is not always necessary or desirable, it is very crucial especially during the operationalization of concepts, however, it should be guided by the understanding of its degree required. The study pursued precision to ensure the quality description and explanatory analyses. Woodside (2010:32) states that accuracy is another important factor in qualitative research, it is a special requirement for reliable description and explanation, it is the state of being correct, more than being specific/precise. It is important not to confuse precision or specificity with accuracy. For

instance, saying that the IS, formerly known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) was founded in 1999 is more precise/specific than saying that the IS was founded in the late 1990s. While saying the founder of the IS, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was born in the Middle East is more accurate than saying Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was born in Iraq. This is because Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was born in Jordan, therefore, the less-specific description, in this instance, is more accurate and a better reflection of the truth. These qualities had been pursued to ensure a credible and reliable study.

Reliability is another important quality of research measurement, it is a matter of whether a particular technique applied repeatedly to the same object yields the same result each time (Babbie 2016:51). To ensure reliability and replicability, the following techniques had been employed: test-retest a method which is to make the same assessment or measurement more than once. The split-half method, a technique used to make more than one assessment of a complex social concept, whereby a set of questions that are designed to assess a phenomenon/subject are divided into two and expected to yield the same results. Finally the use of established measures, which is a method of using measures that have proven their reliability in previous research. For instance, the use of theoretical logic that has been used in previous research and proven reliable (Babbie 2016:51-6). The single case-study research approach has always been subject to several criticisms most commonly being the issue of validity and generalisability. The main strategy that had been used to enhance the validity and generalisability of the study is the strategic selection of the case study or sample. The IS had been strategically selected as a sample due to its representativeness of other irregular warfare groups at least in the Middle Eastern region. Woodside (2010:37) states that the benefits that come with a strategic selection of a case include but are not limited to the empirically-rich evidence, context-specific, holistic accounts, and contribution or the ability of theory-building and, to a lesser extent theory-testing. All these factors will provide rich insight about the studied subject and other related cases.

3.2.5. Ethical Considerations

This study is non-reactive qualitative research that relied on documentary research as the only data collection method. As a result, the study avoided several ethical issues such as informed consent, protection from harm and so on that are common concerns for other data collection methods, especially in reactive research. Although the study relied on the following sources

for data: official documents, speeches, laws and constitutions, letters, diaries, minutes, and research reports. The study observed the general rules of social research such as confidentiality, privacy and anonymity. For instance, all official documents that were examined as sources of data were obtained legally from the official websites of national governments, NGOs, and the UNSC. The identity and privacy of individuals are protected if necessary. As the general principles of scientific research dictate, the study collected data legally, analysed them, and reported the findings honestly to discover what is so, rather than attempting to support a favoured hypothesis or personal agenda.

3.3. Conclusion

Illicit economic activities of the IS especially oil smuggling had played a significant role in the existence and functioning of the IS as an irregular warfare group in the Middle East and the politics of the region at large especially within the context of the ongoing Syrian war. This dimension has shaped and influenced the response (military force) of the international community against the IS yet little is said or known about the effectiveness of the actions taken by the international community against the IS. This research methodology and design was an attempt to develop and guide a research process that led to collecting qualitative data used to describe and explain how and for how long the oil smuggling benefited the IS and gauged the effectiveness of the response (military force) of the international community against IS. Doing so, through documentary research (primary and secondary sources) led to discovering that oil smuggling only benefited the IS for a short period of time (early 2014 and late 2015) and the response of the international community which was largely military force was partially effective and further reproduced humanitarian challenges for the victims such as displacement and loss of lives due to excessive use of military violence. Such research was done through a process that brought an in-depth understanding of the roles played by oil smuggling and other illicit economic activities in strengthening the IS and the response of the international community. The contribution of oil smuggling and other illicit economic activities of IS to the strength of the organization and the actions taken by the international community are subject to the following two discussion and analysis chapters (chapters four and five). Chapter four focuses mainly on the illicit economic activities of the IS with special attention to oil smuggling, whilst chapter five concentrates on the response of the international community.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSES

4.1 Introduction

The study is based on the case of the Islamic State (IS) formerly known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a Middle Eastern-based Sunni Islamic irregular warfare group that is probably the most radical and ambitious militant organization of the twenty-first century so far. This is because, unlike other non-state militant organizations, the IS does not seek to change the political status quo of a specific country. Instead, it holds a long-standing political ambition to establish a caliphate (Islamic state) that will rule over all Muslim communities, beginning in Syria and Iraq. The group had demonstrated a strong commitment to eliminating Western religion, culture, education, and influence in the region. The first attempt to create a caliphate was seen in 2006 in Iraq, followed by a successful establishment in 2014 in Iraq and Syria under the name the "Islamic State" led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the caliph (leader). However, the caliphate was ultimately disintegrated by the US-led coalition forces in Syria and Iraq, the defeat of the IS started in late 2018 and continued throughout 2019. This was followed by an official announcement by former US President Donald Trump that the IS had been defeated in Syria and Iraq and the withdrawal of a large number of American forces from Syria and Iraq followed thereafter. However, it should be noted that the territorial defeat of IS in 2019 did not prevent the group from launching sporadic terror attacks. The group continued to launch attacks from outside Syria and Iraq and relied heavily on IS inspired attacks and foreign terrorist fighters".

The study focuses largely on the illicit economic activities of IS and the response of the international community, however, special attention is paid to the role of oil within the broader economic survival of the organization. Of concern to the study, is the lack of extensive and detailed research on the effectiveness of the violent counterterrorism strategy that was deployed by the international community including the UNSC and individual governments against the IS. The overall objective of this study is to utilise CTS as an approach to terrorism studies to assess the effectiveness of counterinsurgency strategies and policies pursued by the international community including the UNSC against IS. Ultimately the study develops a CTS-oriented approach for understanding how actions can be taken to forestall similar global terror threats in the future. However, in this chapter, the study presents the findings on the illicit economic activities of the IS with special attention on oil smuggling and the role it played

in strengthening the IS. The findings and analysis of the response of the international community against the illicit economic activities of the IS are presented in chapter five. The following section describes the method of analysis (Thematic Analysis) used in this chapter.

4.2 Method of Analysis

The themes that emerged from the data-set or literature review of the study in chapter two in relation to the research questions on the IS and its illicit economic activities were studied thoroughly and interpreted through the lens of CTS as an approach to terrorism studies. In this chapter, the results are analysed via Thematic Analysis (TA) as a tool of analysis that involves identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning or themes within the reviewed literature or data set. The findings are discussed in a historical context, however, this is not to imply that the IS is no longer functional or in existence in Syria and Iraq, or other parts of the world. It is largely to demonstrate that the caliphate that was declared in 2014 in Syria and Iraq had been disintegrated and a significant number of IS fighters retreated to the underground/remote communities of Syria and Iraq. However, there has been a growing number of home-grown terror groups that claim allegiance to the IS in various countries across the globe including North, Central, and Southern Africa. Illicit economic activities including oil smuggling had dropped significantly following the defeat of IS by the US-led coalition from 2018 throughout 2019 in Syria and Iraq. The findings are presented as an empirical case study and analysed through TA to filter the primary and secondary data and further, analysed through the lens of CTS to create a new and original analysis of the studied phenomenon. The data analysis process is more of a deductive approach influenced by CTS and it tends to be more interpretive because analyses are shaped and informed by CTS and concepts central to the study. The following section describes and analyses through TA the themes that have been identified from the data set.

4.2.1. Steps in the Analysis

The illicit economic activities of the IS and the model of governance used by the group to govern the caliphate are analysed through TA in this chapter following the steps below. The process is about identifying, analysing, and interpreting the patterns of meaning or themes within the data set. This process is not merely about counting words in a text, instead, it explores explicit and implicit meanings within the data set (Braun and Clarke 2012:62).

Step 1: Familiarization

The first step was to develop a deeper understanding of the data captured under the literature review section in chapter two of the study. In TA analysis it is very important to get a thorough overview of all the data collected before starting to analyse individual items. This included reading through the texts and taking initial notes and generally looking through the data to get familiar with it.

Step 2: Coding

The second step was coding the data which in my study involved highlighting sections of the text, usually phrases or sentences, and coming up with shorthand labels or codes to describe their content. Various phrases were highlighted in different colours corresponding to different codes. Each code described the idea expressed in that part of the text. Whilst carefully reading through each text, I highlighted everything that stood out as relevant or potentially interesting. As well as highlighting all the phrases and sentences that matched the identified codes. After I had gone through the text, I collated together all the data into groups identified by codes. These codes allowed me to gain a condensed overview of the main points and common meanings that occurred throughout the data.

Step 3: Generating Themes

In this step, I started looking over the codes I have created, identified patterns among them, and started coming up with themes. Themes are generally broader than codes. Most of the time, I combined several codes into a single theme. Sometimes some of the codes were discarded because they were too vague or not relevant enough, for example, some did not appear very often in the data.

Step 4: Reviewing Themes

In this step, I reviewed all the themes to ensure that they are useful and accurate representations of the data by returning to the data set and comparing the themes against it. To check if I am not missing anything, whether the themes are present in the data and if not then figure out what I could change to make my themes work better. Sometimes I encountered challenges with my themes and had to split them up, combine them, discard

them or create new ones (whatever made them more useful and accurate). In most cases, this included changing terminologies.

Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes

After creating a final list of themes, I started naming and defining each of them. Defining themes involved formulating exactly what I meant by each theme and figuring out how it helps me (and the reader) understand the data. Naming themes involved coming up with a succinct and easily understandable name for each theme. For example, sometimes I had to change phrases such as "Illegal oil trade" to "oil smuggling" to ensure that the reader understands exactly what is meant by the phrase within the context of the study.

Step 6: Writing Up

Finally, I started writing up my analysis of the data. I decided to start with a brief introduction to establish my research question, aims, and approach. A brief methodology section describing how the data was collected is included as well as this section which explains how I conducted the TA itself. The findings section addresses each theme in turn, I described how often the themes came up and what they meant, including examples from the data as evidence (in italics). Finally, my conclusion explained the main takeaways and showed how the analysis had answered the first part of my research question whilst the other part will be addressed in chapter five.

4.3 Themes Identified

Issues, under the following themes, were identified, described, and analysed through TA:

- What is the IS – discussed in 4.3.1
- Illicit economic activities of IS – discussed in 4.3.2
- The Caliphate and IS governance – discussed in 4.3.3

In the following discussion, these themes are further elucidated and presented as an empirical case study. The findings are analysed through TA to create a new and original analysis of the studied phenomenon. The analysis tends to be more interpretive because it is shaped and influenced by CTS and concepts central to the study. At the end of the chapter, a table is used

to summarise and consolidate the findings by highlighting the themes, major events, and the CTS-oriented responses/analyses.

4.3.1 What is the Islamic State (IS)

This discussion focuses on describing what is the IS and where it came from. It has been found especially by CTS scholars that the IS is an irregular warfare group, it emerged from al-Qaeda in Iraq. The IS is a multi-layered bureaucratic organization, with the desire to create and run an Islamic state (caliphate) in the Middle East. It poses a threat to the Middle East and some parts of the world, however, IS as often understood is not the greatest threat to global peace and security nor the major cause of global insecurity and instability. Each of these issues will be elaborated upon.

4.3.1.1 How and where did the IS Originate

From the literature, it was found that the IS originated from the Middle East, and initially, it had a very close relationship with al-Qaeda. According to Humud and Blanchard (2020:10), the IS is a Sunni Islamic irregular warfare group, its origins date back to the late 1990s following the release of its founder Abu Musab al-Zarqawi from prison in Jordan. Pack, Smith, and Mezran (2017:10) state that a clandestine organization that eventually became known as the Islamic State (IS) was formed in 2012, the organization was placed under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the caliph and the aim was to reclaim power in the Middle East and reestablish Sunni dominance in the region especially Syria and Iraq. Gunes and Lowe (2015:8) argue that the IS emerged from the remnants of al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), a local offshoot of al Qaeda founded by Abu Musab al Zarqawi in 2004. It faded into obscurity for several years after the surge of U.S. troops to Iraq in 2007, but it began to re-emerge in 2011. By 2011 during the Arab Spring, the IS was based in Iraq using the name the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. That year Baghdadi was attracted by the Syrian civil conflict. As a result, he sent one of his trusted men Abu Muhammad al-Jowlani, a then chief of operations in Ninawa an area formerly controlled by the ISI in Iraq to establish a branch in Syria. Jowlani arrived in Syria in August 2011 and began to connect with local jihadi cells across the country and eventually established a jihadist group that became known as Jabhat al-Nusra. The organization became successful and operated similar to the ISI and alQaeda. Despite the declaration of the newly formed Nusra as the branch of the ISI by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Jowlani as the leader of Nusra turned his back on ISI and denied any

connection to the organization. He declared Nusra an independent militant organization and the main opponent of the Syrian government. Consequently, the ISI (now Islamic State) had to re-establish and cement itself in the Syrian civil conflict. Since the 1990s the group has evolved in terms of size, military strength, and economic viability. It had been reborn several times under different administrations until it became the Islamic State (IS) in 2014.

By 2014, IS had grown into an expansive, multi-layered organization with involvement in military, religious, political, economic, and social affairs, rendering much of the Iraq-Syria border irrelevant. The group had succeeded in destabilizing Iraq and creating conditions that have promoted disunity and paranoia within broad swathes of Syria's opposition (Speckhard and Yayla 2017:2). In Iraq, the group had benefited from its ability to exploit widespread Sunni discontent with Shia-led governments perceived as repressive to Sunni rights. A popular desire for a workable and stable form of Sunni governance had provided IS with a vacuum to fill. The IS had attempted to fill the vacuum with a combination of municipal administration which included police, Islamic outreach, tribal affairs, recruitment and training, education, sharia courts, and aid-based services such as humanitarian assistance and facility management. In doing so, IS had offered civilians much of what nation-state systems do, but with more intense oversight (Fishman 2016:181). The IS reached its peak in 2014 as it controlled hundreds of square miles of territory in Syria and Iraq including the major Iraqi city of Mosul as its main economic hub. However, at that point, the group suffered a major pushback from Western countries led by the United States. By early 2019 it had suffered major military setbacks and lost control of all of its territory reducing it to a smaller but significant force capable of carrying out small-scale terror attacks in Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere.

4.3.1.2 IS Emni or Intelligence

From the literature it has been discovered that the IS is a multi-layered organization, it is comprised of various departments each responsible for specific duties. According to Speckhard and Yayla (2017:2), the most supreme decision-making organ in the IS is the intelligence department also known in Arabic as the IS Emni. This structure was engineered by Haji Bakr, also known as Samir Abd Muhammad al-Khlifawi, a former colonel in the intelligence service of Saddam Hussein's Air Defence Force. A handwritten document that was found in possession of Haji Bakr in 2014 revealed critical information that was relied on to

assemble the IS intelligence and establish the functions and scope of the organization at large. Haji Bakr was previously imprisoned or jailed in Abu Ghraib and Camp Bucca along with the late ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as well as other former nationalistic Iraqi intelligence officers. Haji Bakr was deployed to Syria in 2012 to devise a strategy for the future IS to capture as much territory as possible in Syria and from there to launch an invasion back into Iraq. He settled in a small Syrian town of Tal Rifaat in north Aleppo where he applied his knowledge and experience gained from Saddam Hussein's intelligence and totalitarian state orchestrating the invasion of Syria and the rise of the IS. However, Haji Bakr was killed by a rebel group in Syria in 2014 after transmitting some of his knowledge and intelligence plan gained in the former Saddam Hussein's totalitarian regime and his observation in Syria to fellow IS leaders. Part of the plan was later carried out by IS in Syria and Iraq (Speckhard and Yayla 2017:7).

Cafarella, Wallace, and Zhou (2019:11) contend that the IS had a centralized structure under an intelligence hierarchical system that operated according to intelligence directives of Haji Bakr and its headquarters were based in the Syrian town of al-Bab. Its last known chief was the late Abu Muhammad al-Adnani who was also a spokesperson of IS, al-Adnani was killed in August 2016 by the U.S. airstrikes in al-Bab. Speckhard and Yayla (2017:4) state that the IS Emni's main responsibility was to collect intelligence both in and outside of the Caliphate and to plan external attacks globally. The Emni was responsible for gathering intel for battles in Syria and Iraq in particular and also collecting critical information about the population living under the caliphate as well as gathering crucial information about territories that the organization intends to conquer or invade. It also examined recruits to the group especially those who appeared without referrals as well as gathering and analysed intelligence about potential attacks against IS. Terrill (2014:15) states that instilling fear inside the caliphate and beyond its borders through propaganda as well as facilitating foreign attacks through the recruitment and deployment of foreign terrorist fighters to their home countries was part of the IS Emni's responsibility. In addition to this, the IS Emni was also responsible for spreading awareness about IS-inspired and direct external attacks.

According to (Terrill 2014:15), recruiting and deploying spies to neighbouring countries such as Turkey to spy on refugees that fled violence in Syria and Iraq and facilitating the organization's logistical support in Turkey to ensure no leaks or interruptions was also the

duty of the IS intelligence. Terrill (2014:15) states that communicating with the agents of the opposition groups and states including the Syrian intelligence agents and facilitating the illicit trade of slaves, oil, and antiquities as well as undertaking other activities such as assassinations, kidnapping, and bartering of hostages was the duty of the IS decision-making body (Emni) as well.

4.3.1.3 IS Recruiting and Training Strategy and Membership

It has been discovered that the IS has a special way of recruiting and training its members, the process of recruiting involves radicalization of young people through what is believed to be religious education. Spying appears to be one of the fundamental ways of safeguarding the organization against infiltration and gathering intelligence about rival groups including the Syrian and Iraqi governments and local irregular warfare groups. According to Pack *et al* (2017:16), amongst the fundamental plans of Haji Bakr was the idea that the IS Emni should establish a Dawa, which is an Islamic teaching centre, in towns that the organization was intending to conquer as an effort to win the hearts and minds of the local population. The IS intelligence used the Dawa to recruit and radicalize young people and sometimes turn them into spies. They were used to spy on powerful and influential families in the community. They provided compromising information to the IS authority on the families including their sources of income. Spies were further used by the Emni members to penetrate the families in the villages. Pack *et al* (2017:16), state that guided by the intelligence plan of Haji Bakr the IS relied on surveillance, espionage, murder, and kidnapping to pave a way for the creation of the caliphate they conquered village to village and surprisingly avoided heavy battle losses.

From the literature, it is evident that the IS has an effective and deliberate method of selecting and refining its membership to produce the best members that can serve in critical structures of IS. Speckhard and Yayla (2017:5) state that when foreigners volunteer to fight for the IS in Syria, they were first held for up to a week in an IS holding centre near the border, where they were questioned and investigated to ensure that they are not spies. Those that were doubted were sent to the front lines during the battle to either prove themselves as valiant or die. Speckhard and Yayla (2017:5) further state that captured documents in Aleppo revealed that the IS Emni kept detailed lists and personnel files of the foreign fighters that joined the IS, including letters of application detailing their level of religious knowledge, former military

training, and jihadi credentials as well as their telephone numbers, and even their hobbies. Security is the most important aspect of IS structures. Hassan (2018:5) argues that the IS adopted the omnipresent security system of Saddam Hussein's regime, a security environment where everyone lived in a state of fear and uncertainty about whether or not they were being spied upon. According to Speckhard and Yayla (2017:10) other documents captured in Aleppo revealed that IS had relied on an internal surveillance system set up within the organization as well as a complex system of infiltration and surveillance of all opposition groups outside (Syria and Iraqi governments and other irregular warfare groups). The documents revealed that there were informants put in each opposition group including Assad's intelligence service. It is also revealed that IS Emni members were also given instructions to marry into influential families to gain their loyalty and allegiance before IS could take full control of the village.

The IS Emni was also successful in setting up military camps in the remote communities of Syria where fighting forces were established with these military camps often led by an invisible leadership. The fighting forces were usually made up of foreign fighters who came from the Arab states, Europe, and the Balkans usually with no military experience. These forces were trained and commanded by Chechen and Uzbek IS fighters who served as elite special forces in the organization (Pack *et al* 2017:27). According to Pack *et al* (2017:27) speaking on condition of anonymity, an IS defector suggested that:

> *The subjection of fighters to extreme training and deployment to unknown areas allowed the IS to create forces who lacked knowledge of the societal terrain in which they were placed and had no connection with the community. As a result, the forces were merciless and fought loyally and easily followed the IS principle "hear and obey".*

Hassan (2018:5) states that the IS Emni relied on several tactics to create fear and the impression that they were far more in number than their counterparts especially the Syrian rebel groups such as the wearing of black masks and appearing in several places at the same time. When an individual who is unknown to IS carried out an IS-inspired attack, the IS intelligence in charge of that particular country had to initiate contact through video games or other safe communication platforms to officially recruit the attacker to IS and claim responsibility for the attack carried out in the name of the IS (Lister 2014:12). Al Hayat, the key media platform of the IS, produced pro-IS content in a form of videos in different

languages including English to recruit for IS. Dabiq is an online magazine of the IS which was also used to recruit and spread propaganda for the IS. The propaganda focused on glorifying the IS barbarities and making efforts to convince the world that the Caliphate (Islamic state) is stable and functional (Lister 2014:12).

Although a large number of IS fighters are not professional soldiers, it appears that the IS authorities implemented various extremely cruel measures to painstakingly create loyal and reliable forces. This is reflected in the method used by the group to select, refine, and categorise the membership of the organization. The IS authorities believed that it is better to have small but reliable and quality fighters than to have a large number of unreliable fighters especially in critical structures of the organization. This was especially true in the intelligence department. According to Lawson (2018:97), anonymous IS defector reveals that:

> *The IS is a hierarchical organization, where members work their way up the ranks, ordinary fighters at the bottom of the structure who often lack any skills useful to the organization or displease the organization's leadership eventually become disposable. They are often ordered to volunteer for suicide missions or placed in a front line during the battle where they are highly endangered. Whilst those who add value to the organization, for instance, members with the ability to learn or discover information that will help the organization advance its struggle are promoted to the high ranks and receive more protection and financial rewards.*

Lawson (2018:97), adds that admission to the IS intelligence division is the pinnacle of the organizational membership where members enjoy more power, authority, and status than other relatively high-status positions such as the IS police (hisbah) or foreign fighters. The IS intelligence has higher authority than the IS police and is allocated a large amount of money and resources than any other body of the organization. Speckhard and Yayla (2017:8), contend that the IS Emni members were regarded as the elite membership of the organization, and they were chosen based on their abilities and loyalty. The IS leadership ensured that the majority of them had passports and other relevant travel documents, and they did not get to stay long in Syria and Iraq as they received quick training, and deployed back to their home countries to launch IS external attacks. This was especially true around late 2014 when Western intelligence became more proactive in stopping travellers to IScontrolled areas or placing them under surveillance upon their return.

Cafarella *et al* (2019:20), state that sometimes to avoid detection, the IS leadership instructed foreign fighters to book a holiday package in Southern Turkey and then smuggled them from Turkey to Syria to receive military and weaponry training including lessons on explosives, and sent them back to their home countries to carry out IS external attacks. In most cases Syrian and Iraqi fighters who wanted to join the IS Emni were not directly accepted to the Emni department, they first served in different organs of the organization if the leadership was pleased with their performance, they were then transferred to the Emni. According to Speckhard and Yayla (2017:8), in most cases, foreign fighters were trained according to the needs of the area to which they are to be deployed. Most areas required foreign fighters to undergo military, explosive, and weaponry training. For those who were to be sent to carry out operations outside Syria and Iraqi, trust, loyalty, and commitment were important factors for the task. The IS leadership was very careful about sending members outside its borders because there are members who left Syria and Iraq and never returned. The following section discusses the legacies of the previous Iraq government of Saddam Hussein in the IS.

4.3.1.4 IS Authoritarian Style of Operation

The previous Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein has greatly affected the political landscape of the Middle East and beyond and it will continue to do so for a long time. This is because a large number of military personnel who served in the previous Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein over the years have joined various non-state military groups in Iraqi, Syria, and abroad including the IS after the disintegration of Saddam Hussein's government by the US forces. Through this transition, the legacies of Saddam Hussein's regime continue to grip Iraq and the entire continent. From the data, it appears that the IS was engineered by the former military personnel of Saddam Hussein's regime, and most of Saddam Hussein's ideas and strategies continue to manifest in the IS. Speckhard and Yayla (2017:6) argue that from 2014 throughout 2015 when the IS was at its peak in many ways it reflected the previous Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein, the organization functioned through an authoritarian state style operational intelligence adopted from Saddam Hussein's regime. This is because the majority of IS leadership especially the Emni membership was constituted of many Iraqi former Baathist leaders even in Syria. Speckhard and Yayla (2017:11) state that the IS intelligence members strategically placed informants into the groups that opposed the IS and also recruited some individuals from the IS rival groups to gather accurate information about their opponents. The

IS informants, also known as "assets" inside rival groups, were responsible for carrying out the murder of important leaders in rival groups and sometimes carrying out suicide bombings to weaken the opposition groups and spread fear and terror throughout the IS oppositions to prevent possible attacks. Fishman (2016:185) states that a former IS fighter suggests that:

> *IS was able to invade and conquer various communities in Syria and Iraq because before capturing a new territory the IS would deploy well-paid informants to the identified areas to study the political and ideological position of those living in the area. These informants were also responsible for the assassination of influential leaders and ordinary individuals who were identified as enemies of the IS and incapable of working with the organization. Hence, it was common for the IS to assassinate local leaders in Syria and Iraq before the actual invasion began.*

Speckhard and Yayla (2017:7) share that part of the main responsibilities of the IS Emni was to study the population of the areas already under IS control to safeguard the interests of the organization and to eliminate dissenters within the borders of the caliphate. Just like the previous totalitarian state of Saddam Hussein in Iraqi, paid informants were deployed all over the IS territory to create pervasive fear of defying the IS authorities in any way. Speckhard and Yayla (2017:7) add that according to IS defectors, sometimes individuals could not even trust their family members including children fearing that they may have been turned into spies. In some instances, children as young as 6 and 7 years old were trained and used as informants by the IS Emni. Cafarella *et al* (2019:11) state that some former IS members disclosed that it was difficult to express their doubt about the IS to other members of the organization as in some instances brutal punishments such as beheading and assassination for speaking negatively about the IS were witnessed. According to Cafarella *et al* (2019:11), the IS membership was not exempted from the violence carried out by the organization, a young former IS fighter stated that:

> *"After I have joined the organization thinking that it was a genuine Islamic organization than any other movement in Syria. I had to leave the group after I was angered and disappointed by the behaviour of the IS Emni in killing all the fighters I had recruited from the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and guaranteeing them that no harm would come to them in the IS".*

The above case represents the specific nature of the IS and perhaps that of some insurgent groups that share the same ideological position and principles. Most importantly the above revelations demonstrate that unlike other irregular warfare groups the IS has proven incapable of protecting its own fighters and the communities it claims to represent or stand for. However, the widespread use of indiscriminate military violence offered by the force based counterterrorism strategies pursued by the international community against the IS suggests that the international community refuses to acknowledge that the IS membership/fighters form part of the victims of "terrorist" violence. Given the fact that some of the IS members were recruited to the organization through violent means, CTS acknowledges that meaningful counterterrorism policies should not solely aim to protect the civil population. But should also aim to disarm and rescue irregular fighters who surrendered themselves to insurgency, often pushed by socio-economic and political issues that remain unresolved in different parts of the world. Hence, the study recommends CTS-based policies and strategies that will eliminate insurgency by addressing the core issues that create insurgency and insurgents without unleashing military violence towards those regarded as terrorists.

The IS was declared by the UN as one of the wealthiest irregular warfare groups in the twenty-first century with a net worth of $2 billion. This was especially true between 2014 and 2015 when the organization controlled a large percentage of crude oil both in Syria and Iraq and also relied on other illicit economic activities such as kidnapping for ransom, extortion of money and resources, bank robberies, human trafficking, trade of antiquities and quasi-taxes to generate income for the organization (Cafarella *et al* 2019:12). The IS intelligence was allocated a significant amount of money by the IS leadership, funding up terror operations for the IS intelligence was not a challenge since it had large sums of cash at its disposal (Woertz, 2014:2). For instance, a captured European former IS fighter Abdelhamid Abaaoud (cited in Doganay and Demiraslan 2016:222) states that:

> *"I played a key role in the attacks in Paris and Brussels in late 2015 and early 2016, I was well-financed to travel, rent apartments, and move IS cadres and to purchase fake passports, weapons, and the necessary ingredients for explosives".*

The IS defectors disclosed that some IS Emni members were paid as much as $50, 000 for carrying out attacks. However, under normal circumstances, the Emni members were not

allowed to cash large sums of money instead cash was sent to various countries in Europe via the Western Union or MoneyGram via IS members in Gaziantep or Istanbul. Particularly in Turkey, the Emni members arranged the transfers to occur in smaller amounts to avoid attracting attention by making use of a depositor who is not a member of the Emni (Fishman 2016:183). Countering of Terrorism Financing (CTF) as part of the broader CTS framework suggests that the vulnerability of the international trade system to fraudulent activities of irregular warfare groups, e.g. goods and money laundering, and the financing of irregular warfare by individuals and organizations through legal banking systems is prevalent. Hence, the study is calling for policies that will encourage the international community to create trade and banking transparency units to analyse, share, and track international trade and banking data to identify anomalies. Greater cooperation of both small and big financial institutions within the private sector should be encouraged. The international community should enhance global intelligence-gathering capabilities, particularly financial intelligence capabilities in states where illicit trade and banking flourish. More resources should be directed towards understanding illegal banking networks and platforms and working with the banking industry and NGOs to share information. The following section discusses the use of technology by the IS as a communication strategy and demonstrates why CTS-guided policies are much more necessary now to fight terrorism than ever before.

4.3.1.5 IS communication strategy

Although the IS is known for its reliance on the internet and social media for radicalizing and recruiting terrorist fighters to the organization as well as glorifying and spreading propaganda about the caliphate, the organization had strict control of internet usage. The internet was provided to the civilians and IS fighters in cafés referred to as IS post offices to monitor the communications and activities of the users. Unmonitored internet access was also possible through mobile phone service in certain parts of IS-controlled territories. However, IS intelligence members often searched the cell phones of civilians and fellow IS members to ensure non-visiting of banned sites (Laub 2016:3). The downloading of religiously banned material was prohibited, information that was deemed compromising to the IS was not allowed in the cell phones, this included searching for spies within IS ranks. The cell phones of the captives and hostages were also taken away from them to be searched, social media accounts were also scrutinised. The IS used the internet and social media to obtain facts about

their captives as well as to learn about the wealth and assets that their families possess for the purposes of ransom (Laub, 2016:3). Parents of Europeans who had joined the IS have stated that their sons called home using internet-based applications such as WhatsApp, however, the callers always appeared to be under the supervision of a minder who both determine the length of the call and the conversation (Yazigi 2014:3). For its own communication, the IS intelligence had learned a lesson from al-Qaeda in Iraq, it did not rely on emails or phones that could be traced by foreign intelligence and used to discover their plots and location instead, they preferred face-to-face communication to avoid leaking information.

Whilst ordinary IS members frequently used phone communication via encrypted social media apps like Telegram and WhatsApp, IS intelligence members avoided using those means and resorted to video games for prearranged communication using video call or chat options inside the games. Using the game platform for communication was intelligent and easily avoided detection by hiding and blending in between thousands of people communicating, chatting, and playing the game at that particular moment (Lister 2014:24). However, IS members did not discuss openly their plans on the game platform but they often used coded language, phrases, and words that were only understood by them as they have agreed upon beforehand. Furthermore, the use of Virtual Private Network (VPN) which is a technology that establishes an encrypted connection over a less secure network to hide identity, data packages, and communication to camouflage the IPs to which users are connected was very common amongst IS Emni members (Lister 2014:24). An IP is a unique address that identifies the location of the device on the internet, when an IP is camouflaged, it becomes difficult to identify the location of the device/internet user. According to IS defectors, European recruits were also given software such as CCleaner which is a programme used to remove users' online history on the internet. In Europe in particular, recruits were also responsible for exchanging messages between IS leadership and those in operations (Lister 2014:24).

Crane (2015:17) argues that another critical aspect of IS's internal operations is its effective use of social media and exploitation of international media attention. Through a network of provincial-level accounts and several central media departments, IS had significantly outperformed any other militant group on Twitter until August 2014, when its entire Twitter structure was removed, this was after a formal request by the U.S. government. After briefly

transferring accounts onto an independent and more privacy-focused platform known as Diaspora, IS established a more stable presence on the Russian social networking site known as VKontakte. Crane (2015:17) adds that this, however, was eventually eradicated in mid-September, IS's coordinated release of particularly significant content has proven capable of acquiring impressively large viewership. For example, the hour-long Salil al-Sawarim video, released by IS's Al-Furqan Media on March 17, 2014, was watched by 56,998 distinct YouTube accounts within 24 hours. Two months after its release date, the video was tweeted 32,313 times over 60 hours an average of 807.25 tweets per hour. According to Speckhard and Yayla (2017:10), IS had also operated several Android applications, including Fajr al-Basha'ir (Dawn of Good Tidings), which linked to users' personal information and releases officially coordinated group content via their accounts. Fajr al-Basha'ir was particularly active during the capture of Mosul on June 9-10, 2014, during which one of its centrally coordinated tweets became the first search result under Baghdad on Twitter internationally. IS-linked accounts even hijacked hashtags affiliated with the 2014 World Cup in June, adding tags such as #Brazil2014 and #WC2014 to their military media releases to appear on all related searches on social media using the same term.

Speckhard and Yayla (2017:13) argue that an increased focus on English-language production since April-May 2014 indicated a shift towards promoting the idea of living within its new Islamic state at a more international level. The new Dabiq magazine slickly designed and published in English had incorporated subtle mechanisms to broaden IS's recruitment base. For example, a focus on Millah Ibrahim (the Path of Ibrahim, or Abraham) in Dabiq's first edition was likely intended to remind readers of a well-known paper attacking the Saudi royal family's legitimacy by Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. Opposing the Saudi monarchy was the foundation of al-Qaeda's most powerful affiliate, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), so this focus had been intended to attract AQAP supporters towards IS. Speckhard and Yayla (2017:13) state that by mid-August, U.S. intelligence had detected groups of fighters defecting from AQAP and the North Africa-based al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) to join IS. Not only had social media attracted recruits and worldwide attention, but potential recruits had also used it to coordinate their arrival in Syria or Iraq, and to secure tazkiyya (sanctification or purification of the self). Operating a coordinated network of inter-linked social media

accounts had also allowed IS to maintain consistent messaging in multiple languages. In particular, the group's bitter battle with al-Qaeda was played out online.

There is no doubt that technology affects human life both negatively and positively at different levels. In recent years technology has intendedly and unintendedly benefited and disadvantaged human interactions. Insurgency like many other human institutions has also been advantaged and disadvantaged by the evolution of technology. The ever-increasing use of social media platforms by IS and other irregular warfare groups to recruit, radicalize and plot attacks suggests something significant in the history of insurgency. It suggests what Metz and others predicted and understood as the fourth wave of insurgency which is still coalescing. A phase whereby insurgency will mostly take place online, technology will be fully weaponized against civil populations, online platforms will entirely become battlefields and recruitment fields for insurgent organizations (Metz 2012:32). The fourth wave of insurgency which is believed by some to be on the formation stage is a testament that the current violent counterinsurgency policies and strategies are restricted and cannot help save human lives in the near future. This is because "terrorism" is a very advanced institution it evolves with time, as the world moves from physical spaces to online spaces "terrorism" has also found a place within the online world. Violent-based counterinsurgency strategies will soon cease to make even the smallest impact on irregular warfare groups because violent means will not work online. These developments suggest that counterinsurgency policymakers can no longer continue to neglect CTS-guided policies. Hence, the study maintains that a sustainable way of fighting against global terrorism would be to adopt CTS-oriented policies and strategies to address political and socio-economic issues that engender terrorism from the first place rather than to unleash military violence towards those designated as terrorists. The following section discusses the illicit economic activities of the IS with a special focus on oil smuggling.

4.3.2 Illicit Economic Activities of IS

This section details the illicit economic activities of IS, the section begins with a background to this phenomenon and proceeds to discuss oil smuggling separately as well demonstrate the extent to which it contributed to the organization's total income. The rest of the illicit economic activities of IS are discussed collectively and the section concludes by discussing how the IS used the profits of illicit economic activities to entice local communities by providing social services that equated the IS to a nation-state.

4.3.2.1 Background to Illicit Economic Activities

In June 2014, IS invaded Tikrit and Mosul, and eventually, gained control of a huge chunk of Western and Central Iraq. The organization received the support of the Sunni population in these areas perpetuating the ethnic divide that has defined Iraq since 2003. As the group advanced into Iraq, it demonstrated a significant amount of radical and systematic violence such as ethnic cleansing of minority ethnic groups, subjecting women to sexual slavery, and execution of prisoners (Ipek, 2017:407). The quick defeat of the Iraqi forces gave IS publicity and put the organization at the centre of the attention of the Western governments. The IS had already gained control of territory in Iraq and Syria as part of its goal to create a caliphate, this success in Iraq included the capturing of Fallujah in early 2014. In previous years the IS had carried out coordinated attacks against Iraqi prisons which resulted in an escape of at least 500 of its fighters (Cafarella *et al* 2019:34). The adoption of a new name "the Islamic State" in 2014 was followed by the application of the governance structure of four high councils each of which was responsible for the different areas: Shura or policy; Sharia or law; Internal security; and Military. The state-like aspiration of the organization was also reflected in the call by its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi for professionals such as administrative specialists, judges, doctors, engineers, and so on to help run the newly formed Caliphate (Crane 2015:4).

Crane (2015:4) argues that it is the state aspirant dimension of IS that necessitated the commercialization of the organization, the IS began using terrorist violence at a large scale to extort money and resources from the local population, government, and the private sector. The organization needed large sums of cash that would be used to finance humanitarian services that equated the organization to a nation-state such as free education, health care facilities, security, and so on. Crane (2015:6) states that the IS had relied on a variety of illicit economic activities such as quasi-taxes, extortion, bank robberies, oil smuggling, trade of antiquities, and so on for income. However, in the years 2014 and 2015 oil smuggling had been the IS's major source of income-generating an average of $28 million per week amounting to 70 percent of the organization's total income during that period. The ensuing sub-section discusses oil smuggling in detail.

4.3.2.2 Oil Smuggling

According to Ipek (2017:408), the cost of carrying out terrorist attacks is very small, for instance, the bombings in Madrid that occurred in March 2004 cost $80, 000 and the London bombings in July 2005 cost $15, 000. The perpetrators financed these attacks with their own resources. Therefore, for the majority of terror groups, oil or natural resources generally play a small role in financing terrorist attacks because the cost of carrying them out is very low. However, in the context of irregular warfare groups such as the IS, large sums of cash are needed for their operations. This is largely due to the scope and size of the organization. In 2014, the U.S. national intelligence estimated that the IS fielded about 31, 000 fighters in different camps mainly in Syria and Iraq (Woertz 2014:1). According to a former IS fighter (cited in Hassan 2018:3):

> *Topping the list of the IS expenses were salaries of the fighters, average members of the organization were paid a salary ranging from $100 to $1000 per month. Other expenses included death benefits, the cost for ammunition, military weapons, vehicles, fuel, and spare parts as well as humanitarian services such as free education, food parcels, and health care services. In most areas that the IS-controlled in Syria and Iraq additional expenses included costs for intelligence and security personnel.*

According to Hassan (2018:4), in January 2015, it was estimated that the annual expenditure of Deir az-Zor province in Syria which was under the control of the IS was about $70 million. Of this figure, the monthly salary of the fighters was the largest budgetary cost amounting to $30 million annually which is 43.6 percent of the total annual expenditure. By comparison base support or operations cost 19.8 percent of the total expenditures, whilst media 2.8 percent, intelligence and security 10.4 percent, community services 17.7 percent, and death benefits and aid to families 5.7 percent. Including all costs, annual expenditure amounted to roughly $1 billion. In addition to Deir az-Zor province, the organization also controlled parts of the Raqqa, Allepo, and Idleb provinces in Syria. Hassan (2018:4) argues that, unlike traditional terrorist groups, proto-states or insurgencies like the IS needs more money and resources for their operations. In the post-Cold War era, it has become more prevalent for irregular warfare groups to finance themselves as financial support from foreign governments and individuals had increasingly declined in recent years. For instance, the Taliban in Afghanistan, Revolutionary Armed Forces in Colombia (FARC), Boko Haram in Nigeria, and

insurgents in the Niger River delta are all self-financing organizations. Crane (2015:3) states that the IS used terrorist violence at a large scale to extort money and resources from the local population, government, and the private sector. The organization needed large sums of cash that would be used to finance humanitarian services such as free education, health care facilities, security, and so on. Crane (2015:6) states that the IS had relied on a variety of illicit economic activities such as quasi-taxes, extortion, bank robberies, oil smuggling, trade of antiquities, and so on for income. However, in the years 2014 and 2015 oil smuggling had been the IS's major source of income-generating an average of $28 million per week amounting to 70 percent of the organization's total income during that period.

Crane (2015:2) argues that although, the IS generated huge income from its diverse illicit economic activities, from early 2014 and throughout 2015 the organization was making a weekly revenue of about $28 million from crude oil and refined oil. Oil and refined oil were the most crucial source of income for the IS whilst the rest of the economic activities were estimated to have generated a total of $600 million in 2015. However, Ipek (2017:409) states that in 2015 the IS began losing some of its oil fields including Ajil in Iraq as well as experiencing a decline in quasi-taxes as the Iraqi government decided to stop making payments to civil servants and citizens in Mosul and other areas under the control of IS. The IS oil revenues continued to decline significantly following the bombings of its oil facilities by the U.S-led coalition forces in Syria and Iraq. Economic activities further declined as people living in the IS-controlled areas continued to flee IS territories to much safer places. The Executive Director of the UNODC Ghada Fathi Waly (cited in UNODC 2020:9) states that:

> *By 2016, the IS was believed to be having substantial amounts of cash at its disposal. At the beginning of 2015, the IS was estimated to have had a strategic reserve of up to $2 billion, this figure was based on the $875 million that the organization had in its coffers before conquering Mosul in the summer of 2014. After the invasion of Mosul, the IS gained over $1 billion from the local banks in areas it controlled including over $400 million that was extorted from the Iraqi Central Bank in Mosul as well as funds from a few small banks in the IS-controlled territories in Iraq.*

According to Kiourtsoglou and Coutroubis (2015:3), regular buyers of crude oil from IS were local entrepreneurs who had set up small and unsophisticated oil refineries that heat crude oil to separate low-quality gasoline and diesel which were then sold locally in the IS-controlled territories. Through intermediaries some oil found its way to the Syrian government, it was estimated that the Syrian government purchased about 20,000 bpd from the IS-controlled oil fields through intermediaries. Destinations of smuggled refined oil included Iraq, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in particular and disputed territories, Turkey, and some parts of Syria not under the control of the IS whilst both Iraq and Turkey were not significant consumers of crude oil. The IS began taking control of large swathes of land in Syria and Iraq in 2013, and the territorial expansion accelerated from early 2014 onwards when the group moved aggressively back into Iraq. The group generated huge revenue from the production of crude oil with estimates of weekly oil revenue of over $28 million. By 2014 the IS had been declared the world's richest Jihadist group by the UNSC (Shapiro *et al* 2016:2). According to the Oil Market Report (cited in Shapiro *et al* 2016:2) of the International Energy Agency and the U.S. Treasury Department:

> *The IS oil production levels reached an all-time high of 33,000 bpd in 2014 and declined to an average of 19,000 bpd throughout 2015. By 2016, the IS-controlled 34 out of 75 oil-producing sites in Syria and 8 out of 114 oil fields in Iraq. Oil production was a significant source of income for the IS, from early 2014 till mid-2015. By estimation, the IS had an output of $1 million to $3 million per day during this period, however, these figures declined significantly following the U.S. airstrikes against the organization's assets in late 2015.*

Although crude oil production made a significant contribution to the total revenue of the IS, oil production was not the only the primary source of income for the IS during the period early 2014 and mid-2015. For instance, some sources show that in December 2015 oil revenue was around $370,000 per day or even lower than $260,000, whilst in October 2015 oil revenue stood at 34-40,000 bpd amounting to an average of $1,5 million per day. Whilst other illicit economic activities such as external support or donations, extortion of money and resources, and quasi taxes, and so on were consistent, therefore, played a significant role in financing the IS (Shapiro *et al* 2016:4). According to Shapiro *et al* (2016:2), after the U.S. airstrikes

against the IS oil sites overall oil production activities in the IS-controlled areas remained very low, by 2016, remote sensing data showed that over 60% of the oil sites located in the areas controlled by the IS were inactive. For instance, Ajil, an oil field in Iraq situated northeast of Tikrit near Hamrin Mountains which IS started controlling in June 2014 and produced crude oil uninterrupted until January 2015. In late March 2015, the field was set on fire by the IS members to counter an attack by Iraq forces. The group was pumping low volumes of oil from the field, normal oil production activities last occurred in mid-June 2014 the production dropped significantly after the IS took over. Kiourtsoglou and Coutroubis (2015:3) state that Jaffra, an oil-producing field controlled by the IS situated in the western part of Deir Ezzour Governorate in Syria had a capacity of 25,000 bpd before it was captured by the group. Since late 2013 after it was captured by the IS it had not shown any sign of oil production activity. Contrary to IS-controlled oil sites, Taq Taq an oil-producing field controlled by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) situated southeast of Erbil showed a consistent and continuous production, in 2014, it produced at a rate of 103,000 bpd.

4.3.2.3 Response of the US-led Coalition to IS oil Smuggling

Although ideology appears to be a primary motivation for the IS fighters to join the group, however, financial benefits such as salary for fighters and family support sometimes can become a significant motivation for fighters to join the group and keep the organization functional. Commercial motivation can be so entrenched that most fighters continue to join the organization even after material motivation has replaced the ideological and religious motivations (Berti and Paris 2014:25). For these reasons, policies designed to stop insurgent financing can play a significant role in weakening organizations such as the IS by reducing revenues that comes from various economic activities. The United States and its coalition partners targeted the IS oil facilities such as loading depots and tanker trucks. It also imposed financial sanctions on businesses in the Middle East that are engaged in the business of transporting and trading crude oil and refined oil products sold by the IS. This includes truck fleet operators and intermediaries for the Syrian regime or any other buyers of IS oil (Crane 2015:5). The U.S. government also imposed sanctions on banks that provided financial services for individuals and businesses associated with IS or businesses that engaged in commercial activities that served IS's needs, such as the oil trade. This included banks that were doing business with IS-associated money exchanges (hawala system, a traditional way

of transferring money physically by moving it from one agent to another until it reaches the final recipient), which was allegedly beyond the reach of the U.S. sanctions laws. The U.S. government also used oil-trading network analysis to locate and neutralize IS leadership, as it did with IS emir Abu Sayyaf (Crane 2015:6).

In an attempt to degrade the financial strength of the IS, the U.S-led anti-IS coalition targeted the IS oil infrastructure as well as loading facilities and tanker trucks transporting oil to the buyers both in Iraq and Syria. The United States led a campaign that aimed at discouraging the smuggling of oil from the IS-controlled areas to the buyers by destroying hundreds of trucks using bombs and large calibre machine guns (Crane 2015:6). According to the Executive Director of the UNODC Ghada Fathi Waly (cited in UNODC 2020:21):

> *The targeting of both oil facilities and tanker trucks has had a significant impact on the IS economy, however, despite the attacks on the oil infrastructure and tanker trucks the smuggling of oil had not stopped completely. However, the targeting of heavy trucks hauling crude oil and refined oil products from the IS-controlled areas to the buyers remains a major financial blow to the economy of the IS.*

Heavy trucks are expensive, repeatedly targeting them might have caused the companies that were involved in the smuggling of oil to be out of the business, therefore, leading to the decline in the number of trucks available for oil transportation. In a long run, this would lead to a sharp decline in oil revenues for the IS. Notwithstanding its gains, however, from a CTS perspective, the targeting of tanker trucks was not a reliable and efficient solution and it did not guarantee a permanent solution to similar threats in the future in that oil and refined oil products are valuable enough that light trucks and pickups can be used to transport smaller quantities of oil. Although, it might be more expensive and less efficient than heavy trucks but had the hauliers resorted to light trucks and pickups for the transportation of crude oil and refined oil products. The United States and its allies would not have been unable to target large numbers of light trucks hauling oil or refined oil products. This is because light trucks and pickups are prevalent in Syria and Iraq therefore, targeting them would lead to civilian casualties without much effect on the group's overall financial revenues. Furthermore, the strategy was not efficient because given the deteriorating economy of Syria where it is difficult for citizens to earn an income. There was probably no lack of individuals to take up

jobs as truck drivers in the IS-controlled territories to transport crude oil and refined oil products. Therefore, targeting heavy trucks certainly did put civilian lives in danger especially the truck drivers, whom the majority of them were most probably not encouraged by ideological motives to work with the organization, instead took jobs as truck drivers for commercial reasons. Nonetheless, despite the limitations of bombing IS assets, targeting oil infrastructure, certainly did reduce the oil revenues of the IS since the process of rebuilding the infrastructure takes longer and is much more expensive to repair.

Imposing financial sanctions on larger businesses and the banks engaged in transporting and trading oil and refined oil products sold by the IS in the region have had a tangible impact on the IS. Larger businesses need banking services. The concerted effort on the part of the U.S. Treasury to target larger businesses and their banks had largely reduced their engagement with IS-affiliated activities, therefore, raising costs for the organization. The imposition of sanctions on banks that provided financial services to businesses engaged with the IS had reduced access to financial services for these enterprises, as well as increased costs for the IS as the number of companies willing to engage with the IS declined significantly. However, the strategy had inevitable limitations in that the IS operated heavily on cash using the *hawala* system which is the traditional way of transferring money physically by moving it from one agent to another until it reaches the final recipient. Hence, the measures of targeting financial services although helpful did not lead to a total cut-off in funds. Smaller businesses that engaged with the IS were too small for the U.S. Treasury to target. Lastly, individuals who resided in IS-controlled territories were subject to coercion, making it almost impossible for them to refuse to conduct business with the organization.

4.3.2.4 Other Illicit Economic Activities of IS

According to the UNODC (2020:10), over the past few years, the IS had earned more income through a variety of illicit economic activities in comparison to the underground sale of Syrian and Iraqi oil. IS's finances had been heavily reliant on oil and gas, but other resources were also being exploited, including agriculture, cotton, water, electricity, and so on. UNODC (2020:10) states that the group was believed to be operating an efficient kidnap-for-ransom operation. For instance, four foreign nationals, two young Italian women, a Dane, and a Japanese national were all confirmed kidnapped by IS in August 2014. Whilst such

hostagetaking had proven to be a powerful weapon in recent years through the public execution of American and British nationals, it was also done with the hope of securing a ransom. Despite French denial, unnamed NATO sources in Brussels, for example, had claimed that IS was paid $18 million in April 2014 in exchange for four French hostages. Speaking on condition of anonymity, (cited in Lister 2014:28) the Iraqi intelligence officer stated that:

> *IS had allegedly stolen antiques/artefacts and sold them onto the black market. The group earned about $36 million after selling 8,000-year-old items from al-Nabk, north of Damascus, in early 2014*.

Lister (2014:28) states that whilst IS fighters have long imposed shadow taxation (and extortion) within areas under their control or influence, more official taxation systems have begun to be introduced since the declaration of the caliphate. For example, IS had introduced a customs tax upon the trucking business on the main highways of western Iraq. This organized taxation system targeted trucks that were transporting food and electronics from Syria and Jordan via Iraq's al-Waleed and al-Tanif crossings. As of September 2014, rates were placed at $300 per truck of foodstuffs and $400 per a load of electronic goods, with an occasional $800 flat rate for trucks. Even in areas not under its complete control the IS still maintained extortion networks and protection racket which was a scheme whereby the IS guaranteed protection from violence, looting, raiding, piracy, and other similar threats caused by them outside the sanctions of the law to polities, businesses, and individuals that paid them money in return. The system itself was surprisingly professional in that not only did IS offer protection from bandits, but its tax collectors also provided traders with paperwork that showed that they have paid IS taxes as well as counterfeit government tax receipts that truckers can show to Iraqi Army checkpoints, which allowed them to pass without further payments (Lister 2014:13).

The imposition of the dhimmi (protection) pact upon monotheistic non-Muslims had been another major source of income for IS. It was initiated in Raqqa in late February 2014 and Mosul from July 17, 2014. The dhimmi is a system whereby non-Muslim societies were placed under the protection of IS, so long as they regularly pay jizya (poll tax) and abide by several other strict regulations, including not building additional places of worship and so on. IS prohibited visible signs of faith, bearing arms, and selling or consuming pork and alcohol

(Lister 2014:14). IS had offered civilians much of what nation-state systems do, but with more intense oversight. In practice, however, this "protection" had represented a demotion to second-class citizenship. In Mosul, IS followed its introduction of the dhimmi pact with the threat of "nothing but the sword", residents who rejected the agreement, or to convert to Islam had to flee the city within 48 hours. Property owned by Christians and Shia members of the Shabak and Turkmen communities was subsequently painted with the Arabic letters "noon," indicating nasrani (Christian) and "ra," for rafida. Within three days, the vast majority of the city's Christians and Shia had fled (Lister 2014:23).

4.3.3. IS and the Local Communities

In addition to strengthening the military capacity of IS, the organization's financial capacity has also provided a source of social leverage, through incentives to induce tribal loyalty and funding food provision and fuel subsidies to encourage popular support. For example, Crane (2015:3) states that during its offensive in Deir Ezzor from May to June 2014, IS spent $2 million in the area to entice tribes and leaders to permit their presence, therefore, securing several strategic surrenders and pledges of allegiance. Terrill (2014:18) argues that the IS's ability to present an image of wealth and success had strengthened its recruitment strategy of new fighters locally and abroad. Speaking on condition of anonymity (cited in Terrill 2014:18) a Syrian Arab Armed Forces commander based in Aleppo in June 2014 stated that:

> *Syrians join IS for money simply because it can afford to pay salaries. IS is expanding and it has a lot of money and Syrians are so poor. Money changes everything people have turned to support extremism out of desperation.*

The above revelations are very critical to the study in that they do not only expose the limitations of violent-based counterterrorism policies and strategies in understanding and responding to the factors that push and attract civilians to irregular warfare groups. But they also vindicate and validate CTS as a reliable approach to countering terrorism in that they put forth the challenges that their solutions are the core of CTS. CTS framework understands "terrorism" as a social construct that emerges from specific political and socio-economic conditions that remain unresolved in various societies. From the CTS perspective, the main causes of "terrorism" among other things include political subjugation/prejudice, lack of

identity, and economic marginalization/poverty (OSCE 2014:12). Therefore, CTS suggests that the most effective way of fighting "terrorism" would be to avoid using military force as the main tool against 'terrorism". This is because in recent years military force has produced more 'terrorist" groups than it had eliminated and contributed significantly to gross human rights violation across the globe. CTS is calling for a consideration of a multi-layered and dimensional approach that will address the political and socio-economic conditions that give birth to "terrorism". Military force is understood as a last resort and is tolerated on the condition that a thorough intelligence investigation is conducted before the application of military force to avoid the destruction of livelihoods and the killing of innocent civilians. The on the ground research will help to identify the subjects (human beings, areas, property, etc) that are to be subjected to military force in compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and other relevant measures. The following section discusses the IS caliphate in Syria and Iraq that was declared in 2014 and the system of governance used to govern it.

4.3.4 The Caliphate and IS Governance

The Islamic state was declared by the IS in Syria and Iraqi under the leadership of Abu Bakr alBaghdadi in 2014. Even though the Islamic State was not broadly recognized by the international community as an official state, it had assumed responsibilities that equated it to a nation-state (sovereign state). Lister (2014:22) states that the IS was not solely focused on disciplinary justice, it also spent significant financial resources on providing social services. According to Lister (2014:22), speaking on condition of anonymity, IS proponent and resident of a previous IS-controlled area stated that:

> *One of the first things IS did upon capturing a municipality was to take control of industries and municipal services and facilities to ensure what is perceived by IS as a more efficient and egalitarian provision of services. Consequently, this had led to a complete assumption of authority.*

Lister (2014:23) contends that in Mosul, IS successfully introduced the dhimmi pact with the threat of "nothing but the sword" but IS also took over electricity, water, and gas supplies, local factories, and even bakeries all of which lent IS total control over the core needs of a civilian population. IS frequently subsidized the prices of staple products, particularly bread, and had been praised for capping rent prices. For example, after assuming control of much of Deir Ezzor governorate in July 2014, IS funded the reduction of bread prices from 200 Syrian

Pounds to 45 and also made it mandatory for bakeries to provide zakat (a charitable obligation in Islam) to the poor. Lister (2014:23) states that in Mosul, IS established a free hospital a few days after capturing the city and later capped monthly rent prices at a more affordable $85. Civilian bus services were frequently established and normally offered for free. Electricity lines, roads, sidewalks, and other critical infrastructure were repaired, postal services were created, free healthcare and vaccinations for children were offered, soup kitchens were established for the poor, construction projects were offered loans, and Islam-oriented schools were opened for boys and girls. In Raqqa, IS operated a consumer protection office, which had closed shops for selling poor quality products. IS attempted to provide the same services that a nation-state offers to its citizens, but, according to the group, in a more ethical manner.

Proselytization through "religious education" is another key element of IS's religious fundamentalist political governance. In addition to introducing new academic curriculums, public *da'wa* (proselytizing) events were frequently held, allowing the organization to "educate" their constituents on the benefits of living under IS rule. Free meals and gifts for children were often provided and on occasion, they also celebrated the pledging of *bay'ah* (oath of allegiance) by local tribal leaders or other dignitaries (Cafarella *et al* 2019:16). According to a former IS fighter (cited in Cafarella *et al* 2019:16):

> *When ISIS entered Homs governorate, people were very scared, but after four to five months, the majority of village chiefs had pledged allegiance to IS and hundreds of their men had volunteered to join IS. IS had educated the people, taught them how to read, run vaccination clinics for children, stopped bandits and highwaymen, and allowed trade to resume properly.*

According to Hassan (2018:3), IS had devised a near-complete mode of governance, which, when combined with the organization's extensive financial resources, had largely kept cities running and people tacitly content. The introduction of such governance within a broader context of conflict and instability meant that Sunni civilians had been more likely to accept the imposition of harsh norms. This factor is key to IS's survival or demise. Hassan (2018:3) states that although executions sometimes by crucifixion and stoning and the amputation of limbs as punishment for murder, adultery, and robbery had presented a shocking level of brutality. The "stick" combined with the "carrot" offered by social services had occasionally

meant that IS had appeared, at least in the immediate term, as a viable alternative to what is perceived as repressive, sectarian, and foreign-influenced governments and incapable, "moderate" oppositions.

The above revelations are critical to the study since they validate and vindicate the hypothesis that terrorism thrives in dysfunctional places, this includes fragile countries but rich in resources with a lack of governance. This hypothesis was first popularized by the former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon who argued that the failure by authorities to police their borders create a decisive strategic advantage for criminal groups and terrorists. This is because terrorist and criminal networks are very skilled at taking advantage of institutional weakness on the ground (cited in Keefe, 2013:102). The former head of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (cited in Keefe, 2013:102) Antonia Maria Costa argued that "There are so many forgotten places, out of government control, too scary for investors and tourists. These are the places where smugglers, insurgents, and terrorists operate". This hypothesis is significant to the study in that it is the foundation of CTS.

The study suggests that when pursuing measures to counter IS's growth and eventually to defeat it altogether, it ought to be approached as something more than a terrorist organization. From a CTS perspective, counterterrorism efforts should incorporate and involve aspects of economic, political, diplomatic, social, and religious policy (Biersteker and Eckert 2008:293). Effectively countering IS will take a long time due to the organization's complicated and mysterious nature. Hence, the best approach would be to allow local actors that understand and share the same history and heritage, religion, geographical terrain, and so on with the society that IS represents to take the lead with the support of Western states and the rest of the world, not vice-versa. In both Syria and Iraq, a broad strategy should be developed and implemented that will explicitly target not only or specifically the IS revenue stream but addresses the political and socio-economic conditions that enable the IS to prosper. This argument is fully developed in the next findings and discussions chapter (chapter five). The following section describes the current status of the IS by assessing the possibilities of the restoration of the caliphate, new recruitment strategy and the new illicit economic activities that the group has adopted following its territorial defeat in 2019.

4.3.5. The current status of the IS (2019 – 2021)

The IS was defeated in 2019 by the US-led coalition forces alongside the local Kurdish forces. The IS lost control of all its territory both in Syria and Iraq and went underground, although the group continued to launch sporadic terror attacks on a small scale (Vianna de Azevedo 2020:48). Following the demise of the caliphate in 2019, all individuals that lived under IS rule including the wives and family members of the IS fighters were taken to different refugee camps in Syria and Iraq. The IS is currently targeting under-resourced and poorly managed refugee camps such as the Al-Hawl camp in Northern Syria one of the largest Internationally Displaced Persons (IDP) refugee camps in the Middle East (Vianna de Azevedo 2020:48). The IS targets the refugee camp to recruit future IS fighters, extort money from individuals, traffic women and children and vulnerable groups. The Al-Hawl refugee camp was set up to shelter women and children after the demise of the IS. However, the camp has now turned into a mini-caliphate itself. Where female leaders nurture the IS's violent ideology and run moneymaking schemes that help keep the insurgency alive outside of Syria (Trew 2021:5).

Pro-IS women who in most cases are wives or close family members of the IS fighters have been able to gather funding from social media for various IS-related activities. This is done by using sensational titles and languages like "Thoughts from Prison", "Sisters in Captivity", and "Caged Birds" and so on to influence the religious sentiment of social media users (Trew 2021:5). Pro-IS women have engaged in promotional campaigns intending to raise funds and donations from outside the camps. The women collect funds from jihadist organizational cells from Europe and elsewhere to fund the IS operations in the Middle East. This is done using the informal Hawal money transfer system (which is a traditional system of transferring hard cash from one agent to another till it reaches the final recipient, historically prevalent in Asia and the Middle East) and PayPal. These women often access online banking using secret cell phones hidden inside their tents. Sometimes once they have gathered funds, pro-IS women inside Al Hawl camp then pay smugglers related to IS cells in Syria and Iraq to smuggle families and individuals out of the camp (Trew 2021:6). According to Trew (2021:6), an undisclosed Al-Hawl refugee camp Kurdish guard states that:

> *Some of these women eventually disappear, probably to join IS or other like-minded groups. They smuggle amounts of cash between $5,000 and $20,000 out of the camp and transport them to Idlib or Turkish-controlled areas. Given these ongoing activities*

in the Al-Hawl camp, it is important to recognize that the camp constitutes a dangerous "small caliphate".

Members of the international community should strongly consider greater collaboration with the Syrian and Iraqi governments to accelerate the repatriation processes. This is especially urgent to the European nations since data shows that they are reluctant in taking back their citizens except for a few countries. There is no other viable way to resolve the massive Syrian refugee crisis than repatriation coupled with rehabilitation processes that are victim-centred. The conditions are dire in the Al-Hawl refugee camp and they deteriorate on a daily basis. The refugee camp has defeated its own purpose for providing protection and rehabilitation to the victims of violence. This is because the international community neglected to adopt a meaningful humanitarian approach that would focus on ensuring that displaced people do not find themselves and their families stranded in or staying for a long time in the refugee camps. This can only be achieved through greater cooperation to accelerate repatriation because it is the most viable way to address the refugee crisis in that refugee camps by their nature are not sustainable.

According to Trew (2021:10), pro-IS women in the Al-Hawl camp are also carrying out campaigns to spread extremism and recruitment inside the camp by teaching children and teenagers extremist jihadist ideas. A huge portion of the 65,000 people living in the camp are children with two-third of the camps' population under the age of 18 and over half under the age of 12. Trew (2021:10) states according to Lt. Gen. Paul Calvert, who commands the U.S.led counter-IS mission in Iraq and Syria:

The wives of the IS fighters are carrying out a daily indoctrination programme and the so-called "Cubs" are exported back through the ratlines coming out of Al-Hawl that pushes them down into the Badia desert for additional training and used as IS fighters. Weapons smuggling in and out of the facility is also a daily occurrence.

Countries have been reluctant to repatriate their citizens while many Syrians are stuck and over the years, living conditions have deteriorated and desperation has taken root. Records show that over 154 people have been murdered in the camp since September 2020 alone (Vianna de Azevedo 2020:51). There has been a surge in threats to the guards and local people working with NGOs in the camp as well. Kurdish officials and staff working for international

NGOs have disclosed screenshots of nearly half a dozen text messages threatening death if money, "taxes" or charitable donations are not paid (Vianna de Azevedo 2020:51). Vianna de Azevedo (2020:51) further states that one text message sent to a woman who worked as a cleaner for a humanitarian NGO in the Syrian-Iraqi section of the camp reads:

> *We are your brothers in the Islamic State, give us the amount of $300 [£225] for zakat* [a form of almsgiving]. *You have three days to pay.*

According to Vianna de Azevedo (2020:51), in another message sent from a Lithuanian number on WhatsApp, an Iraqi refugee who owned several stores in the camp was ordered to pay $8,000. The message, which contained the location of his tent and the name of the workers he employs reads:

> *If you neglect the Islamic State and you don't answer or block this phone number, we will find you. The mujahedeen are close to you, we know where you live.*

There are also active Telegram channels including one called "Hasakah Nightmare" where users share photos, addresses, and even phone numbers of people within the Al-Hawl accused of working with the Kurds or the camp administration, or of violating extremist conservative values. The channel's admins urge their followers to find these individuals and attack or kill them (Trew 2021:10). There have also been documented attacks on NGOs' facilities within the camps, although the charities believe money not IS ideology or religion is the motive as conditions in the camp have reached dire levels. In addition, there are also concerns that some of the corrupt camp guards are involved, as extortion has become a lucrative business (Trew 2021:10).

In combatting these pernicious trends within the Al-Hawl camp, the international community/UN need to take urgent actions. One critical step is to increase funding for the camps educational and rehabilitation centres already set up by UNICEF. These centres should operate with an increased emphasis on de-radicalisation for children and women of IS through psychological and religious educational curricula, as well as training for healthy reintegration into the camp residents home societies. This process will likely require the separation of children from extremist mothers for a transitional period until mothers can show that they have shed radical ideologies. At that point, these families' host countries will

hopefully feel comfortable repatriating them. The following section concludes this chapter by using a table to summarize and consolidate the themes, main events, and findings of the study covered in this chapter.

4.4. Summary of Themes, Core Aspects/Events, and Research Findings through Thematic Analysis (TA)

This section uses the below table to summarise and consolidate the findings of the chapter by highlighting the core and sub-themes identified in this chapter. The table is made up of three columns, the first column identifies the themes, the second column highlights the core aspects or events within the themes and the final column presents a CTS-oriented brief response/analysis to the identified themes.

Themes identified	Core aspects/events	Research findings and response through CTS
What is the IS?	Irregular warfare group based in the Middle East, established a Caliphate/Islamic state in 2014 only to be disintegrated in 2019.	The IS is a unique and powerful irregular warfare group with the desire to create and run an Islamic state (caliphate) in the Middle East. It poses a threat to the Middle East and some parts of the world. However, from the CTS-perspective IS as often believed is not the greatest threat to global peace and security nor the major cause of global insecurity and instability.

How and where did the IS originate?	The has emerged from the Middle East, it is the product of the competing socioeconomic and political demands that are being ignored in the region and globally.	The international community is failing to pick up early warning signs of coalescing irregular warfare groups and also to understand the circumstances that give birth to irregular warfare groups including IS. Military force was widely used against IS, however, failed to adequately address the problem (IS threat) instead reproduced more humanitarian challenges such as loss of innocent civilian lives, exacerbated refugee challenges as a result of damaged infrastructure, and so on.
IS Emni	IS intelligence structure or division engineered by Haji Bakr responsible for running IS finances, planning attacks, instilling discipline, and so on.	Torturing and subjecting "terrorist" prisoners to forced labour, detaining them without trial, separating them from ordinary prisoners, and so on does not help the fight against "terrorism". Instead, it radicalizes and reproduces worse "terrorists". For instance, Haji Bakr, a man who is the mastermind of the IS intelligence structure received his "terrorist" knowledge from prison because he was previously imprisoned in Abu Ghraib and Camp Bucca along with the late IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and many other former military personnel of the intelligence service of Saddam Hussein's Air Defence Force.

IS recruiting and training strategy and membership.	IS radicalize civilians (especially vulnerable young people) through religious "education".	The CTS approach holds a view that the international society is not failing only to address socio-
	Spying is used to safeguard the IS against infiltration and to gather intelligence. IS uses elite special forces (mostly Chechen and Uzbek) to offer weaponry and explosive training to the recruits. Sometimes training occurs online.	economic and political conditions such as poverty, economic marginalization, lack of democracy/freedom and so on that engenders "terrorism". But is also failing to protect vulnerable civilians from "terrorist" recruitment especially young people and women. The international community has not done enough to fight "terrorist" efforts on the internet because more money and resources are channelled towards military campaigns.

IS and the legacies of the previous Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein.	The IS is largely formed by various military personnel who served in the previous Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. Legacies (violence, torture, intimidation, and spying) of the previous Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein are common in the IS.	The CTS approach suggests that the excessive use of military force as the main response to the so-called "terrorism". Which is a direct product of the political and socio-economic challenges of the Middle East is unlikely to meaningfully address the growing challenges of stability and security crisis in the region. This is because the use of excessive and uncooperative violence is a perfect recipe for radicalization, extremism, and terrorism. For instance, the majority of the individuals that suffered or witnessed the military violence that was used in Iraq by the U.S. forces to disintegrate the government of Saddam Hussein eventually became the masterminds and founders of IS and other small irregular warfare groups.

The IS communication strategy.	The IS relies on the int for and social media communication, radio and recruitment of and "terrorists". The intern used for glorifying propaganda abou caliphate.	The CTS approach offers the view that the international community is unable to effectively counter IS efforts on the internet because it refuses to acknowledge that half of the battle is fought online as once asserted by Zawahiri. CTS regards military force as less effective in countering IS and "terrorism" in general because "terrorists" are increasingly moving to online spaces where physical violence does not stand a chance of making even the smallest impact. Therefore, CTS is calling for the international community to start thinking of counterterrorism strategies as a multidimensional approach to target all aspects of the so-called terrorism. For instance, CTF should be used to target terrorism financing whilst greater cooperation between the states and the internet and social media companies should also be taken seriously to keep IS content and presence out of the internet.

Illicit economic activities of IS.	General illicit economic activities of IS (quasi-taxes, extortion, bank robberies, trade of antiquities, donations, kidnapping for ransom, and so on). The use of profits to entice local communities (by providing social services).	The CTS regards IS as an adaptive irregular warfare group, it relies on a variety of illicit economic activities for income. Due to negligence and lack of responsiveness by the international community to the political and socio-economic challenges of the Middle East, Syria, and Iraqi in particular. The IS has stepped in and provided
		much-needed social services to the local populations of Syria and Iraqi, as result in some areas especially in Iraq IS has received unwavering support. CTS warns that irregular warfare groups will always win the hearts and minds of the people where governments are absent or irresponsive.

Oil smuggling	Oil smuggling had been the major source of income for the IS during early 2014 and late 2015 generating an average of $28 million per week amounting to 70 percent of the IS's total income.	Oil smuggling was a major source of income for the IS in the year 2014 and 2015 contributing approximately 70% to the IS's total income. However, no evidence suggests that the oil smuggling profits have been used to strengthen the IS's military capacity, as the oil smuggling was a significant contributor only for a short period. Instead, data shows that the IS has relied heavily on military weapons that were confiscated from their enemies during the battles including weapons from the US. Sometimes weapons that were meant for Iraqi forces ended up in the hands of the IS fighters.
Response of the US-led coalition to IS oil smuggling	The U.S-led anti-IS coalition targeted the IS oil infrastructure and the loading facilities as well as the tanker trucks transporting oil to the buyers both in Iraq and Syria.	The CTS perspective holds a view that excessive use of military violence by the international community as the immediate response to IS oil production and smuggling was counterproductive. This is because the military force has reproduced more political and socio-economic such as loss of innocent lives, damage to infrastructure, and exacerbated refugee crisis and displacement
		for the people of the Middle East.

The IS governance and local communities (Caliphate).	The financial capacity of the IS created a source of social leverage. Subsidies in basic food, fuel, rent, and so on were made to encourage popular support. Free Islamic education was used to indoctrinate the communities.	The CTS approach offers the view that military coercion does not offer a viable counterterrorism strategy that can meaningfully address the threat posed by the IS. Especially because the IS has deeply cemented itself in poor and vulnerable communities. Due to the benefits or incentives offered by the IS that comes in a form of social services and other welfarerelated benefits. The group has created social capital or leverage within the local communities that make it difficult for the international community to target the IS through military force without endangering innocent civilians. This is because innocent civilians are involved in the businesses of the IS, for instance, the oil smuggling process involved civilians sometimes as truck drivers or oil buyers. Therefore, the CTS approach proposes a counterterrorism strategy that will work to defeat the IS and simultaneously free and protect innocent civilians from the "terrorist" activities by addressing the political and socio-economic challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and social marginalization amongst others that draw local community population to ISrelated activities.

4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, the findings and discussions on the following themes were presented: What is the IS, Illicit economic activities of IS, and the caliphate and IS governance. Issues were identified, described, and analysed through TA as a tool of analysis. The themes that emerged from the data-set or literature in the study in chapter two in relation to the research questions were studied thoroughly and interpreted through the lens of CTS as an approach to terrorism studies.

In this chapter, the results were analysed via TA, which involved identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning or themes within the data set. The following chapter (chapter five) which is the core and the most qualitative part of the study will focus on the response of the international community on illicit economic activities of IS.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSES.

5.1 Introduction

The study is based on the case of the Islamic State (IS) formerly known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a Middle Eastern-based Sunni Islamic irregular warfare group that is probably the most radical and ambitious militant organization in modern history. This is because, unlike other non-state militant organizations, IS does not seek to change the political status quo of a specific country. Instead, it seeks to establish a caliphate (Islamic state) that would rule over all Muslim communities, starting in Syria and Iraq. Amongst other aspects, the group had demonstrated a strong commitment to eliminating Western religion, culture, education, and influence in the region. The first attempt to create a caliphate was seen in Iraq in 2006 which was a total failure. A successful establishment was only seen in 2014 in Iraq and Syria under the name the Islamic State (IS) led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the caliph (leader). However, the caliphate was ultimately dismantled by the US-led coalition airstrikes in Syria and Iraq, the territorial defeat of the IS began in late 2018 and continued throughout 2019. This was followed by the official announcement by former U.S. President Donald Trump that the IS has been defeated in Syria and Iraq, hence, the withdrawal of a large number of American forces from Syria and Iraq followed thereafter. However, it should be noted that the territorial defeat of IS in 2019 did not prevent the group from launching sporadic terror attacks. The group continued to launch attacks from outside Syria and Iraq and relied heavily on IS-inspired attacks and foreign terrorist fighters".

The study focuses largely on the illicit economic activities of IS and the response of the international community, however, special attention is paid to the role of oil within the broader economic survival of the organization. Of concern to the study, is the lack of extensive and detailed studies on the effectiveness of the violent counterterrorism strategy that had been deployed by the international community including the UNSC and individual governments against IS. The overall objective of the study is to utilise CTS as an approach to terrorism studies to assess the effectiveness of counterinsurgency strategies and policies pursued by the international community including the UNSC against the IS. Ultimately the study develops a CTS-oriented approach for understanding how actions can be taken to forestall similar global terror threats in the future. In this chapter, the study presents the findings on the response of the international community to the illicit economic activities of

the IS and analyse through CTS the effectiveness of the counterinsurgency strategies deployed by the international community against the IS. The following section describes the method of analysis (Thematic Analysis) as a tool of analysis that is used in this chapter.

5.2. Method of Analysis

The themes that emerged from the data-set or literature review of the study in chapter two in relation to the research questions on the IS and its illicit economic activities were studied thoroughly and interpreted through the lens of CTS as a critical approach to terrorism studies. In this chapter, the results are analysed via Thematic Analysis (TA) as a tool of analysis that involves identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning or themes within the reviewed literature or data set. The findings are discussed in a historical context; however, this is not to imply that the IS is no longer functional or in existence in Syria and Iraq, or other parts of the world. But largely to demonstrate that the caliphate that was declared in 2014 in Syria and Iraq had been disintegrated and a significant number of IS fighters retreated to the underground/remote communities of Syria and Iraq. However, there has been a growing number of home-grown terror groups that claim allegiance to the IS in various countries across the globe including North, Central, and Southern Africa. Illicit economic activities including oil smuggling had dropped significantly following the defeat of IS by the US-led coalition from 2018 throughout 2019 in Syria and Iraq. The findings are presented as an empirical case study and analysed through TA to filter the primary and secondary data and further, analyse it through the lens of CTS to create a new and original analysis of the studied phenomenon. The data analysis process is more of a deductive approach influenced by CTS and it tends to be more interpretive because analyses are shaped and informed by CTS and concepts central to the study. The following section describes and analyses through TA the themes that have been identified from the data set. The steps in the analysis process that were followed were described in detail in the previous chapter (chapter four).

5.3. Themes identified

Issues under the following main and sub-themes were identified, described, and analysed through TA as a methodological tool utilised in the research:

- Response of the international community against IS in Syria and Iraq.
  - ➢ Military response.

> ➢ Non-militaristic response.

- Effects of the response of the international community on IS itself, human rights and international law.

  ➢ IS under heavy Western military attack.

  ➢ Human rights violations in Syria and Iraq.

  ➢ International Law violations.

In the ensuing discussion, these themes are further elucidated and presented as an empirical case study. The findings are analysed through TA to create a new and original analysis of the studied phenomenon. The analysis tends to be more interpretive because it is shaped and influenced by CTS and concepts central to the study. At the end of the chapter, a table is used to summarise and consolidate the findings by highlighting the themes, major events, and the CTS-oriented responses/analyses.

5.3.1 Response of the International Community against IS in Syria and Iraq

The purpose of this section is to analyse and explain the response of the international community to the illicit economic activities of IS and its presence in the Syrian Arab Republic and the Republic of Iraq within the context of the ongoing Syrian conflict. The actions of the international community as a response to IS are divided into military and non-militaristic approaches. Military actions occurred in a form of the US-led anti-IS military campaign, a coalition of 68 countries conducting airstrikes against IS in Syria and Iraq. However, ultimately ground infantry actions were carried out in Iraq by the Iraqi forces and in Syria by the Kurdish militias accompanied by Western military advisors. The non-militaristic actions were largely facilitated by various UN agencies particularly the UNHCR from early 2012 till the present both in Syria and Iraq. The UNHCR focused largely on providing food supplies, water, and shelter to the refugees that are displaced within Syria and Iraq and those stranded in other neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt as well as rehabilitating the communities affected by the war in Syria and Iraq.

5.3.1.1 Military Response

The IS was met with a significant amount of military force that was coordinated largely by the

United States alongside other UN members states. This response to IS took the form of a military campaign predominately based on aerial attacks. As the House of Commons Library (2014) report points out:

> *A massive global anti-ISIS military campaign was initiated in early 2014 by the international community to fight ISIS both in Syria and Iraq. The United States was the first country to conduct airstrikes against ISIS both in Syria and Iraq, it started in Iraq in August and Syria in September. The campaign was soon joined by US Arab partners such as the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Qatar, they launched several airstrikes in Syria on the 23rd of September. While countries such as Denmark, Belgium, France, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Australia, and Canada were reluctant to participate militarily in Syria, instead they conducted airstrikes in Iraq on September 26.*

In this regard, a variety of accounts were provided by the United States and its partners to justify and validate the military actions taken against IS. The arguments range from moral/humanitarian to security-based concerns. For instance, an American politician and diplomat who served under the administration of former President Barack Obama appearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of the Representatives in September, John Forbes Kerry (2014) stated that:

> *In early 2013 the ISIL launched its first offensive in the northern part of Iraq leaving President Obama with no choice but to begin launching airstrikes against ISIL to protect American personnel and prevent major catastrophes. Such as the fall of the Haditha dam or the maintenance of the Mosul dam, and also to boost the Iraqi Security Forces and the Kurdish forces.*

From the data, it is apparent that the campaign was heavily based on aerial attacks, seemingly, this is because there was a general reluctance amongst the participating member states to partake in ground combat with the IS fighters. The reluctance and unwillingness of participating member states to deploy ground forces persisted even when the need for such was evident. As stated by the House of Commons Library report (2014):

> *Both in Syria and Iraq, the military actions were limited to air operations in support of local forces providing reconnaissance, surveillance, and attack capabilities. Airstrikes*

targeted heavy weapons, armed vehicles such as armed pick-up trucks, and the local

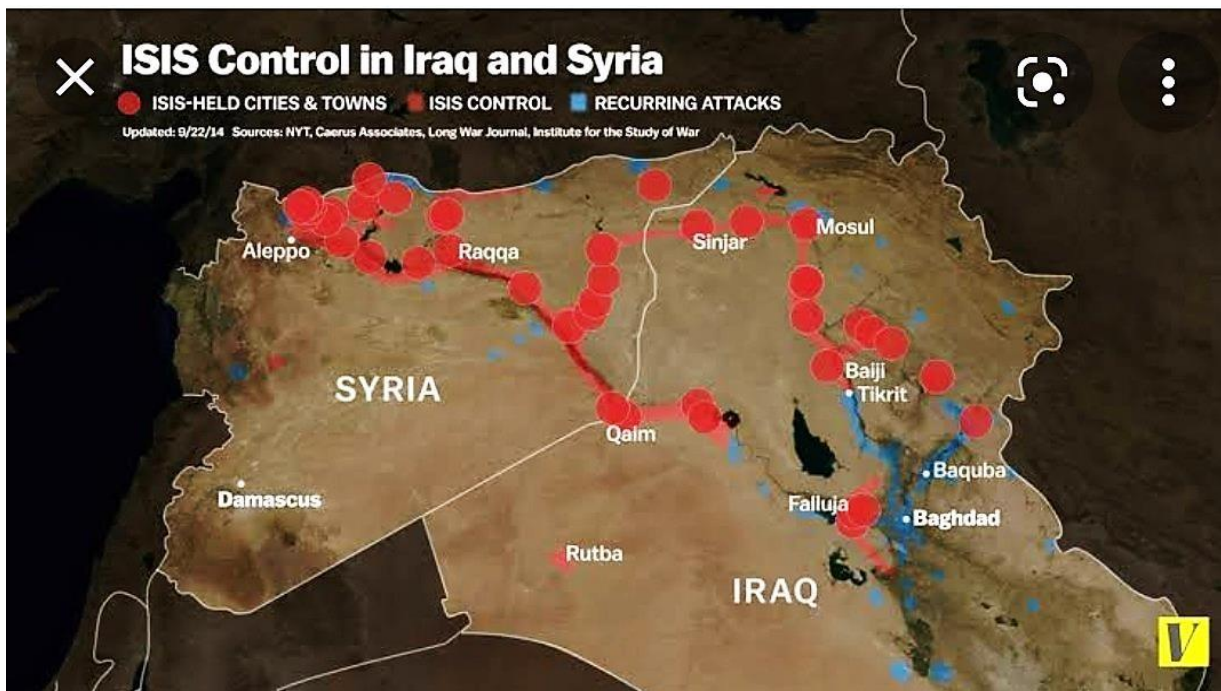*ground forces engaged in combat fire with ISIS fighters.*

Fig.5.1. This map by Vox (2021) shows ISIS-held and controlled cities & towns in Syria and Iraq as well as the recurring attacks by the US-led coalition against ISIS in 2014.

By late 2014 there was an inevitable need for ground combat caused by the ineffectiveness of airstrikes against unconventional/irregular fighters who were almost impossible to identify with certainty due to their reliance on guerrilla warfare tactics. This dilemma prompted a debate about the need for boots on the ground or land forces amongst the participating member states. House of Commons Library report (2014) points out that:

There was widespread resistance from participating member states especially European nations and Australia to deploy ground troops. The UK, Canada, Australia, and France explicitly dismissed the idea of deploying ground combat forces in Syria and Iraq. However, the UK deployed non-combat army trainers to northern Iraq and announced at the beginning of November 2014 that a small number of advisers will be deployed to Iraqi headquarters and the US Congress announced its decision to consider military deployment both in Syria and Iraq in the near future.

Even though the US was the leader of the anti-IS coalition campaign, the US was also reluctant to deploy its own ground forces to engage with IS on the ground, instead, it resorted to arming and training the Syrian forces. Clandestine US programmes were put in place to assist the

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Syrian Democratic Forces led by the People's Protection Unit (YPG) that collaborated closely with the Kurdish rebels such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) that are antagonistic towards the Assad-led Syrian regime and to a lesser extent the IS. These programmes included the 2014 Pentagon programme that was intended to train and equip 15,000 rebels to fight IS and the Assad-led Syrian regime. The programme was abolished in 2015 after spending $500 million and producing only a few dozen fighters (Jung, Howe, Lichtenheld, and Mukhopadhyay 2019:21). Another $1 billion covert programmes called Timber Sycamore was conducted by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) aimed at challenging the Assad-led Syrian regime was more successful. However, it was decimated by Russian bombings, and cancelled in mid-2017 by the Trump administration (Jung *et al*, 2019:22). Shortly after the civil war broke out in 2011, the US initially supplied the rebels of the FSA with non-lethal aid such as food rations and pickup trucks however, the US later began providing training, money, and intelligence to selected Syrian rebel commanders. The strategy was regarded by the US authorities as the best Syrian counterweight to both the Syrian regime and extremists like ISIL (Jung *et al,* 2019:22).

While the US and the West viewed irregular warfare groups like the Taliban and the IS as dangerous to Western values and interests, they were reluctant to commit their ground troops to the effort and instead were willing to depend upon locally trained forces to do the job. Recent events in Afghanistan demonstrate the potential limitations to that strategy. The reluctance amongst the US and Western governments to commit to ground combat was a confirmation of the lessons learned by the United States and other Western states from the US-led war on terror and other devastating wars of the 21st century. For instance, although an estimated 30,000 Afghan troops and police and 31,000 Afghan civilians were killed between 2001 and 2016. More than 3,500 troops from the NATO-led coalition were killed during that time, and 29 countries were represented among the dead (Jeffrey, 2021:7). In addition, some 30,000 Pakistani government forces and civilians were killed by the Pakistani Taliban. In the case of the Iraqi war, despite an estimated number of 85,000 Iraqi civilians that were killed by the end of the war in Iraq. By the time the U.S. combat forces were withdrawn in August 2010, more than 4,700 coalition troops had perished in the conflict (Jeffrey, 2021:7). Seemingly, it is against this background that the majority of Western states had resolved to revise their military engagement strategies towards irregular warfare groups which resulted

in the general unwillingness by anti-IS US-led coalition member states to engage in ground combat with the IS fighters. For instance, the National Security Strategy (2015) of the US former president Obama discloses that:

The United States had learnt significant lessons from the past decade from the War on Terror in terms of the military strategy against the terrorists on the ground. The United States will move away from the costly and dangerous traditional military engagements such as large-scale ground combat. The US military will now pursue a more sustainable approach that prioritises targeted counterterrorism operations, collective action with responsible partners and increase efforts to prevent the growth of violent extremism and radicalisation that increase threats.

Primary military actions against IS in Syria were largely carried out by the Kurdish forces with the support of the US. In 2016, the US former President Barack Obama despatched hundreds of US combat advisors and ordered an airdrop of weapons, ammunition and medical supplies to boost the Kurdish forces in their fight against IS in Kobani. Although, the Russian military had not fielded significant ground forces in its Syrian campaign at the time. Unlike the US and the majority of the Western states, Moscow had dispatched at least 3,000 military personnel on the ground by September 2016 and 4,500 as of March 2018 (Tan and Perudin, 2019:3). Seemingly, the Russian government was planning to limit the military engagements with IS on the ground in Syria at that time, particular efforts were taken to minimize active ground combat operations. Limiting ground operations was significant to prevent massive human losses, which could have produced a domestic backlash. For instance, the use of mercenaries helped Kremlin to create an impression at home that the human cost of the conflict was low. Tan and Perudin (2019:3) state that in 2018 the Wagner group, a Russian Private Military Contracting Agency (PMC), was involved in the battle of Khasham in the Deir ez-Zor Governorate. Where the US-led coalition aircrafts conducted strikes against the pro-Syrian government forces leaving between 100 and 200 fighters dead, the Wagner group members were allegedly represented amongst the dead. A Russian paramilitary chief claimed that a small contingent of Russian PMCs was stationed in Al Tabiyeh however, was not participating in the fighting. Despite the silence of the Russian authorities on this issue, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) an activist organization reported that the Russian PMCs were accompanying pro-Syrian government forces as they advanced towards the SDF-held oil

and gas fields, hence, they were killed at Al Tabiyeh. However, they were not killed in the airstrikes, but instead in a booby-trapped explosion at an arms depot. The state did not report or admit mercenary deaths, and the public appeared to be unaware of the losses experienced by soldiers-for-hire. As a result, the Russian public believes that the Russian Federation has not lost significant human resources in any of its recent operations including in Syria (Tan and Perudin 2019:5).

The US and Russia's military intervention in Syria indirectly contributed to the strengthening of IS in that the US and the Russian Federation intervened in the Syrian conflict with different objectives. Initially, the US objectives were to depose the authoritarian government of Bashar al-Assad and minimise the geopolitical influence of Iran since it is a strategic ally of the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition, Iran is believed by the US to have provided significant support for the Syrian government including logistical, technical and financial support as well as training and some combat troops. Hence, it is regarded by the US as detrimental to the stability of the region (Tan and Perudin 2019:8). Whilst Russian intervention in Syria was based mainly on the belief by the Russian leadership that if the Syrian regime collapses, Sunni extremism will spread throughout the region and eventually to Russia. Hence, Russia's intervention was more focused on the US-backed anti-Assad forces such as the FSA, PKK and other Kurdish militia groups seeking to overthrow the Assad-led regime and possibly end Russian presence in Syria including its naval base (Tartus facility) in the country (Tan and Perudin 2019:8). According to Tan and Perudin (2019:8) Valery Gerasimov, chief of the Russian General Staff argued:

> *Had Russia not intervened in the Syrian crisis ISIS would have continued to gather momentum and would have spread to adjacent countries. We would have had to confront that force on our own territory. They would be operating in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Volga region of Russia.*

Both the US and Russia had used different approaches to achieve their objectives. Ironically, despite the fear of IS spilling over into the Russian borders. Russian airstrikes were often directed towards US-backed rebel groups in Syria such as the FSA, PKK, and SDF rather than IS, which indirectly enabled IS to gain ground against its rival groups. This is consistent with the discovery of Speckhard and Yayla (2017:14), where in 2003 Assad's intelligence conspired with the intelligence agents of the deposed Iraqi government including Haji Bakr to move fighters into Iraq through Syria. This was at the time when Bashar al-Assad thought that the

victorious US troops in Iraq would advance into Syria to topple his regime. This loyal relationship was mended by Haji Bakr in 2014 and the Syrian intelligence agents were happy to reunite and work with Haji Bakr against the common enemy. Speckhard and Yayla (2017:14) state,

> Through the renewed relationship, the IS received favours, assistance, and cooperation from the Assad air force that regularly bombed positions and camps of rival rebel groups whilst avoiding the IS positions. In return, the IS also ordered its fighters to refrain from shooting at the Syrian army. This alliance also led to the sale of wheat and oil to the Assad government by the IS, in some instances the Syrian civilians also purchased wheat and oil from the IS. Some IS defectors recall Syrian forces giving up territory to IS without much of a fight and sometimes leaving behind weapons without destroying them.

The US-led coalition on the other side focused on conducting airstrikes against IS as well as training, funding, and arming the so-called "moderate opposition groups", the SDF which collaborate closely with YPG, FSA, and PKK, in particular, to continue fighting the Assad regime effectively. This conundrum was a result of incompatible and irreconcilable individual interests of the US and Russia in the Syrian conflict in connection to the question of how to eliminate the IS in Syria as well as to end the conflict itself? This became a challenge as the United States had positioned and declared itself the only solution to the ongoing Syrian conflict. Obama's National Security Strategy (2015) document states that:

> Joined by allies and partners, including multiple countries within the Middle East, the United States had employed its unique military capabilities to arrest ISIL's advance and to degrade their capabilities in both Iraq and Syria. The United States had worked with partners to train and equip a moderate Syrian opposition to provide a counterweight to the terrorists and the brutality of the Assad regime. The United States remains the only solution to the Syrian civil war, it will facilitate an inclusive political transition that responds to the legitimate aspirations of all Syrian citizens.

It can be concluded that apart from the financial strength and military capability of the IS, other elements of the Syrian civil war such as the conflict of interests and contestation between the US and Russia had indirectly sustained the IS in Syria. This is because both the

US and Russia had adequate powers and resources to eliminate the IS in Syria but instead, elected to utilise their resources for military contestation to an extent that some scholars understood it as a form of proxy war, as such, the IS benefited from the US – Russia hostility in Syria (Muharrem 2017:112).

The US-led coalition constituted largely by the European nations and a few US strategic partners in the Middle East (mainly Kurdish-led forces) achieved a significant victory in the territorial defeat of IS or destroying the IS caliphate in Syria and Iraq in March 2019 (McGurk 2019:69). Although, this "victory" has sharply reduced the fighting against IS in Iraq and Eastern Syria. The US-led Coalition did not, however, fully defeat IS in either Iraq or Syria or eliminate IS and other forms of extremism. This is because the US-led coalition did not bring about peace and lasting stability to Iraq or end the Syrian civil war, and it did not eliminate the threat of IS and other extremist groups in the rest of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) areas (McGurk 2019:69). According to (Vianna de Azevedo 2020:44), recent findings from the UN has shown that IS has reorganized and recovered to a significant degree in both Iraq and Syria since the final battles against its caliphate and it continues its operations in other countries. Although, currently IS faces serious financial constraints but is still able to fund small scale operations. The below map shows the final assault on the last pocket of IS territory.
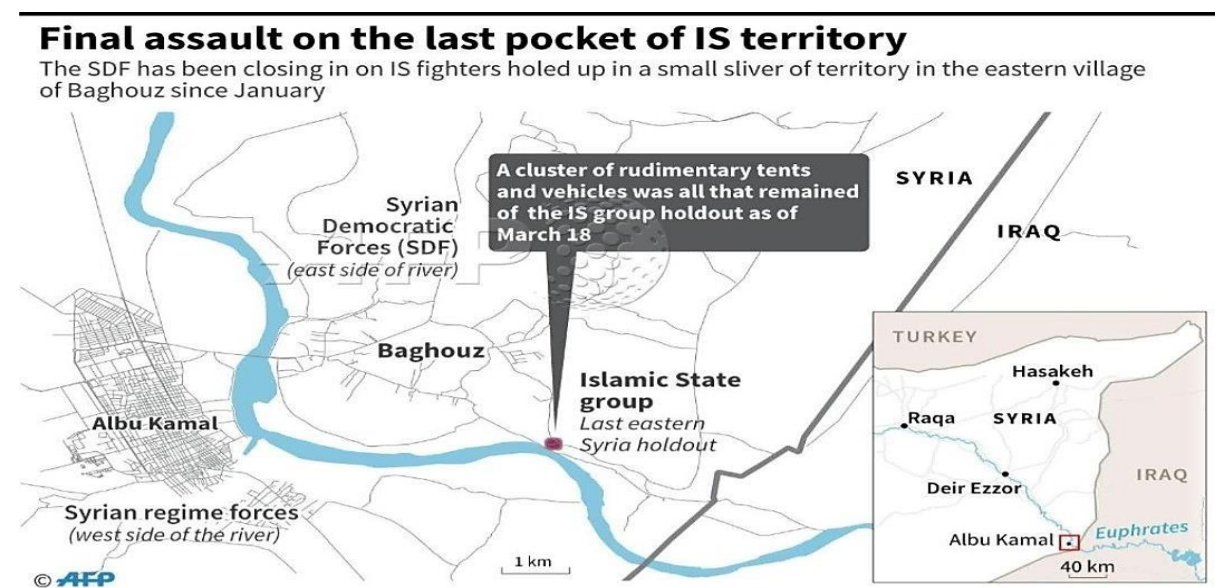

Fig.5.2. The above map by the ACLED (2020) shows the final assault on the last pocket of IS territory in March 2019.

Vianna de Azevedo (2020:45) further argues although the data compiled by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), shows that the defeat of IS in final battles in 2019 sharply reduced the level of IS-related violence in Iraq and Syria since the breakup of the caliphate. The fact that latest data show that IS is not attacking nor killing at the rate it did before the defeat of its caliphate, does not necessarily mean that IS has been defeated in Iraq and Syria, or that its influence has not expanded outside both states. Vianna de Azevedo (2020:45) adds that the decline in the level of IS-caused violence does not mean that the US-led coalition has reduced the overall threat of extremism, or brought peace and stability to Iraq, Syria, or any of the other states affected by IS and other extremist movements. From a CTS point of view, defeating the IS caliphate has only treated a key symptom of "terrorism" but has not addressed most of its major causes. Institutions like the World Bank, IMF, and the UN indicate that the political, governance, economic, and broader security problems that breed and sustain extremism have grown worse in the past decade. Most affected countries include Iraq, Syria, and other states in the Middle East since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the Arab upheavals that began in 2011 (Vianna de Azevedo 2020:47). The graphs by ACLED below show the estimates of IS-caused violence in Iraq and Syria between 2016 and 2019.

Attacks by Islamic State, Iraq & Syria, January 2016 - Present, ACLED Database

Fatalities from Islamic State Activities, Iraq & Syria, January 2016 - Present, ACLED Database
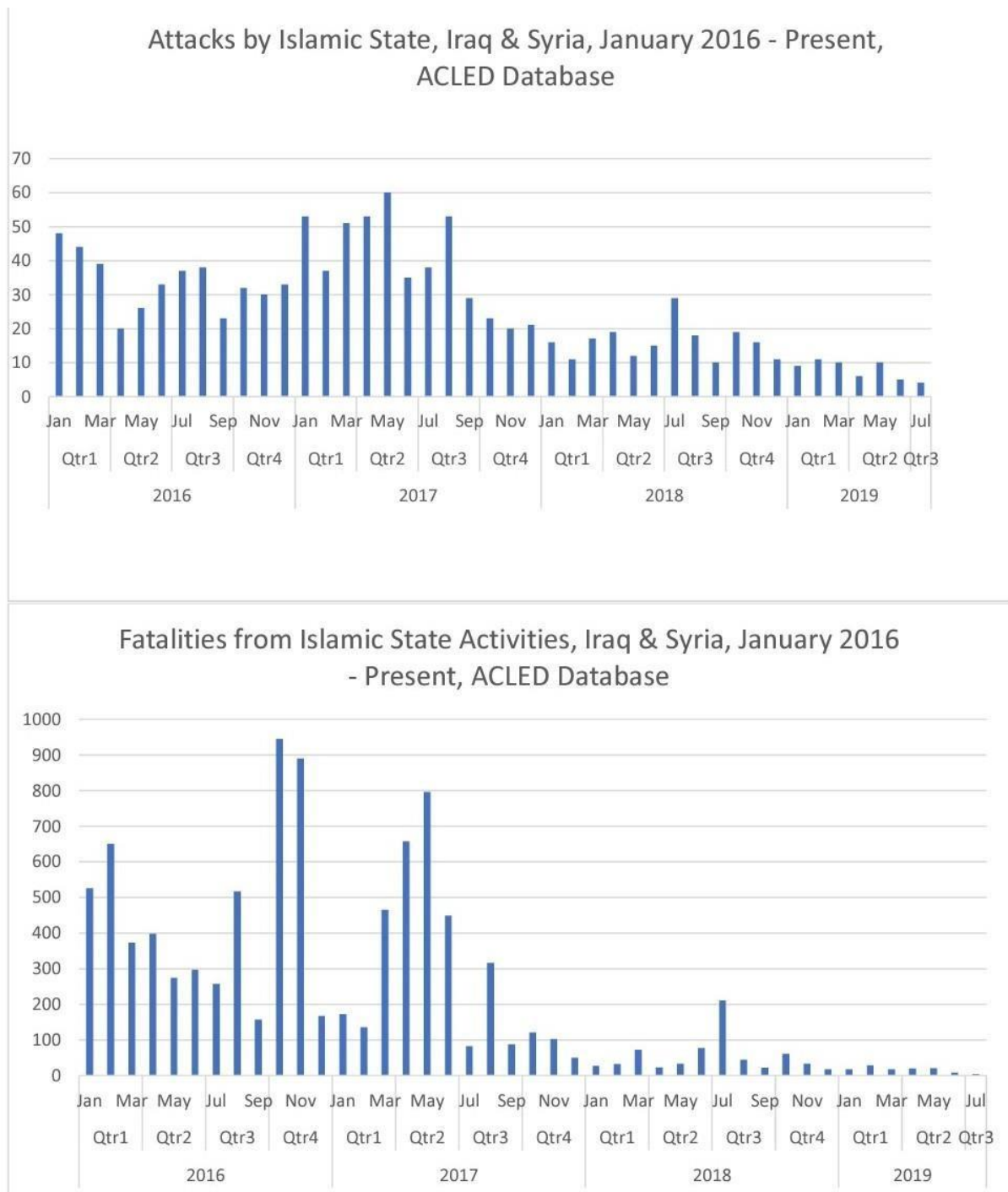
Fig 5.3. The above graphs by the ACLED (2020) show the estimates of IS-caused violence in Iraq and Syria between 2016 and 2019.

The destruction caused by IS in Syria and Iraq has inflicted irreversible damage not only on the civilian livelihood but also on the Syrian and Iraqi heritage (e.g. the destruction of the oldest and best-preserved jewels of ancient civilization such as Syria's Roman-era ancient city of Palmyra). Some of the legacies remain prevalent and are likely to remain so for a long time (e.g. human trafficking). The IS was officially defeated militarily on the ground in March 2019 by the US-led coalition and Kurdish forces playing a more significant role. Stern (2018:12)

states that CTS as an approach to counterterrorism suggests that a critical aspect of counterterrorism effort begins after the irregular warfare group has been defeated militarily on the ground. Following the defeat of the irregular warfare group on the ground, a multidimensional strategy to address the socioeconomic, health, political and psychological issues that give birth to "terrorism" should be rolled out to address these challenges effectively. Indeed, all these challenges remain prevalent in Syria and Iraq even after the territorial defeat of IS in 2019. For instance, Vianna de Azevedo (2020:48) states that:

> *Al Hawl camp remains the largest Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Northeastern Syria. As of 2020, the camp holds around 68,000 people, 94% of whom are women and children. The camp holds people who fled ISIS as well as individuals and families connected to IS (members and supporters) who were displaced from its former territory. Criminal activities such as human trafficking, sexual violence, fraud and so on have aided ISIS in having the upper hand inside the camp while preparing its militants for a future role in case the caliphate is restored. In the meantime, since its territorial defeat two years ago, IS has benefited from the human smuggling networks that operate in Syria since 2011. Smuggling its fighters and families out of the conflict zone has been an important strategy for ISIS future ambitions.*

The above revelations are unsurprisingly true because IS and its emulators, like Al Qaeda in Iraq and Boko Haram in Nigeria, have always benefited from prison and refugee camp contexts, which from a CTS perspective fundamentally serve the growth and restoration of irregular warfare groups. Vianna de Azevedo (2020:48), argues that poorly managed refugee camps have proven to be breeding grounds for Jihadist indoctrination and networking in the Middle East. For instance, Al Hawl Camp has been dubbed the "Jihadist University" and became well known for its role as a breeding ground for the IS and other irregular warfare groups. Vianna de Azevedo (2020:49), adds that vulnerable individuals stranded in refugee camps are likely to fall into the trap of extremist recruitment. Al Hawl has been part of IS's strategy through crime and terror networks that have developed within the camp. IS residents in Al Hawl camp conduct terrorist indoctrination, radicalization, human smuggling, document fraud, forgery, financing and so on. Poorly managed and under-resourced refugee camps often defeat the actual purpose of counterinsurgency efforts including the idea of refugee

camps and rehabilitation itself. Hence, CTS insist that refugee camps should be designed as places of protection and rehabilitation, they should be kept at the centre of the communitybased projects or programmes that are rolled out following the defeat of the irregular warfare group on the ground. Monitoring and evaluation of the refugee camps to gauge their progress and contribution to the rehabilitation project are key. This is because monitoring and evaluation will allow authorities/policymakers to detect "terrorist" elements that might exist within the refugee camps to avoid having refugee camps that are used by irregular warfare groups as a recruitment base. The following section concentrates on the non-militaristic response of the international community against IS that seemed almost like humanitarian aid in Syria and Iraq.

5.3.1.2 Non-Militaristic Response

The non-militaristic strategy adopted by the international community as a response against IS involved humanitarian activities following the territorial defeat of IS in the Middle East. The non-militaristic response occurred within the context of the mass refugee crisis emanating from Syria as a result of the ongoing Syrian conflict. Although foreign intervention in Syria was based largely on military force, military coercion was directed towards those regarded as "terrorists". Following the territorial defeat of IS in March 2019, humanitarian actions were carried out by the UN agencies and many other international and regional organizations in Syria, Iraq and neighbouring countries. By early 2014, it had become evident that the Syrian refugee crisis had become one of the major humanitarian catastrophes since the Second World War. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2017:76), over 700,000 Syrians had registered as refugees with the UNHCR in 2014, with an average of approximately 70,000 Syrians fleeing their country every month. UNHCR (2017:76), states that by 2015, Syria's neighbouring countries were already paying the steep humanitarian costs of the refugee crisis with Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey hosting approximately 600,000, 1.14 million, and 1.6 million refugees, respectively, and with a smaller number of Syrians seeking shelter in Egypt (over 140,000) and Iraq (over 220,000). The dire conditions facing a large part of the refugee population are directly undermining all dimensions of their human security (from the personal, economic and environmental, to health and food security). UNHCR (2017:77) states that:

The earliest global response to the ongoing humanitarian emergency in Syria was the inter-agency Regional Response Plan (RRP) that brought together over 100 stakeholders between UN agencies and NGOs to foster bilateral and multilateral assistance to the host countries and communities. The Syrian Regional Response Plan was first adopted in 2012 to raise resources to sustain emergency assistance and relief efforts. The RRP was aimed at improving access to health, education, shelter, water, and sanitation as well as ensuring food security for refugees to reduce the pressure on the already frail host communities and countries.
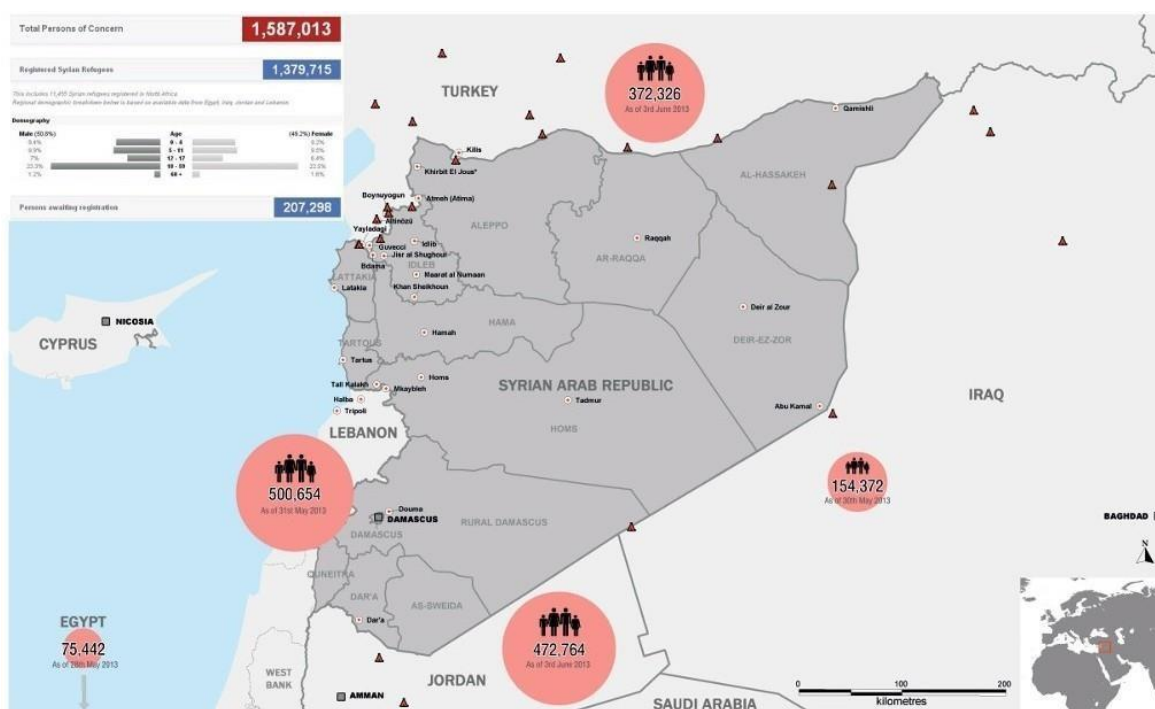

Fig 5.4. The above map by the UNHCR (2017) shows the number of registered refugees in Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan in 2015. (Between 2013 and 2015 the numbers have doubled).

Since the beginning of the Syrian civil conflict, the government of Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt have largely continued to demonstrate their commitment to giving Syrian refugees access to their territory and to ensure their safety. But the heavy burden on their infrastructure and resources also continues to grow as the conflict progresses (Berti 2015:49). The institutions and resources of these countries have been stretched to their limits. The RRP was the best response to the Syrian humanitarian emergency by the international community but the resources were not sufficient for the refugee crisis in Syria (Berti 2015:49). From a CTS perspective, war is an expensive exercise, hence it is recommended that counterinsurgency efforts should focus on addressing the conditions that engender conflicts than mobilising and

deploying military resources to resolve a conflict by force (Stern 2018:24). Humanitarian intervention is regarded by CTS proponents as a critical aspect of counterviolence that requires more resources than any other form of intervention especially when the conflict is multidimensional and indecisive. Urgent humanitarian mechanisms are necessary not only to help the stranded refugee communities in the neighbouring countries but also helpful for both host communities/countries and the refugee communities. This is because the refugee crisis can also fuel pre-existing political, sectarian, and socioeconomic tensions between host and refugee communities.

In 2014, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2165 on the Syrian crisis. The resolution authorized the UN to deliver cross-border humanitarian aid through Jordan, Turkey and Iraq without the consent of the Syrian government and established a monitoring mechanism to monitor implementation (UNHCR 2017:61). The resolution also reaffirmed the primary responsibility of the Syrian authorities to protect the population. This humanitarian effort focused largely on maintaining human security within the refugee communities by providing protection, shelter, water and food, and so on to stranded refugees in host countries (UNHCR 2017:61). As the refugee crisis continued to increase in scale and complexity with a large number of refugees (85 per cent) hosted in low and middle-income countries. The international community acknowledged the overwhelming need to share the responsibility of hosting and supporting Syria's growing number of refugees more equitably (UNHCR 2017:61). The end year report of the UNHCR (2021:6) states that:

> *The UNHCR developed a Three-Year-Strategy (2019 – 2021), an initiative to resettle refugees by transferring them from the country where they have sought protection to another country that has agreed to admit them, as refugees, with permanent residence status. Resettlement is regarded by the UNHCR as an invaluable protection tool to meet specific needs of refugees in which life, liberty, safety, health or fundamental human rights are at heightened risk. Emergency or urgent resettlement is also meant to ensure the security of refugees who are threatened with refoulment to the country of origin, or those whose physical safety is seriously threatened in the country in which they have sought refuge.*

UN member states and non-state stakeholders are also making efforts to ensure that justice prevails in Syria. For instance, on 21 December 2016, the United Nations General Assembly

adopted resolution 71/248. The resolution established the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) to assist in the investigation and prosecution of persons responsible for the most serious crimes under international law committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 (UNHCR 2021:5). The mandate of IIIM, as stated in the resolution is to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyse evidence of violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and human rights violations and abuses. As well as to prepare files to facilitate and expedite fair and independent criminal proceedings, following international law standards, in national, regional or international courts or tribunals that have or may in the future have jurisdiction over these crimes, following international law. The IIIM seeks to support accountability processes aimed at bringing about justice for the victims of serious international crimes committed in Syria since March 2011 (UNHCR 2021:5). The end year report of the UNHCR (2021:5) states that:

> *Following the loss of territorial control by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2019, the UN member states have managed to secure admissible evidence to ensure prosecution for terrorist crimes, upholding the rights and needs of victims and rehabilitating liberated communities. As well as to protect and de-radicalize thousands of men, women, and children with suspected links to the ISIL currently in camps and detention facilities, including foreign terrorist fighters and their dependents.*

The IS was officially defeated in Syria and Iraq in March 2019, the majority of the territories that were previously under the control of IS have been liberated and civilians have been moved to the UN refugee camps since most of the towns are uninhabitable. However, there is still much to be done in Syria and Iraq. For instance, as of 2021, only about half of the Syrian population is under the control of the Syrian regime, nearly 13.4 million civilians are in serious need of humanitarian assistance (Jeffrey, 2021:7). The UN, individual states, and other international organizations are at the forefront of providing humanitarian relief to the Syrian and Iraqi affected populations and launching initiatives to ensure non-resurgence of IS as well as addressing the refugee crisis in the region. According to the tenth report of the UN Secretary-General (2020):

Despite the general reluctance amongst the UN member states to repatriate citizens that are stranded in refugee camps in Syria and Iraq, there have been considerable efforts by some member states to repatriate stranded citizens. There are several initiatives and programmes to improve international cooperation within member states that have been put in place, this includes the Accra Initiative, launched by Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. The initiative aims at addressing threats of terrorism and transnational organized crime in the region, facilitating the creation of a platform to exchange information and intelligence between the police, the gendarmerie and the security services. The UN Counter-Terrorism Centre is launching a joint project with INTERPOL for implementation in 2020 to facilitate the exchange of information on foreign terrorist fighters in Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East. The implementation of the multi-agency United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme launched in May 2019 has begun in several pilot States.

The Syrian refugee crisis had a significant impact on human security which including the protection and wellbeing of the refugee population. From a CTS perspective, the legal, psychological, and physical protection of the refugee population is as essential as the shelter and food supplies. UNHCR (2021:15) states that the UN estimates that up to 85 per cent of Syrian refugees live outside of refugee camps, scattered in both urban and rural settings with little or no access at all to health and education facilities.

CTS as a counterinsurgency framework is fundamentally interested in understanding how social challenges interact with each other in a certain fashion and produce conditions and a climate that is conducive for violence or "terrorism". For instance, lack of adequate infrastructure in middle-income countries aggravated by the refugee influx has also had direct repercussions on the states' capacity to deliver social services, where the host countries' health and educational systems, especially in the cases of Lebanon and Jordan, are stretched beyond their limits (Jeffrey, 2021:9). A decent livelihood and employment are also necessary for the refugee population. For instance, the massive refugee flows have in some cases resulted in the saturation of the job market in middle-income countries, with a widespread perception in host communities that refugees have contributed to both a general rise in unemployment rates along with a decrease in wages (Jeffrey 2021:10-11). According to Jeffrey (2021:10-11), vulnerable groups are especially women and girls, particularly women who fled

Syria alone or with their children are vulnerable to sexual and verbal harassment, as well as to a heightened risk of other forms of violence or abuse. Children, particularly unaccompanied minors, are another especially vulnerable group, with insecure and impoverished living conditions. Children are exposed to various forms of exploitation, from child labour to sexual violence, to recruitment and employment by armed and criminal groups. Child marriage has also become increasingly common among Syrians since the beginning of the war. The end year report of UNHCR (2021:16) states that:

Despite the high level of attention paid to the tremendous scale of need for more resources, substantial resource gaps remain. Those resource gaps have consequences. The UNHCR and the World Food Programme, both of which are critical to aid delivery in frontline states, face funding shortfalls that have resulted in housing and food insecurity. This lack of institutional support, coupled with deepening poverty and hurdles to legal residency, led hundreds of thousands of refugees to make their way to Europe and other parts of the world, often at great personal risk.
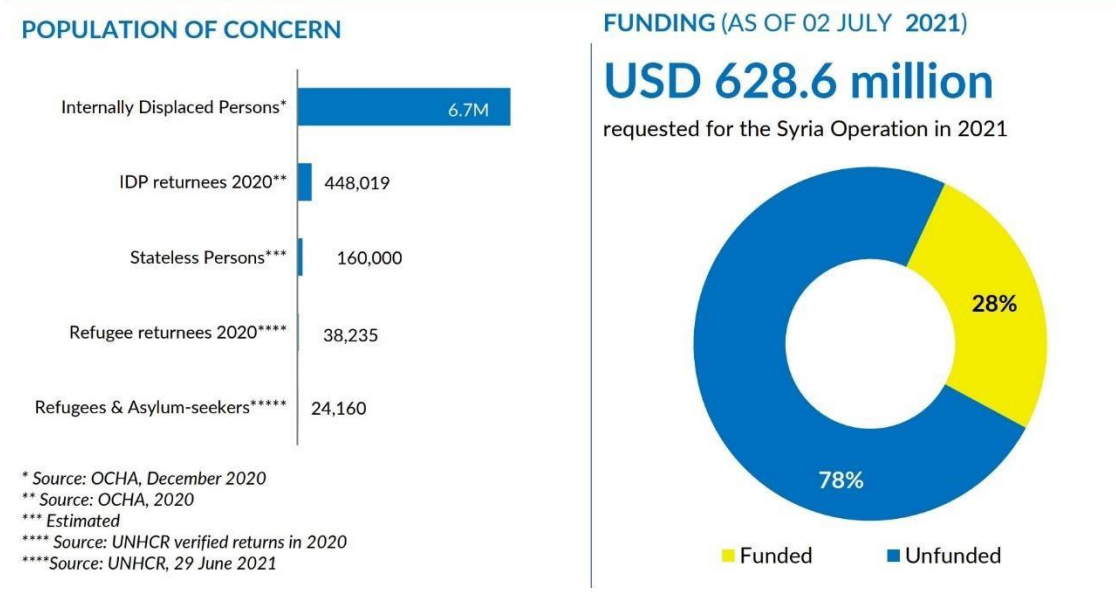
Fig 5.5. The above graph and chat by the UNHCR (2021) show different categories of refugee populations in need of humanitarian aid and the funding requested as of 2021.

Global politics and international relations have been reshaped and influenced by the mass Syrian refugee crisis as a result of the ongoing Syrian conflict in the Middle East, largely in ways that strain the transatlantic relations, for example, Brexit and the rise of extreme forms of populism (Jeffrey 2021:21). The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) was established

in 2015 as a coordination platform including neighbouring countries (with the exception of Israel) and Egypt. By 2016, various nations (including the UK which had granted asylum to 5,102 refugees and announced plans to accept 20,000 more refugees over the period of 5 years), had made pledges to the UNHCR to permanently absorb and resettle about 170,000 registered refugees (UNHCR 2017:61). Syrian refugees have contributed to the European migrant crisis with the UNHCR receiving almost one million asylum applicants in Europe by August 2017. The UK government has been severely criticised by the public for accepting Syrian refugees. This was evidenced by the results of the YouGov votes conducted by the British charity Islamic Relief, which showed that 42% of respondents voted that Britain should not take in any more foreign nationals fleeing conflicts in their own countries (Jeffrey 2021:21).

The contribution of modern technology to the improvement of human life has not only produced desirable results but has also benefited other elements of life that threaten the stability of societies. Insurgent groups are benefitting immensely from new technological innovations, therefore, creating an overwhelming need for greater cooperation amongst nation-states to ensure a successful fight against "terrorism" around the world. The IS is a self-financing organization, it depends on various economic activities to generate income (as discussed in chapters two and four). Over the years the group has not only demonstrated incontestable ability to generate profit, but also the ability to move cash from one point to another through illegal means using electronic banking systems and physically (*Hawala* system). Seemingly, this is acknowledged by the international community as evidenced by the initiatives undertaken by the UN and other international organizations. As the UN Secretary General (2020) report suggests that:

> *New technologies, such as crypto-currencies and mobile payment systems, offer new easy ways for terrorists to move money. Hence the United Nations Security Council has mandated the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to protect financial systems from terrorist take over to discourage the financing of terrorist organizations. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Development Programme, in joint partnership with the European Union, launched the Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism (STRIVE), a programme to support member states in Central and South-East Asia. The United Nations supports several integrated assistance*

counterterrorism initiatives to fight the resurgence of the Islamic State in North, Central, and West Africa.

The rise of IS in 2014 in the Middle East had presented several challenges to the governments of the region and the Western states. Amongst other things, the governments had mobilized resources to roll back the territorial gains of IS through coalition airstrikes and boosted local forces (Iraqi and Kurdish), as well as undertaken initiatives to limit finances of self-funded IS (quasi-state). The territorial defeat of IS was achieved by the US-led coalition alongside Kurdish forces in March 2019. However, most of the challenges caused by IS and the Syrian civil war remain unresolved in the Middle East and other parts of the world. UNHCR (2021:18) states that the refugee crisis created by the Syrian civil war is one of the major consequences of the war that extends beyond the borders of Syria and even the Middle East. Now in its 11th year, the Syrian refugee crisis remains the world's largest refugee and displacement crisis of the 21st century. About 6.8 million Syrians are refugees and asylum seekers and another 6.7 million people are displaced within Syria. UNHCR (2021:18) states that about 13.5 million Syrians in total are forcibly displaced, more than half of the country's population. Nearly 11.1 million people in Syria need humanitarian assistance and about half of the people affected by the Syrian refugee crisis are children. 11 years after the onset of the Syrian civil conflict, the international community has not mobilised enough resources to address the Syrian refugee crisis and the civil war at large. However, from a CTS perspective, the fundamental concern is not necessarily the lack of resources but the misuse and misallocation of resources by the powerful and wealthy governments of the world such as the US, Russia and the UK. A tremendous amount of resources have been allocated and used for military purposes in Syria, often unnecessary and sometimes for military contestation or proxy war, further exacerbating the situation rather than providing humanitarian aid. The ensuing section discusses the effects of the response of the international community on IS itself, human rights and international law.

5.3.2 Effects of the Response of the International Community on IS, Human Rights and International Law

The purpose of this section is to discuss and analyse how the response of the international community against IS has affected IS itself, the human rights of both innocent civilians and IS members, as well as international law. The response of the international community against

IS was based almost entirely on extraordinary military violence mainly in the form of coalition airstrikes and to a lesser extent ground combat. From the data, it has been found that heavy Western military force did not only affect IS and its economic activities but human rights and international law as well. These violations sometimes occurred indirectly and unintentionally within the context of the international community's attempt to pursue justice for the victims and hold the perpetrators accountable.

5.3.2.1 IS under Heavy Western Military Attack

The IS is a very resistant and persistent organization, such was evidenced by the battle of Mosul and the Raqqa campaign. During the Mosul and Raqqa campaigns both the Iraqi and Syrian government forces together with various allied militia groups and international forces (US-led coalition) subjected the IS to suppressive military fire in an attempt to drive it out of its strongholds both in Syria and Iraq (Tan and Perudin 2019:9). These military confrontations are regarded as the world's largest military operations since the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the toughest urban warfare since the Second World War (Tan and Perudin 2019:9). From this one may surmise that IS is a very tough militant group in that even when it found itself in the midst of extreme suppressive military fire it did not crumble and deteriorate instantly. Instead, IS remained and fought in Mosul and Raqqa for several months before it eventually retreated to more secluded remote areas of Syria and Iraq with the hope to continue fighting by other means possible. According to the tenth report of the UN Secretary-General (2020):

> *Between 2016 and 2019 when ISIL was faced with the full military might of the US-led coalition that resulted in its defeat in its strongholds inside Syria and Iraq. The organization remained reliant on ISIL inspired attacks outside of Syria and Iraq to demonstrate its relevance while simultaneously working to re-establish its former capacity to direct complex international operations. The group continued to conduct economic activities in certain remote areas in Iraq and increased its activities and presence in some secluded parts of the Syrian Arab Republic. Although, the group had lost a huge number of fighters due to the military pressure it endured both in Syria and Iraq from 2016 to 2019, due to its increasing ability to recruit and train fighters online (mainly Foreign Terrorist Fighters). ISIL remains a serious challenge and poses a short, medium, and long-term threat to global peace and stability.*

The IS first conquered Raqqa which it named as its first capital and eventually the Iraqi city of Mosul where the group declared its caliphate. It took the international community nearly a year of sustained combat to free the two cities from the grasp of IS (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:6). In addition to training and arming the Iraqi forces and a few Kurdish and Arab militia groups regarded by the US as "moderate forces", the US-led coalition embarked on a relentless campaign of airstrikes to dislodge the IS fighters. In the process, both the city of Raqqa and the old city of Mosul were nearly obliterated and the livelihoods of local citizens were violently destructed (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:6). According to (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:6):

> *Between October 2016 and October 2017 from the beginning of the campaign for Mosul until the end of that for Raqqa, the US-led coalition dropped 46,683 air released munitions in Iraq and Syria. The US military alone fired 29, 000 munitions including bombs and land-fired rockets and artillery in support of Iraqi security forces in Mosul.*

The fight for Mosul is regarded as the world's largest military operation since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, which was the heaviest urban combat since the Second World War and the destruction resembled that of Dresden, Germany. Former US Secretary of Defence James Mattis characterized the fight as a "war of annihilation" (Tan and Perudin 2019:16). More than a year later the city of Raqqa and the city of Mosul remain in ruins and the possibility that they will be rebuilt is doubtful. UNHCR (2021:22) states that the destruction is near total, the UN estimates that almost 80 per cent of the old city of Mosul is in ruins with 8,000 homes destroyed and the tons of debris are estimated to be eight million. Raqqa is also considered unfit for human habitation with 11, 000 buildings damaged, around 70 per cent of the city. The consequences for residents are worse, like the CTS framework suggests, military violence in Syria has proven self-defeating in that it has facilitated the same thing it was meant to prevent (human suffering). The relentless and non-discriminatory bombings and the lack of independent investigations rendered the efforts unfit to be regarded as successful counterterrorism in that the damage it has caused in the civil communities of Syria and Iraq is seemingly senseless and irreversible. For instance, families are still struggling to give dignified funerals to their loved ones since thousands of dead bodies are still believed to remain buried in the rubble caused by the bombings. UNHCR (2021:25) states that the

wreckage of both cities is littered with leftovers of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and unburied corpses. The people of Raqqa and Mosul struggle to remake the homes they lost as they were caught between the brutal rule of the IS and the "war of annihilation" launched by the coalition campaign. More than 24 months after IS's defeat, at a time whereby (at least according to CTS) an important part of counterterrorism work ought to begin not only to ensure a non-resurgence of IS. But also, to rehabilitate the affected communities, give emotional and psychological support as well as restore and rebuild affected cities and residential areas. Life in many places that are victims of US-led coalition bombings remain frozen in time at a moment just after the last bombs fell, the fires went out, and the US-led coalition declared victory and moved on. Hence, the CTS insists that the world community should hold accountable all the states involved in the destruction of Mosul and Raqqa in the name of counterterrorism, especially because the destruction of these two cities and surrounding communities did not deliver the complete defeat of IS (only territorial defeat).

Despite the territorial defeat of IS by the US-led coalition in March 2019, due to a variety of factors including amongst other things the group's strategy of expanding to various parts of the world through inspiring small Islamic irregular warfare groups especially in developing countries to secure geopolitical influence. In recent years, Africa and Asia have seen a growing number home grown irregular warfare groups that are connected to IS, such as the Rajah Solaiman Islamic Movement (RSIM) in the Philippines, Islamic State's Central Africa Province (ISCAP) in Central Africa and others (UN Secretary-General 2020:20). These IS-affiliated organizations function almost as havens for IS members who flee Iraq and Syria when the organization is faced with heavy military pressure. In addition, these groups sometimes provide membership and training fields to the main IS organization fighting in Syria and Iraq (UN Secretary-General, 2020:21). It is evident that during a period of severe military pushback, the IS did not only ensure that it continued fighting by all means necessary, such as relying on IS-inspired attacks and Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) for external attacks. But it also ensured that the organization continued to recruit and train members in any way possible, especially because during severe military pushbacks the group often experienced a huge loss of fighters. According to the UN Secretary-General (2020:24) report:

> *In Asia, since ISIL had been expelled from its Afghan headquarters in Nangarhar*
> *Province following the severe military pressure that it received from the Afghanistan*

security forces and the Taliban fighters towards the end of 2019. The Afghan government had managed to arrest about 1400 ISIL fighters with different nationalities including Afghans. However, ISIL continued to inspire Islamic irregular warfare groups across the globe including Africa in countries such as Libya, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Somalia, Egypt, Lake Chad, Nigeria, Mozambique and Central Africa.

European member states of the United Nations also noted that in Europe ISIL members continue to use various online platforms and encrypted internet applications to connect, recruit and radicalize especially during a defensive stage. IS is also making means through the internet and Foreign Terrorist Fighters to connect with terrorists or prisoners who are set to be released in 2020 due to challenges posed by COVID-19 in prisons.

In the past decade, it has been difficult to imagine the Middle East politically without IS in the picture. It all started in early 2013 when IS (then known as the Islamic State of Iraq) first poured across the thinly guarded Iraqi-Syrian border and quickly captured a huge chunk of Iraq and rendered the national borders between the two countries irrelevant (Stergiou 2016:12). To a certain extent, the group had played a significant role in fuelling the political turmoil that had gripped the region since the onset of the Arab Spring. In addition to the ongoing Syrian war that has destabilised the Middle East, IS launched the Islamic state (Caliphate) in June 2014 that resulted in foreign intervention in Syria and Iraq and further complicated the politics of the region. Amongst other warring parties, IS had incontestably played a leading role in the Syrian civil war. Just when the United States and its P5 partners (UNSC) were very close to a nuclear diplomatic breakthrough in 2013 with Iran. The IS launched an irregular warfare campaign into Syria and back to Iraq signalling an emergence of a new force in the Middle East (Stergiou 2016:12). Despite the reluctance of the international community to respond to the IS in a fashion that acknowledged that the organization is unique and pernicious more than any other irregular warfare group in modern history. The above revelations are testament to the fact that to a certain extent IS is a hybrid organisation that combines guerrilla tactics, military precision, religious ideology, and technological and bureaucratic innovations. From a CTS perspective, the international

community was obsessed with military force, so much so that it missed the opportunity to learn and respond to some of the hidden capabilities of IS, which emerged only once the group was under heavy military attack. These include capabilities such as recruiting and training IS fighters online and connecting with IS-inspired groups outside Syria and Iraq. As well as sourcing fighters from these groups and relying on IS-inspired attacks as a way of continuing fighting when the organization was unable to fight actually inside Syria and Iraq due to severe military pushbacks. Hence, because the militaristic counterinsurgency strategy that was adopted by the international community against IS failed to acknowledge and address each of these layers. The strategy was not only time and resource-consuming, but also detrimental to the livelihood of the local populations (of Syria and Iraq). Part of the reason as far as CTS is concerned is that military violence is a very insensitive approach to many if not all challenges of modern societies. This is due to the ambiguity that surrounds military violence especially when it is directed towards a society that has an unattractive historical relationship with the party that sponsored the violence. The following section discusses and analyses how the response of the international community against IS had affected the human rights of both innocent civilians and IS members.

5.3.2.2 Human Rights Violations in Syria and Iraq

The purpose of this discussion is to describe and explain how the response of the international community against IS both in Syria and Iraq had, directly and indirectly, violated the human rights of IS fighters and innocent civilians. The IS fighters and Iraqi civilians that were suspected to have a connection with IS suffered human rights violations in the hands of the Iraqi government, the judicial and police system in particular. The human rights violations occurred within the context of the Iraqi government's attempt to prosecute those regarded as "terrorists". The trials were held in Iraq whereby a significant number of individuals appeared in the court of law for various crimes and were tried under various anti-terrorism laws including death penalties. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2020:11) report points out that:

> *The main concerns amongst other things were the violations of fair trial standards relating to equality before the court of law and conduct of hearings in particular as a result of ineffective legal representation. Lack of adequate time and facilities to*

prepare a case and the limited possibility to challenge prosecution evidence cumulatively placed the defendant at a serious disadvantage compared to the prosecution. Overreliance on confessions, with frequent allegations of torture or illtreatment that were inadequately addressed by courts and that on their own constituted human rights violation and further contributed to the disadvantaged position of defendants.

The imposition of the death penalty following unfair trials, practical restrictions on the publicity of hearings, lack of victim attendance in court proceedings, and overreliance on a charge of membership of a terrorist organization limited the possibility for victims and their families. As well as the general public, to see the perpetrators being held to account, and failed to expose the full range of crimes committed.

From the above revelations, one can surmise that the Iraqi government and the judicial system's response to the IS fighters did not only violate the human rights of the IS members and individuals that were suspected to have connections with the organization. But the Iraqi government and judiciary system had also successfully managed to violate the human rights of the general public including victims of IS by denying them access to the courts of law during the trials of IS members. Anti-terrorism laws that made the death penalty mandatory for a wide range of acts that did not even meet the most serious crimes threshold, which is necessary for imposing such a sentence, were used as a blanket/all-round approach (UNAMI and UNHCHR 2020:11). From a CTS perspective, one can conclude that the strategy adopted by the international community to respond to IS in Syria and Iraq both its militaristic approach and non-military approach were self-defeating and ineffective. In its attempt to bring perpetrators to justice the Iraqi judiciary system institutionalized and facilitated not only the abuse of the human rights of those regarded as "terrorists" but also subjected the victims to unimaginable human rights abuse. This signalled that in Syria and Iraq currently there is no possibility of "real" humanitarian assistance that will not only focus on providing food supplies in the refugee camps. But also consider the mental health-related issues and justice for the affected communities especially coming from the Syrian and Iraqi governments. The above findings vindicate the position of the CTS approach which is that concepts such as "terrorism", "self-defence", "war-sustaining targets" and many others that inform or determine

counterinsurgency policies and strategies, ought to be explicitly defined and carefully contextualised. To avoid ill-informed counterinsurgency actions that often endanger innocent lives and sometimes reproduce more "terrorists" (Stern 20210:11). For instance, in the case of Iraq whereby prosecutions were informed by an anti-terrorism legal framework with an overly broad and vague definition of terrorism and related offences that focused on association with or membership in a terrorist organization. Without sufficiently distinguishing between those who participated in violence and those who joined IS for survival or through coercion, and failure to distinguish degrees of underlying culpability has resulted in widespread institutionalised human rights violations.

Seemingly, the Iraqi government was not the only government that violated the human rights of the general public in its attempt to eliminate IS and bring perpetrators to justice. The Syrian government has also contributed immensely to the violations of economic and social rights of the Syrian population particularly in areas that were under the control of IS and other militia groups. These violations occurred within the context of the Syrian government's attempt to roll back IS's territorial gains. From the data, the Syrian government security forces, the Military Intelligence Directorate, and the Military Police emerged as the main perpetrators of human rights violations against the Syrian population. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (2020) report states that:

> *Violations of human rights by the Syrian authorities include arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, extreme torture, sexual violence, and death in detention as well as several cases of economic and social rights violations. Other violations include deprivation of access to clean water, electricity, and fuel to areas that were previously under IS control. In addition to the rapidly deepening economic and currency crisis as a result of the outbreak of the global pandemic (COVID-19) which resulted in deepening poverty and socio-economic inequalities. The Syrian National Army facilitated the appropriation and seizing of land, property, and houses by force and subjected a considerable number of civilians to sexual violence, torture, and abduction.*

These findings do not only confirm that the Syrian government had failed to deploy an effective strategy against the IS in Syria and also to provide rehabilitation and justice to the affected communities. But they also easily expose the inability of the Syrian regime to go

beyond the sectarian divide (mainly Sunni and Alawite/Shia) in Syria and reach out to all citizens despite ethnicity and religion. Although the civil conflict in Syria was not necessarily sparked by sectarian issues. The violation of human rights, economic marginalization and the general discontent with the Assad regime which are believed to be the triggers of the Syrian civil war have some sectarian dimensions and they have played a significant role in shaping the conflict (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:16). The Sunni population as the majority group in Syria constituted a large membership of various rebel groups including the IS particularly in places such as Homs and Raqqa. The Sunni majority group in Syria have suffered the violence of IS like any other group, however, some Sunni leaders that broke away from the Shi'a led government of Assad supported IS in many places. As a result, Sunni communities paid the steepest price in Syria as they suffered unimaginable violence and disposition at the hands of the Syrian government military personnel (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:6).

Human rights violations in Syria and Iraq did not only manifest themselves through violence and inadequate legal representation, but they also took a variety of forms including lack of access to basic education. From the data, it has been found that in Iraq in particular, access to post-primary education for children and young adults who lived in areas under IS control between 2014 and 2017 is still hindered by a variety of factors. Such factors include amongst others, lack of required documentation, inadequate schools and so on. The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2020) report points out that:

> *Children and young adults who lived in areas previously controlled or influenced by ISIL have accumulated a substantial gap in their schooling due to years of missed education and also face challenges in obtaining the civil documentation required to enrol in formal schooling. As such, in the post-conflict context, children from these communities continue to experience a range of barriers to their access to education. After missing years of education under ISIL, these children are now young adults and further disadvantaged by the insufficient number of schools which tend to be underequipped and with inadequate teaching hours. Those residing in refugee camps also suffer from movement restrictions and a lack of civil documentation. Many children who were not in school when living under ISIL control are now young adults, making them too old to attend mainstream schools and are left with no alternative options.*

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From a CTS perspective, these findings are crucial in that they are a reminder to counterinsurgency policymakers that counterterrorism work does not end when a "terrorist" group is defeated on the ground. In fact, CTS suggests that the most critical part of counterinsurgency work begins when the insurgents have been defeated on the ground. Initiatives to rehabilitate, de-radicalize, re-educate, disarm, and put in place development and infrastructure projects to comprehensively redress grievances caused by insurgent organizations in the communities should be rolled out. This is because these challenges tend to reproduce extremist tendencies in a long run. For instance, in the case of Iraq and Syria, these challenges might create a new generation of marginalized children and young adults, many of whom will enter adulthood with no sense of belonging. The obvious consequences of marginalization would be the formation of feelings of resentment and exclusion amongst Iraqi and Syrian youth which will most definitely have a direct impact on the countries' journey towards peace and reconciliation. If some specific Syrian and Iraqi population groups perceive their governments to be discriminating against them, including denying them access to education, it might serve to undermine the legitimacy of the government amongst already marginalised communities. If the current system is perceived to be unjustly impacting children and youth from these communities, the authorities risk feeding the IS narrative of defending a particular community and helping to expand the IS recruitment base. In short, from a CTS standpoint, it is predictable that the implications of these shortcomings coupled with physical and sexual violence and forced removal by the National Syrian Army will result in the recreation of more "terrorist" movements. This then suggests that now that the IS has been defeated militarily on the ground, meaningful and progressive counterterrorism work is yet to kickstart in Syria and Iraq. This should be a counterterrorism strategy that is communitybased to ensure the non-resurgence of IS or any potential irregular warfare group and local support. This is especially necessary for the Sunni areas of Western Iraq where the IS allied with local Sunni leaders who had broken away from the Shi'a led government in Baghdad to help create the caliphate. The ensuing section discusses and analyses the effects of the international community's response against IS on international law and state sovereignty.

5.3.2.3 Violation of International Law.

The US-led anti-IS military campaign played a significant role in the ultimate territorial defeat of IS in March 2019. Although the campaign was largely based on aerial attacks, ground combat was eventually undertaken by the US-sponsored Kurds and Arab militia groups such as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), receiving arms, military training and reconnaissance from the US and a few Western and Middle Eastern-based states (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:7). It is also discernible that to a certain extent the military interventions undermined and disregarded international law and the sovereignty of Iraq and Syria especially the latter. Syria had not requested military intervention on a domestic crisis that began as a civil protest and later took a form of a civil war. A coalition of 68 countries was engaged in international efforts to counter IS, the United States had led airstrikes against IS in Iraq from 8 August 2014 and the operations were extended into Syria by the end of September 2014 (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:11). (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:11) states that:

> *Beginning in August 2014, the United States assisted by a handful of other Western and Arab countries carried out thousands of bombing sorties and cruise missile attacks against ISIS targets in Iraq and Syria. Iraq had consented to the airstrikes in its territory but Syria had not and Russia initially blocked the UN Security Council from authorizing force against ISIS in Syria. The United States used several legal arguments to justify its actions, including the right to humanitarian intervention, Responsibility to Protect (R2P), the right to use force in failed states, and the right to hot pursuit, before finally settling on self-defence.*

Military intervention in Iraq was legitimate since the Iraqi government had officially requested military aid from the international community to get rid of terrorist elements on Iraqi soil. However, it is also considered that the commencement of the aerial attacks on the night of September 22 in Syria introduced new legal issues relating to the legality of American interventions in the Syrian conflict. These include questions regarding the criteria that was applied to determine and justify the extent of bombings required in Syria. It is understood that part of the reason that was used to justify the attacks under IHL was that any object (individuals, infrastructure, vehicles etc.) that sustained or provided a military advantage to the "terrorists" is subject to attack. Hence, two weeks after the commencement of the campaign several mobile oil refineries that belonged to IS were attacked in Syria (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:3). This bombing campaign was illegitimate for many reasons but most

importantly because according to IHL military confrontation of "terrorists" that operate within the national borders of a sovereign state by the international community or individual states is prohibited. Unless or until "terrorists" are in full control of the country and the sovereign state has officially requested military intervention. This means that concepts such as R2P, collective or individual self-defence cannot be applied by individuals or groups of foreign states to justify the pursuit of military violence against "terrorists" that operate in another sovereign country. Unless they are invited to do so and authorised by the UN Security Council. In addition, from a CTS perspective, R2P is understood as a principle that does not necessarily grant power to the international community members to intervene in domestic affairs of other states that are regarded by them as "terrorist threats". Instead, it gives responsibility to the international community to intervene in situations whereby a sovereign state is violating the human rights of its own citizens. The international community is given a right to assume responsibility to defend human rights and prevent genocides, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and so on (Weiss and Nicole 2019:11). Therefore, R2P as a principle of international law was not fully applicable or necessary in the context of the ongoing Syrian civil war. Because the conflict originated as a domestic political crisis before it developed into a civil war and only to be soon complicated and broadened in scope by the intervention of external forces. The main external actors in the conflict include foreign powers such as the US, Russia, the UK, France and a few Middle Eastern-based Arab countries as well as various Islamic irregular warfare groups.

The airstrikes that were conducted by the coalition aircraft included several obvious targets such as enemy leaders and fighters, command posts, logistics facilities, and military vehicles. However, the problem was the targeting of IS-controlled oil refineries located in remote areas of Eastern Syria. These oil facilities were first attacked on the night of September 24, 2014, by the military forces of the US, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Although, the targets were rendered inoperable, but not completely destroyed with the hope that they might be brought back into production in the future by Syrian opposition groups. The rationale for the attacks was that these small-scale refineries provided fuel to run IS operations, money to finance their continued attacks throughout Iraq and Syria, and were an economic asset to support future operations. However, from a CTS perspective what was dangerously problematic in that event was the frustratingly vague interpretation of the war

sustaining concept used to justify these attacks which endangered innocent lives. What the war sustaining concept neglected to acknowledge was that many IS-controlled oil refineries that were bombed in Syria and Iraq were not operated by IS members. This is because IS did not have enough members with the necessary skills to operate even the smallest oil refinery facility. Instead, it relied on civilians/professionals who worked in the same stations before they were captured by IS, these individuals were often forced to work in the station whilst their families were held hostage. The lack of professionals within IS was evidenced by the call made by former IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi for doctors, teachers, judges, engineers etc. to help run the newly formed caliphate in 2014 (Hassan 2018:15).

The use of force in self-defence has traditionally not been viewed as lawful against non-state actors operating within a sovereign state unless they are under the effective control of that state. However, the United States argued that in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks by al Qaeda, such force can be justified where a government is unable or unwilling to suppress the threat posed by non-state actors operating within its borders. Cafarella *et al* (2019:18) states that:

> *The US military intervention in the Syrian civil conflict especially the targeting of ISIS was not initially accepted by Russia, China, or even the United Kingdom. However, that changed in the aftermath of IS attacks against a Russian jetliner and a Paris stadium and concert hall in 2015. Leading to the unanimous adoption of a UN Security Council resolution calling on States to use all necessary measures to fight ISIS in Syria without offering a legal basis for military action.*

From the above revelations, one could deduce that the authorization of military intervention by the UNSC without any legal grounds was a fundamental paradigm shift that will have broad and long-term implications for international law. The shift in international law especially during times of crisis justify and allow for more liberal use of military violence against irregular warfare groups. From a CTS perspective, the UNSC's authorization of military intervention in the Syrian civil war in the absence of apparent legal basis is an example of factors that contribute to the normalization of military violence as the main counterterrorism approach. But most importantly, it also demonstrates how the UNSC undermines itself and its authority

and powers to defend international law and norms and human rights, therefore, leaving them vulnerable to violations by the UN member states. The use of excessive and unreasonable amounts of military violence especially explosive power in selected Syrian and Iraqi communities such as Mosul and Raqqa in the name of counter IS was a direct result of the UNSC's authorization of military intervention without well-founded legal grounds. The current mass Syrian refugee crisis that is regarded as the biggest humanitarian crisis of our time since the end of the Second World War can also be regarded as a direct result of the UNSC's decision to allow the US-led coalition to obliterate IS-occupied cities and render them inhabitable. According to Ogunnowo and Chidozie (2020:8), almost all cities that were once under the control of IS both in Syria and Iraq have been declared inhabitable by the UN not as a result of once being under the control of IS but as a result of the tremendous level of bombings undertaken by the US-led coalition. From a CTS perspective, military violence especially aerial attacks in Syria and Iraq have created something worse than what it was intended to resolve.

The dynamics of the military campaign in Syria were very complex as the IS had increasingly lost territory, operations to retake Mosul and Raqqa had been conducted and regional actors such as Turkey had made efforts to secure spheres of influence in the region. Russia's participation and support for Assad's regime complicated the situation in Syria making the line between the campaigns to defeat IS and the Syrian civil conflict becomes even more blurry (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:5). To build the capacity of local forces on the ground, offensive military actions in Iraq and Syria by the US-led coalition have focused largely on onair operations in support of those local forces, providing intelligence, reconnaissance, surveillance, and attack capabilities (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:5). From the data, it has been discovered that part of the reasons that rendered the US-led military campaign against IS controversial is not only the amount of military violence that had been unleashed towards the IS. But the contradictions that were seen in the campaign, as amongst others Ogunnowo and Chidozie (2020:6) has pointed out that:

> *The US-led military campaign against ISIL in Syria and Iraq is full of internal contradictions. While both Syria and Iraq constitute one single stage of Operations for Inherent Resolve (OIR), there is a considerable difference between the two in terms of the nature of the adversary, the countries involved, the US strategy, and the politicomilitary dynamics of the respective conflicts.*

Although there was some shift in the US policy and attitude after it was written when the threat of the IS was greater as the United States abandoned its mission of regime change in Syria to concentrate on destroying the IS in close cooperation with the Russians. The contradiction and inconsistency in the campaign remained. The Trump administration largely maintained the Syria policy inherited from the Obama administration (Abratt 2020:20). Although the United States had stated clearly that its ultimate goal is to see Bashar al-Assad being deposed that goal diminished gradually because, since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the United States had elected not to intervene openly in the conflict. Former President Obama saw no way of using US troop deployments to exert a decisive influence on the course of what is both a civil war and a proxy war and is wary of a "mission creep" into the conflict. Thus, Washington had since then limited itself to providing training and equipment, both limited in scope, to a small number of "moderate" rebels, as well as supporting the diplomatic process, which was a failure at the Montreux conference in 2014 (Abratt 2020:20). In Iraq, the United States aimed at shaping the course of the war, whilst in Syria was not the case, the struggle against IS in Iraq is a continuation of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which continued after the United States retreat in December 2011. The parties involved and apart from a few exceptions, their motivations remained largely the same as in 2006 and 2007, the most intense period of the US occupation. There is no doubt that the United States carried a special responsibility for the country, moreover, in terms of international law, this operation was based on an explicit request by the Iraqi government in Baghdad. This solid political and legal basis has cleared the way for an international coalition that also included several Western partners including Canada, the UK, France, Denmark, and Germany with varying degrees of involvement. However, Arab states participation was very limited. Given the Shi'ite-led government in Baghdad and the presence of Iranian military advisors, the involvement of the Syrian coalition would in any way be quite improbable. Unlike in Syria, there is a political objective to the mission in Iraq that could potentially be shared by all parties and factions opposed to the IS. A reformed and functioning, federal Iraqi state within its international borders and free from an existential threat from the IS. Essentially an improved status quo compared to 2011 and unlike in Syria, the IS in Iraq was not a purely military threat. The advance of the IS in the summer of 2014 and its deeply entrenched support in Sunni strongholds such as Fallujah can largely be attributed to the Sunni-backed revolt against the

Shi'ite led central government in Iraq. Thus, the key to success for the United States was a sound compromise and power-sharing agreement involving the various population groups in Iraq.

From the data, it appears that the legal basis for the military intervention both in Syria and Iraq are contested. Disagreement in the interpretation of the provisions made by the UNSC regarding military coalition and conflict resolutions also played a significant role in producing an anti-IS military campaign that is questionable. In an attempt to highlight the provisions of the UNSC in relation to conflict resolution, McInnis (2016:14) states that:

> *In terms of the legal basis for the coalition, several United Nations Security Council Resolutions, in particular, 2170, 2178 and 2199 call on UN member states to take a variety of steps. This includes coalition activities such as countering terrorist financing, assisting with humanitarian relief, cutting the IS communication and assisting with stabilization support.*

Although these falls short of explicitly authorizing the use of military force against the IS. Some coalition participants have cited the Iraqi Government's letter to the UNSC requesting defence assistance and stating that Iraq faces threats from the IS safe havens in Syria as a further legal basis for participating in the military coalition. McInnis (2016:15) further argues that with regard to the US contribution to the military campaign, some observers have argued that a new Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) was required. The Obama administration maintained that it already had the necessary legal basis to prosecute the campaign through the 2001 AUMF (P.L. 107-40), and the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (2002 AUMF; P.L. 107-243). Even so, US administration officials underscored that the military campaign is only one part of the overall effort to counter the IS. Asserting that success depends upon the ability to make progress in nonmilitary areas, such as to shrink the recruitment base of terrorists through safeguarding individuals that are vulnerable to terrorist recruitment and to de-radicalize those that have succumbed to terrorist appeal. Intelligence information sharing to restrict the movement of foreign terrorist fighters, maintain a well-functioning global network that will minimise terrorism financing and so on (McInnis 2016:15). The following section concludes this chapter by summarizing the findings and analyses presented in this chapter.

5.4. Summary of the Themes, Core Aspects/Events, and Research Findings through Thematic Analysis (TA)

This section uses the below table to summarise and consolidate the findings of the chapter by highlighting the core and sub-themes identified in this chapter. The table is made up of three columns, the first column identifies the themes, the second column highlights the core aspects or events within the themes and the final column present a CTS-oriented brief response/analysis to the identified themes.

Themes identified	Core aspects/events	Research findings and response through CTS.
Response of the international community against IS in Syria and Iraq.	Militaristic and Non-Militaristic responses.	Militaristic/violent policies are aggressive and insensitive and do not eliminate "terrorism". They instead reproduce more extreme forms of "terrorisms" and "terrorists". The non-militaristic strategy was also not entirely effective, in fact, it also contributed to human rights violations (due to unjust legal processes). Syrian refugee crisis accompanied by food insecurity, lack of shelter, and no access to education are still challenges due to lack of adequate resources.
Military response	Airstrikes, IS territorial defeat, obliterated cities, mass Syrian refugee crisis, and US – Russia hostilities.	From a CTS perspective, military violence, in general, is not regarded as an effective solution to modern societal challenges. The launching of aerial attacks in the residential areas of Syria and Iraq was irresponsible and insensitive. The territorial defeat of IS came at an expense of the human security of the innocent Syrian and Iraqi citizens. The current mass Syrian refugee crisis was exacerbated by the US-led coalition bombings in Syria and Iraq that left many areas inhabitable. Despite their

		resources and strength, the US – Russia hostilities prevented the two countries from defeating IS in a short period and ending the Syrian civil war sooner.
Non-militaristic response.	UNHCR Humanitarian Aid (Food and water, protection/security, shelter and education programmes), initiatives to resolve the refugee crisis. The UNHCR Three-Year-Strategy (2019 – 2021) and Regional Response Plan (RRP) as well as initiatives to investigate perpetrators of terrorist violence, the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM).	From a CTS standpoint, Humanitarian intervention requires more resources than any other form of intervention, especially when the conflict is multidimensional and indecisive. All the initiatives were undertaken as a nonmilitaristic response were useful and necessary. However, they did not produce tangible results due to a lack of resources. Most resources have been channelled to military campaigns, as well as a general reluctance to participate and donate by some members of the international community.
Effects of the response of the international community on IS itself, human rights and international law.	Excessive military violence, IS territorial defeat, International Law, and Human Rights Violations.	The level of violence was unreasonable, destructive, and unnecessary. The international community missed the opportunity to respond to IS in a meaningful manner. In the process of trying to persecute IS members, the Syrian and Iraqi governments consciously and unconsciously committed mass violations of human rights against their citizens.

IS under heavy Western military attack.	IS surrenders Raqqa, Mosul and other territories and retreats to remote areas. The US-led coalition destroyed cities and communities. IS recruited and trained fighters online, and relied on IS-inspired attacks.	As far as CTS is concerned, heavy military violence caused much more destruction and harm to the Iraqi and Syrian societies than the IS did. Military violence was self-defeating because it exacerbated the refugee crisis and prevented the coalition from investigating the strength and weaknesses of IS and
		engaging with it meaningfully. Lack of thorough investigation on the ground resulted in large scale indiscriminate use of violence in Syria and Iraq.
Human rights violations in Syria and Iraq.	Unfair trials and death sentences, state brutality torture (including sexual violence and deat in detention), and lack of a education.	Given that violence and aggression were at the centre of the counterterrorism strategy that was adopted by the international community against IS in Syria and Iraq, according to CTS, the violation of human rights and loss of innocent lives were inescapable possibilities. The international community neglected to acknowledge that the promotion/protection of human rights and counterterrorism are two mutually reinforcing tasks. Therefore, because the human rights of the Syrian and Iraqi people were violated in the name of counterterrorism/IS. A more extreme form of terrorism could emerge from the same societies.

| Violations of International Law. | UNSC authorised military intervention in Syria without a legal basis. Violation of Syria's sovereignty (The Syrian government did not request military intervention). | CTS suggests that to avoid the violation of international law, human rights and loss of innocent lives. All the concepts that inform and determine counterterrorism policy and foreign intervention. Such as amongst others "war sustaining targets", "R2P", "terrorism", "self-defence" and so on ought to be explicitly defined and carefully contextualised. To avoid ill-informed counterinsurgency actions and the violation of the sovereignty of other nations. Because it might endanger innocent lives and sometimes reproduce more "terrorists". |

5.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, the findings on the response of the international community against IS in Syria and Iraq were discussed and analysed in detail. The findings were analysed through TA as an analytical tool to create new and original analyses of the studied phenomenon and the final results were presented as an empirical case study. The analysis tended to be more interpretive because it is shaped and influenced by CTS and concepts central to the study. The findings are collapsed into two main themes. 1) The response of the international community against IS in Syria and Iraq, the main findings under this theme are that the international community responded to IS both in Syria and Iraq with extraordinary military violence mainly in the form of airstrikes. This operation was undertaken by the US-led coalition. The response of the international community also involved non-militaristic elements such as repatriating refugees that were stuck in camps. Provide food supplies and water in areas that were severely affected by the conflict in Syria and Iraq however. There is a lack of resources and willingness by the international community member states to participate and make donations. 2) Effects of the response of the international community on IS itself, human rights and international law, under this theme three main issues, were discussed: IS is a very resilient and unpredictable organization and it has the capacity and means to continue fighting even when it finds itself in the midst of heavy military attacks. Both the Iraqi and Syrian

governments committed human rights violations on a large scale in an attempt to eliminate the IS and bring the perpetrators to justice. International law was also violated by the actions of the international community during the intervention in Syria and Iraq by misinterpreting the principles that allowed military intervention, these incidents occurred under the watch of the UN. The sixth and final chapter provides a conclusion delineating the main findings of the study and the implications for future research as well as formulate a CTS-orientated approach to understanding how action can be taken to counteract the IS and similar global terror threats in the future.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

6.1. Introduction.

In this chapter, a reflective approach is used to conclude the study by re-emphasizing the contributions of the study to the broader field of terrorism studies. This study contributes to the debate on IS's illicit economic activities, specifically oil smuggling and the response of the international community. This is done by revisiting the research questions, summarising the findings of the study, making recommendations based on the findings of the study, and finally calling for future research based on the limitations of the study and the areas of relevant research unveiled by the study.

The study focused on the illicit economic activities of IS and the response of the international community, however, special attention was paid to the role of oil within the broader economic survival of the organization. The study was inspired largely by the lack of extensive and detailed research on the effectiveness of the force-based counterterrorism strategy deployed by the international community including the UNSC and individual governments against IS. The study utilised CTS as an approach to terrorism studies to assess the effectiveness of counterinsurgency strategies and policies pursued by the international community against IS. Ultimately, the study developed a CTS-oriented approach for understanding how actions can be taken to forestall similar global terror threats in the future. The following section reflects on the research questions by briefly demonstrating how the findings of the study addressed the research questions.

6.2. Answers to the Research Questions

The assessment of the illicit economic activities of IS, especially oil smuggling and the extent to which it has contributed to the organization's source of income, as well as boosting the military strength of the organization. The assessment shows that crude oil smuggling made a significant contribution to the IS's total revenue only for a short period (2014 – 2015). According to Crane (2015:6), although oil smuggling was a primary source of income for the IS during the period early 2014 and mid-2015. There is no clear evidence suggesting that the illegal oil trade revenue contributed directly to IS military strength during that period. Instead, IS income was used to settle various expenses of the organization such as paying monthly salaries of IS fighters, providing social services such as Islamic education, protection, and food

parcels (soup kitchens) and so on to the communities living within the IS-controlled areas. Ipek (2017:409) argues that oil smuggling as a source of income only benefited the IS for a short period as the production of oil in IS-controlled territories declined significantly since the group did not have the full capacity to produce oil sustainably. For instance, by December 2015 oil revenue was around $370,000 per day or even lower than $260,000, whilst in October 2015 oil production was at 34-40,000 bpd amounting to an average of $1, 5 million per day.

Other illicit economic activities such as external support or donations, kidnapping for ransom, extortion of money and resources, quasi taxes, and so on were more consistent, and therefore, played a more significant role in financing the IS. According to Shapiro *et al* (2016:2), following the US aerial attacks against the IS-controlled oil sites, overall oil production activities in the IS-controlled areas remained very low. By 2016, remote sensing data showed that over 60% of the oil sites located in the areas controlled by the IS were inactive.

The military response did reduce the IS's oil production, however, that did not immediately translate to the weakening of the IS because the group had other economic activities that were consistent in generating income. Such activities include extortion of money/bank robbery, illegal quasi taxes, international donations, kidnapping for ransom and so on. Cafarella *et al* (2019:16) argue that oil smuggling had long ceased to be a major source of income for the IS because the group was officially defeated territorially in March 2019 by the US-led coalition alongside the US-sponsored Kurdish forces. However, since its territorial defeat, IS is has relied heavily on human trafficking targeting mainly vulnerable women and children in under-resourced and poorly managed refugee camps such as Al-Hawl and Roj refugee camps for profits both in Syria and Iraq.

A thorough evaluation of the response of the international community on IS and its illicit economic activities in the Middle East, Syria and Iraq in particular shows that a variety of actions were taken by the international community against the IS. The actions of the international community as a response to IS are divided into military and non-militaristic actions.

Militaristic actions were undertaken largely by the US-led coalition constituted by 68 countries that conducted airstrikes against the IS in Syria and Iraq (House of Commons Library 2014:12). In addition, the US government individually undertook several clandestine programmes to destabilize IS and the Assad-led Syrian regime indirectly by training and arming the SDF that worked closely with other Kurdish militia groups to challenge the Assadled Syrian regime and IS in Syria (Jung *et al*, 2019:21). These programmes included the 2014 Pentagon programme that was intended to train and equip 15,000 rebels to fight IS and the Assad-led Syrian regime. However, the programme was abolished in 2015 after spending $500 million and producing only a few dozen fighters (Jung *et al,* 2019:21). Another $1 billion covert programmes known as Timber Sycamore was conducted by the CIA aimed at destabilizing the Assad-led Syrian regime was more successful. However, it was affected by Russian bombings and cancelled in mid-2017 by the Trump administration (Jung *et al*, 2019:22).

These programmes are significant to the study in that even though they were meant to destabilise the Assad-led Syrian regime they indirectly benefited the IS especially in 2014 and 2015 not only by setting up the political climate that was conducive for IS's growth. But also by shifting the military attention of both the U.S. and Syria away from the IS which enabled the IS to focus on eliminating other small Islamic militia groups in Syria. Eventually, the group cemented itself as one of the major opposition non-state militant actors to the Assad-led Syrian regime in the ongoing Syrian conflict during that time.

On the other hand, non-militaristic actions were facilitated mainly by various UN agencies particularly the UNHCR from early 2012 till the present both in Syria and Iraq to address humanitarian challenges. The UNHCR focused largely on providing food supplies, water, and shelter to the refugees that are displaced within the Syrian and Iraqi borders and those stranded in other neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt as well as rehabilitating the communities affected by the war in Syria and Iraq (UNHCR 2021:5).

Initiatives undertaken by the international community to address humanitarian challenges include the Syrian Regional Response Plan (RRP) first adopted in 2012 to raise resources to sustain emergency assistance and relief efforts. A Three-Year-Strategy (2019 – 2021) was established by the UNHCR, an initiative to resettle refugees stranded in foreign countries. The

International Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) to assist in the investigation and prosecution of persons responsible for the most serious crimes under international law committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 was also adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2016 (UNHCR 2021:5).

A thorough evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategies and policies used by the international community including the UNSC against IS shows that the strategies and policies were partially effective and oftentimes generated other social challenges that are as destructive and detrimental to human life as "terrorism" itself. According to the House of Commons Library (2014:11), the UNSC's main response to the IS in Syria was the unanimous adoption of resolution 2118 that authorised foreign intervention and the use of military force in Syria in 2013. Tan and Perudin (2019:3) state that military actions were carried out largely under the US-led military campaign based mainly on aerial attacks that resulted in the massive destruction of IS occupied territories both in Syria and Iraq including the cities of Raqqa and Mosul. Heavy reliance on airstrikes also resulted in the loss of innocent lives, destruction of livelihoods and mass refugee crisis as the majority of the bombed communities became uninhabitable due to the destruction of infrastructures. Humanitarian actions on the other hand were undertaken by different UN agencies mainly the UNHCR to provide protection, shelter, food, water, and many other necessities to the refugee population in different countries that host refugees from Syria and Iraq. This includes amongst other countries Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan (UNHCR 2021:5). The following initiatives or programmes: the Syrian-RRP, Three-Year-Strategy (2019 – 2021) and the IIIM were established to provide sustainable solutions to the non-combatant challenges caused by the IS and the Syrian war at large including raising funds to address the refugee crisis (UNHCR 2021:5). From a CTS perspective, the humanitarian intervention in Syria and Iraq to help communities affected by IS, was only partially effective. This was not only due to the lack of resources and the reluctance amongst foreign nations to donate but mainly due to the misallocation of funds by the international community. Most resources and efforts were channelled towards the military campaign, as a result, the amount of money spent on military campaigns far outstripped the money spent on non-military response.

6.3. Summary of the Research Findings

A few years after the onset of the Syrian civil war in 2011 it became public knowledge that IS was increasingly gaining control of land and other several natural resources both in Syrian and Iraq. The national bothers between Syria and Iraq were eventually rendered irrelevant by the actions of the IS and an Islamic state (caliphate) was declared in June 2014 (Hassan 2018:3). By 2014 the IS had gained control of a large number of oil sources and other natural resources, such as clean water and agricultural produce both in Syria and Iraq following the declaration of the caliphate in the Middle East in 2014 starting (Hassan 2018:3). To a great extent, this study was largely influenced by a variety of presumptions including amongst others the idea that oil smuggling was the main source of income for the IS and the profits were used to boost the military strength of the organization. The idea of the caliphate was never conceptualised as something equivalent to a state, and the expenses of the organization were never fully imagined. The hierarchal structure of IS leadership and the bureaucratic processes taking place within the organization were also unthinkable. The findings of the study strongly demonstrated that the declaration of the caliphate by IS in Syria and Iraq signalled an emergence of a significant force in the Middle East that had shaped and influenced the politics of the region in many ways (Cafarella *et al* 2019:16). The IS captured huge pockets of land in Syria and Iraq including Mosul and the Raqqa city which was treated as the capital of the IS and gained control of natural resources including the oil in both countries. Large profits were generated from illegal oil trade with various stakeholders including Turkey and the Assad-led Syrian regime itself through middlemen (Cafarella *et al* 2019:16). However, while data suggests that oil smuggling was a significant source of income for the IS only for a short period, there is no evidence suggesting that illegal oil trade revenues were used to strengthen IS military capacity. Instead, data shows that IS had primarily relied on military weapons and resources that were captured from their opponents during battles including the US weapons that were meant for Kurdish rebel fighters that ended up in the hands of the IS (Jeffrey 2021:7). Data further show that IS combined profits from different illicit economic activities were used to take care of the expenses of the organization such as paying salaries to IS fighters, providing security and social services such as food parcels and education to the population living within the caliphate (Crane 2015:6).

As a result of the IS's participation in the ongoing Syrian civil war, several phenomena such as the group's illicit economic activities, oil smuggling in particular and humanitarian challenges. As the refugee crisis caused by the IS takeover of territory in Syria and Iraq have raised many

questions regarding the actions of the international community against the IS. The research findings show that the international community had relied heavily on military force as a strategy to roll back the territorial gains of the IS. The humanitarian crisis and damage to the communities and infrastructure caused by the excessive use of military violence especially in the form of airstrikes raised questions about the effectiveness of military force as the main strategy of counterterrorism (Tan and Perudin 2019:3). From a CTS point of view, the study concludes that the amount of military violence that was used by the international community in Syria and Iraq against IS was unreasonable, uncooperative, and insensitive. This is because military force exacerbated violence and contributed to the refugee crisis in Syria and Iraq. The research findings also show that foreign intervention in Syria and Iraq also raised IHL related concerns. The concerns/questions raised relate primarily to the legality of military intervention especially in Syria where the official Assad-led Syrian government did not request foreign intervention. This is because the Assad-led Syrian government views the Syrian crisis as a domestic/internal political crisis that requires domestic attention (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:4). The study concludes that military intervention in Syria was not in accordance with the IHL in that the UNSC adopted resolution 2118 authorising the international community to intervene and use military violence in Syria without well-founded legal grounds.

The findings of the study further raised fundamental questions about the criteria used to determine the targets in Syria and Iraq under the IHL. The IHL allowed for the targeting of IS assets such as vehicles, oil fields and refineries, and infrastructure and individuals including ordinary fighters and leaders on the basis that they provided a military advantage to the IS (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:4). However, these bases were not solid in that whilst these objects were believed to be providing a military advantage to the IS. Some of the individuals that were included were not necessarily affiliated with the IS. For instance, the oil hauling trucks that were involved in IS illegal oil trade did not belong to IS and were driven by innocent civilians who were trying to make a living in the devastated Syrian economy. Some individuals that were affected during the bombings of the IS-controlled oil refineries did not necessarily belong to the group but were professionals such as engineers who were taken against their will by the IS to operate the oil fields whilst their family members were held hostage (Ogunnowo and Chidozie 2020:6). Furthermore, the bombing of the Raqqa and Mosul cities

was much more problematic than the bombing of oil fields due to the lack of on the ground investigations. The study concluded that this was caused by the lack of on the ground investigation before launching military attacks, as well as the deliberate lack of proper interpretation of concepts such as "war sustaining targets", "IS membership", and so on that inform counterterrorism policy.

6.4. Recommendations

Based on the research findings on various aspects of the topic, several recommendations are made: the study recommends that counterinsurgency policymakers should begin properly diagnosing the causes of terrorism and cease the tendency of relying on simplistic narratives. One popular simplistic narrative is that terrorism stems solely from radical ideologies such as nationalism, ethnonationalism, fascism, anti-socialism, anarchism and so on (Stern 2010:31). From a CTS perspective, radical ideologies do not necessarily create "terrorism" but are merely early signs warnings about the potentiality of "terrorism" in environments that are conducive for such. Radical ideologies on their own are not enough to produce terrorism, until such time they begin to interact with unaddressed/neglected political and socio-economic grievances of a specific society in a particular fashion to create "terrorist" attitudes and behaviours. For instance, Geltzer (2018:7) holds a view that in the case of the Middle East "terrorism" is a phenomenon that springs from competing for political, psychological and socio-economic demands in fragile societies. As previously mentioned in chapter five, this includes amongst other things the lack of political freedom, poverty, unemployment, mental health issues, and lack of belonging and socio-economic marginalization. Therefore, it is imperative for policymakers to formulate tailored counterterrorism policies since the causes of terrorism oftentimes differ from one society to another. Furthermore, according to the OSCE (2014:12), counterterrorism policymakers should begin paying attention to early signs warnings and address grievances of organised social groups before they degenerate into "terrorist" groups. This is because from a CTS perspective, those designated as "terrorists" are viewed as products of structural conditions. These conditions include political oppression, socio-economic marginalization, and so on created and facilitated consciously or unconsciously by the systems of power and authority. Sometimes they are groups of individuals sharing common grievances that are oftentimes ignored or neglected by

governments or authorities to a point of moral decay. During the process of moral decay, the neglected lose touch with their authorities and resort to violent "terrorist" tactics to express their dissatisfaction and exasperation. According to OSCE (2014:13), in other words in most cases, "terrorist" groups are in many ways products of man-made conditions that exist in their societies and are oftentimes maintained by governments or other authorities that benefit from the status quo. For instance, Omale (2013:98) argues that before undergoing a phase of moral decay and eventually degeneration to a "terrorist" establishment, Boko Haram was initially a movement that functioned as a place of refuge for Nigerian youths that were confronted with economic marginalization, inequality, poverty, lack of political freedom and participation on a daily basis. Therefore, the negligence and oppression of the Nigerian government have successfully helped Boko Haram to transition from a social movement into a "terrorist" enterprise.

From a CTS perspective, the use of military violence as the main tool of counterinsurgency is questioned since it is regarded as insensitive and counterproductive. Instead, the use of minimum and reasonable military force is endorsed but should only be launched as a last resort. Biersteker and Eckert (2008:297) argue that national armies in general but more especially those of the US and Western states are trained to fight conventional battles as a result, in most cases, they are not fit to fight against guerrilla fighters. Therefore, the study recommends that national armies be offered special training that will allow them to engage in well-calculated ground combat with insurgent fighters without endangering the lives of innocent civilians by relying heavily on aerial attacks.

From a CTS perspective, part of this recommendation can only be achieved through a thorough on the ground investigation to identify targets with certainty before a military campaign is initiated to avoid loss and destruction of innocent lives. Furthermore, the study recommends that the powerful governments of the world especially the US, Russia, and the Western states cease the tendency of funding irregular fighters to carry out proxy wars to maintain their status quo. This is because it contributes to the creation and maintenance of "terrorist" groups. For instance, Ogunnowo and Chidozie (2020:9) state that the US-trained and funded Kurdish irregular fighters in Syria since it regarded them as moderate fighters in the Syrian conflict. At some point the military weapons that were provided to the so-called "moderate fighters" ended up in the hands of the IS fighters and further contributed to their

military capability. The tendency of providing military support especially weapons to regimes that are facing "terrorist" threats or experiencing civil conflicts is equally problematic. This is because some states, especially authoritative regimes tend to use organized groups or irregular fighters to maintain their status quo. The study further recommends that counterterrorism policymakers refrain from identifying "terrorism" with specific ethnic groups. This is counterproductive because it can perpetuate socio-economic and political challenges such as marginalization, lack of tolerance and so on which play a significant role in creating conditions that are conducive for "terrorism". For instance, the identification of "terrorism" with Muslim people especially by the U.S. government has contributed to the rise of the so-called "Islamic terrorism".

The US oftentimes claim that a viable strategy to achieving global security is through cooperation in collective action to confront mutual global security threats such as "Islamic terrorism". However, the idea of cooperation in most cases is reduced to the participation of developed countries and international organizations such as the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (McInnis, 2016:17). Hence, CTS maintains that the effort to eradicate global security challenges especially the so-called "Islamic terrorism" should include Islamic religious leaders, families, communities, and organizations (Stern, 2010:32). Instead of focusing on strengthening security alliance and promoting narratives and slogans such as collective defence and "an injury to one is an injury to all". The main focus of the international community especially the powerful states ought to be on promoting and allowing other sovereign states, especially developing countries freedoms to self-determination, self-governance, and the choice to practice tailored or alternative forms of governance to democracy (McInnis, 2016:17). Until or unless the US as a global hegemonic state ceases its obsession with military violence as the tool of counterterrorism and the promotion and performance of violence in different corners of the world, the Middle East in particular in the name of counterterrorism efforts will remain much as it is.

There is ample evidence that suggests that under-resourced and poorly managed refugee camps and the so-called "terrorist" prisons are not helping the counterterrorism efforts. This is because in most cases the purposes of these "terrorist" prisons and refugee camps are skewed. There is an overwhelming need within the field of counterterrorism to repurpose these programmes. For instance, in most countries, the purpose of "terrorist" prisons is not

necessarily rehabilitation of the ex-terrorists but to subject them to extreme torture and hard labour. As well as to ensure that they spend the longest time possible in prisons and sometimes they are jailed without trial. The obvious result of this approach is the reproduction of more "terrorists" (OSCE 2007:34). From a CTS perspective, keeping highly dangerous prisoners together under extreme conditions is self-defeating in many ways. The longer "terrorist" prisoners are kept in prisons with other "terrorists", the more likely they are to gain "terrorist" knowledge and radical ideologies that boost their propensity for increased terrorist activity (OSCE 2007:34). For instance, according to Warrick (2015:54), Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian jihadist also known as the spiritual founder of IS was arrested following the unsuccessful trip to Afghanistan. Zarqawi was arrested in Jordan along with several hard-line Islamists. Not wanting to keep these aspiring jihadists among the general prison population. The Jordanian government decided to reopen a British-era fort (prison) in Al-Jafr, named after the village (Al-jafr) deep in the southern desert where they could keep a close eye on them. The unforeseen result was that the prisoners formed personal attachments and deepened their radicalisation, especially as the prison combined various law offenders including Jihadists like Zarqawi with the brains of bomb-makers and die-hard clerics. Warrick (2015:54) further states that according to the prison officials, doctors, and intelligence officers who regularly interacted with Zarqawi, when he first arrived in Al-Jafr, Zarqawi had no formal religious training. It was a matter of luck that he shared a cellblock with a noted extremist scholar, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, allowing him to deepen his religious beliefs. Warrick (2015:55) states that Zarqawi and Maqdisi were released as part of a general amnesty issued by King Abdullah II after the death of his father, King Hussein, in 1999. Zarqawi left Jordan soon after his release to form Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (JTJ) in Iraq in 1999 and led it until his death in 2006. JTJ had evolved to become the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or IS as it is known today.

From a CTS perspective, Zarqawi's future would likely have been different had he been jailed in a normal prison with ordinary prisoners for the purposes of deradicalization and rehabilitation of prisoners. The international community should begin to move towards a direction whereby the main objectives of the counterterrorism policy and strategy is not to ensure that terrorist prisoners serve the longest sentences possible in prisons and sometimes subjected to extreme levels of torture as seen in the deadliest prisons such as Al-Jafr and

Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp. Instead, the international community should begin to consider prison programmes that are not based on longevity of sentences and extreme torture. But multidimensional rehabilitation prison programmes that will offer meaningful rehabilitation to "terrorist" prisoners by protecting them from radicalization and recruitment to "terrorist" groups and rehabilitating and reintegrating them back into civilian communities.

It has become clear that in many parts of the world "terrorism" is slowly moving from physical to online spaces, and the internet is increasing the ability of "terrorist" organizations to recruit, train, and radicalise potential membership at a larger scale. Insurgent groups use social media for various purposes including amongst others propaganda, financing, training, planning and communication, and to a lesser extent cyber-attacks (Stergiou 2016:36). In a letter written by the then senior Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri to the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in July 2005. Zawahiri wrote, "We are in a battle, and more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media" (Theohary and Rollins 2011:3). This can only mean that counterinsurgency policymakers should begin viewing the internet as a battlefield where "terrorist" fighters are taking the fight. Some counterinsurgency efforts should be refocused on fighting "terrorism" online. Although, there are many global surveillance programmes in place already, but more innovation is needed, for instance, many messaging applications like WhatsApp use end-to-end encrypted technology, which is good for the user's privacy but it also helps extremists mobilise easier. This can be achieved through a strong collaboration between policymakers and internet/social media companies such as Google, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and so on. These companies should ensure that insurgency related content do not reach their platforms as well as put initiatives and campaigns online to educate vulnerable people about "terrorism" and protect them against harmful content. Factors such as demographics, age, gender, economic status and so on can be used to determine the most vulnerable of individuals.

However, Grobbelaar and Solomon (2014:246) insist that it should be noted that although the internet and social media have presented a lot of advantages for irregular warfare groups but online efforts are always complimented by conventional "terrorist" ways of recruiting, radicalizing, and attacking. Family members, peers, and religious leaders, and so on, are still playing a significant role in helping irregular warfare groups recruit or even carry out "terrorist" attacks. Therefore, meaningful counterinsurgency efforts ought to include them in

the process of eliminating terrorism. Grobbelaar and Solomon (2014:246) further argue that in the case of the Middle East and many parts of Africa, terrorism is not necessarily thriving as a result of online efforts since huge portions of these two continents do not have effective internet connectivity. Instead, the lived realities of the people in these continents such as poverty, displacement, unemployment and all sorts of social injustices are more contributing factors to the vulnerable and recruitable population especially the youth. The ensuing section details the call to future research based on the findings of the study and areas of relevant research unveiled by the study.

6.5. Call for Future Research

The study has contributed to the broader debate on illicit economic activities of IS and the response of the international community. Facts on the IS itself, its illicit economic activities and military strength as well as the response of the international community. Including its consequences on IS, international law, and human rights of ordinary civilians especially in Syria and Iraq have been uncovered. However, due to a variety of reasons including the fact that the study is documentary research, the study could not exhaust the main topic and other issues surrounding the topic. Instead, more issues that require research emerged which includes amongst others the advocacy-based research for the individuals that remain vulnerable to IS violence and recruitment whilst staying in refugee camps. The new illicit economic activities for IS since its territorial defeat and loss of military strength. Includes human trafficking of individuals stranded in refugee camps and extortion of money although, at a small scale. Possibilities for recruitment and radicalization created by loopholes of counterinsurgency efforts such as poorly managed refugee camps and prisons deserve extensive research.

The findings of the study have demonstrated that many security threat issues remain unresolved in Syria and Iraq and most if not all of them provide the likelihood of IS resurgence. For instance, according to Vianna de Azevedo (2020:48), the Al Hawl refugee camp in northern Syria remains the largest Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) refugee camp in Syria. The IS benefits in many ways from Al Hawl refugee camp including sourcing new fighters and women as well as children for human trafficking purposes. By 2020, the camp was holding around 68,000 people, 94% of whom were women and children. The camp is currently holding people who fled IS as well as individuals and families connected to IS (wives and supporters) who

were displaced from its former territory. Vianna de Azevedo (2020:48) argues that criminal activities such as human trafficking, sex work, fraud, and so on have aided IS in having the upper hand inside the refugee camp while preparing its militants for a future role in case the caliphate is restored. Since its territorial defeat in 2019, IS has benefited from the human smuggling networks that operate in Syria since 2011. Smuggling its fighters and families out of the conflict zone has been IS daily business and an important strategy for the organization's future ambitions.

Part of the research findings have demonstrated that IS and its emulators like Al Qaeda in Iraq, Boko Haram in Nigeria and so on tend to benefit from prison and refugee camp contexts, which from a CTS perspective fundamentally serve the growth and restoration of irregular warfare groups. Vianna de Azevedo (2020:48) argues that prisons like Guantanamo Bay and other notorious prisons and poorly regulated refugee camps have proven to be breeding grounds for Jihadist indoctrination and networking. For instance, Al Hawl Camp has been dubbed the "Jihadist University" and become well known for its role as a breeding ground for the IS and other irregular warfare groups. Vianna de Azevedo (2020:49) claims that vulnerable individuals stranded in refugee camps are likely to fall into the trap of extremist recruitment. Al Hawl has been part of IS's strategy through crime and terror networks that have developed within the camp. IS residents in Al Hawl camp conduct terrorist indoctrination, radicalization, human smuggling, document fraud, forgery, financing and so on. The following section concludes the study by summarizing the entire thesis contributions to the broader field of terrorism studies on the debate or discussion about IS's illicit economic activities and the response of the international community.

6.6. Concluding Remarks and Thesis Contributions

The study has contributed to the broader field of terrorism studies and more especially to the discussion on IS's illicit economic activities and the response of the international community. Part of the main revelations was that oil smuggling was not necessarily the major source of income for IS because it only contributed a large percentage to the organization's total income between early 2015 and mid-2016. No evidence suggests that there was a clear positive relationship between the then increasing oil smuggling revenues and the military strength of IS during the period 2014 and 2015. Instead, data shows that IS has relied heavily on military

weapons that it confiscated from its opponents when engaged in military battles. However, some military weapons came from the US, but they were not meant for the IS and unfortunately ended up in the hands of IS jihadist fighters.

The study revealed that apart from its illicit economic activities, the IS has benefited immensely from the US – Russia hostility in the ongoing Syrian war context in that to a certain extent the hostility indirectly contributed to the staying power of IS. By moving the military attention of the US and Russia away from IS to other warring parties. As the US-Russia's military contestation continued in the Syrian conflict in the form of military intervention which some political commentators understood as a form of proxy war, the military attentions of the US and Russia were turned away from the IS. Instead, the U.S. and Russia remained focused on funding and protecting their allies involved in the ongoing Syrian conflict such as the Syrian forces or the Assad-led Syrian regime and various militia groups including the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Russia's involvement in the ongoing Syrian conflict and the IS history with the Assad led Syrian regime has also contributed to the IS military advantage. The data suggest that IS fighters had often used military weapons that were left on the battlefield deliberately by the Syrian forces for them and in return IS fighters also avoided attacking the Syrian forces during battles.

The study has also contributed to the understanding of how international law and human rights were violated by members of the international community within the context of global anti-IS military campaigns and efforts to prosecute and bring terrorist fighters to justice. The military intervention by the international community mainly the US, Russia, and a few Western and Arab states raised a critical question regarding the legal basis that were used to justify the foreign intervention. As well as the criteria that was used to determine targets and the amount of military violence unleashed. The study further emphasised why from a CTS perspective it is imperative for the international community to clearly define and fairly contextualise concepts such as "global security threat", "R2P", "War sustaining targets" and so on. This is because these concepts are central to the formulation and implementation of military intervention and counterinsurgency policies because where there is a failure to do so, violation of human rights and even loss of innocent lives are inescapable probabilities. Violations of human rights were not only perpetrated by the IS fighters, but also both the Syrian and Iraqi governments have contributed to the violation of human rights through their

attempt to prosecute and bring terrorist fighters to justice. Cases of torture, unfair trial, and detention without trial were reported in both countries and sometimes the killing and violations of human rights of innocent civilians occurred in both countries.

The study has also contributed to the broader debate on the effectiveness of military violence as the main counterinsurgency approach. By demonstrating that whilst excessive use of military violence is often thought of and used as the main strategy to counterinsurgency, it does not necessarily guarantee a permanent solution to global terrorism. This is especially true in the Middle East where violence has been used for a long time to disintegrate governments and communities in the name of counterterrorism campaigns. Violence has not reduced insurgency in the Middle East, instead, it has reproduced more extremist groups and perpetuated violence and suffering amongst innocent communities. From a CTS perspective this is because military violence is insensitive to societal challenges and when used as a counterterrorism tool or strategy, it oftentimes recreates the same violence it seeks to eliminate. Especially when it is sponsored and facilitated by a party that has an unattractive historical relationship with the community that "terrorism" allegedly emanates from. The study has also contributed to the subject by bringing to light that in terms of economic survival, IS is very adaptable in that following its territorial defeat in 2019 the organization started tapping into other illicit economic activities that were never significant to the organization before. Such activities include human trafficking for child marriage, sex work and so on. After its defeat in 2019, the organization started targeting refugee camps for the recruitment of new fighters and human trafficking.

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Appendix A: Turn-it-in Similarity Report:

Note from Supervisor:

Entire report obtainable from Giovanni Poggi. I ran the work through my Turn-it-in similarity checker. The 31% similarity rating is largely due to Turn-it-in not ignoring the Reference List entries, not ignoring some of the direct quotes that were cited, and not discounting some info presented in cited tables.

The work is entirely original and no single source match went above 2% in total.

Please contact me at Giovanni.Poggi@mandela.ac.za if there are any questions.

_____   ___3/12/2021___

Signed   Date