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DAESH AND STATEHOOD: BUILDING THE NARRATIVE FOR A CALIPHATE THROUGH VIOLENCE

Maj A.J. Hewitt

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Exercise Solo Flight

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EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

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Maj A.J. Hewitt

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DAESH AND STATEHOOD: BUILDING THE NARRATIVE FOR A CALIPHATE THROUGH VIOLENCE

INTRODUCTION

Rush O Muslims to your state. Yes, it is your state. Rush, because Syria is not for the Syrians and Iraq is not for the Iraqis. The State is a state for all Muslims.

- Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Inauguration Speech as Caliph of Daesh

With his inaugural words as the self-proclaimed spiritual and political leader of Muslims worldwide, al-Baghdadi declared himself the Caliph of the newly formed Islamic State, Daesh.¹ Bestowed with the authority of God, al-Baghdadi stood atop a totalitarian jihadi-salafist regime which had seized large swathes of land from the states of Iraq and Syria following eight years of bloody violence.² As the de facto authority for eight million people, Daesh seemed perilously close to achieving their ultimate aspiration: a recognised caliphate founded upon a strict interpretation of Islamic, or *sharia*, law.³ Yet from the viewpoint of the West, Daesh is not an equal member of the international community but rather a terrorist organisation, a derivative of Osama Bin Laden's notorious al-Qaida network. In their reign of terror, Daesh has killed over 30,000 people, claimed responsibility for over 140 international terrorist attacks, and committed

¹ Miriam Mueller, "Terror or Terrorism? The "Islamic State" Between State and Non-state Violence," *Domes Digest of Middle East Studies*, (Fall 2017): 447.

² Bernard Haykel, "ISIS and al-Qaeda: What are they Thinking? Understanding the Adversary," *The Annals of the American Academy*, (November 2016): 77.

³ *Ibid.*, 72-73.

incredible acts of cruelty against vulnerable populations. Does Daesh's extreme use of violence deny them from achieving their goal of being a legitimate state?

This paper will demonstrate that Daesh is purposefully using violence to build a narrative to unify their movement, defeat rivals, and seize territory as the primary means to establish an Islamic state. The West is broadcasting a competing narrative: a group of vicious terrorists who kill innocent people, destroy historic and cultural works, and enslave women. This paper will argue that Daesh's narrative has been more effective, insofar as actually establishing legitimacy within their target audience of the Muslim world. Their actions have given rise to an Islamic territory which emulates the principles of the 1933 Montevideo Convention while adhering to Max Weber's axiom of a state having monopoly of violence within a territory.

A review of the developmental history of European and post-colonial states will show that violence has been an integral component of nation-building. Using Tilley's analysis of state violence to establish states, protect its citizens, and ultimately extract resources to perpetuate its survival, it will be demonstrated that Daesh's rise to power is not unique. To understand their motivations, it will be articulated how conventional and unconventional violence targeting both regional ethnic rivals and Western civilian populations are at the heart of their strategy. Lastly, an examination of the narrative that Daesh promotes, contrary to that of the West, will link violence to Daesh's ability to attract recruits, develop revenue streams, and govern their territory. Although the international community has recently concentrated military forces which are scoring significant military successes against Daesh, it will be argued that this use of force only perpetuates Weber's relationship between the control of violence and the sovereignty of the state.

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Violence has always been integral to the notion of establishing and maintaining a state. Max Weber postulated in 1918 that the state is the “human community that claims monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.”⁴ The development of Western European states, post-colonial states, as well as the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) support the relationship between violence and state-making.

In a study of violence in the development of European nations, Tilley argues that before the nation state, violence was legitimately employed by numerous public and private actors.⁵ Legitimacy was often based upon who you were working for; pirates acting independently on the high seas were outlaws. Conversely, if they were hired by a monarch to plunder a rival they were sanctioned Privateers.⁶ It is in the 1600s under Tudor England where Stone observes the first monopolisation of violence as the Crown absorbed control of individual Lords’ militias (often by defeating them militarily and razing their fortresses.)⁷ This policy was emulated by other European leaders as they realised they no longer had to rely on the military strength of feudal Lords to control their territory. This promoted the legitimacy of the state as local militias were disbanded and replaced by state police forces. The state’s monopoly of violence allowed for the expansion of its officialdom throughout the nation.⁸ Perhaps more importantly, Tilley observes that in controlling violence, the state was able to eliminate internal rivals, compete externally with other states, and protect its citizenry and trade. In return, merchants and civilians would

⁴ William J. Novak, "Beyond Max Weber: The Need for a Democratic (Not Aristocratic) Theory of the Modern State," *The Tocqueville Review*, Vol. XXXVI No. 1 2015: 54.

⁵ Charles Tilley, "War Making and State Making as Organised Crime," In *Bringing the State Back*, by Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 170-173.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 173-176.

compensate the state for their protection through taxation.⁹ The monopolisation of violence proved a lucrative way to fund nation-building.

The notion of using violence to forge states was also reflected in post-colonial nations. The United States of America was founded on an armed revolution against Great Britain. Vietnam launched an insurrection against the French as did Algiers. In his 1967 analysis of decolonisation, Fanon believes that colonial powers long used violence as a means to dehumanise and subjugate colonial subjects.¹⁰ In order to dispel colonial institutions and gain independence, indigenous people must use violence as it is the only means the colonial power understands and respects.¹¹ In essence, Fanon is arguing that the people must seize control of the monopoly of violence from the colonial power if they are ever to achieve independence.

Lenin and Mao both understood the necessity for violence as they led revolutions which created two of the largest states in the 20th century. During the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, Lenin used a workers' militia to seize control of Tsarist Russia. In establishing his *dictatorship of the proletariat* Lenin used violence to gain control of the state apparatus and eliminate internal rivals to create the Soviet Union.¹² The PRC was founded by Mao in 1949 following a 22-year civil war. Like Fanon, Mao fundamentally believed that violence was a suitable option to settle disputes between the people and its enemies.¹³ Although their use of violence was akin to state terror, a notion which will resonate with Daesh, Lenin and Mao both established control of their

⁹ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Weidenfeld), 1963: 14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 15-21.

¹² David Priestland, "Soviet Democracy, 1917-1971," *European History Quarterly*, (Volume 32, Issue 1 2002): 110-116.

¹³ Francois Marmor, *Le maoïsme : philosophie et politique*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1976): 61.

state and were recognised internationally. They became active and legal participants of the United Nations (UN) and international trade.¹⁴

Whereas it is clear from a historical point-of-view that violence has been a viable method to achieve statehood, a counter-argument to the present-day legitimacy of using violence to establish statehood stems from the UN Charter. Article 1 of the Charter states the organisation's aim is to promote international peace and security. Should a threat to peace arise, Article 14 empowers the Security Council alone the responsibility of maintaining international security.¹⁵ Thus, member states have pledged to refrain from using violence as a method to resolve problems or achieve goals. In this regard, Daesh is not acting like a legitimate state in 2018.

Yet, from Daesh's point of view, they are not bound to the accords of the UN. It is an armed non-state actor (ANSA) which aspires to be a state. If the PRC was recognised by the UN after decades of violence, why not Daesh? To be recognised as a member state of the UN, the Charter maps out four key criteria:

1. The state must accept the obligations of the Charter;
2. The Security Council recommends admission;
3. The General Assembly votes for admission; and
4. The resolution for admission must be adopted.¹⁶

Daesh is clearly not demonstrating any intention of accepting the current obligations of the Charter. As four of the five Permanent members of the Security Council are currently

¹⁴ Spencer B. Meredith, "Daesh and the Gray Zone: More Black and White Than They Appear?" *Special Warfare*, (January-June 2016): 5-6.

¹⁵ United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, 2 April 2018, <http://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations>.

¹⁶ United Nations, *About UN Membership*, 2 April 2018, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/member-states/about-un-membership/index.html> .

engaged in armed operations against Daesh, it is unlikely that any request for admission will be recommended or adopted in the foreseeable future. But does UN membership preclude Daesh from achieving statehood? There are exceptions as Kosovo, Palestine, and the Vatican are not members of the UN but are recognised as “Non-Member States.”¹⁷ As an ANSA, Daesh fits into a gray zone in the contemporary global order; they do not conform to the existing structure which aims to reduce state violence, yet violence is at the core of their agency to become a state.

In an effort to perhaps clarify the gray zone surrounding statehood, Novak attempts to expand Weber’s definition. He contends that Dewey’s notion that “the state must always be rediscovered” implies that traditional concepts of bureaucracy, judicial law, and democratic theory must expand Weber’s definition. Unfortunately, through his review of state theories from Marx to Weber, he provides no viable alternative.¹⁸

The 1933 Montevideo conference attempted to quantify the characteristics of a state as an entity with a permanent population, defined territory, a government, and a capacity to enter into foreign relations.¹⁹ Although nineteen nations signed onto these principles, including the United States (US), they form at best a component of customary international law and are not universally binding. An argument will be made in the third part of this paper that Daesh may actually meet the Montevideo principles. However, with the absence of a universally accepted definition of statehood and given the current structure of the UN, there is no clear path to statehood for Daesh.

¹⁷ United Nations, "Non-Member States," *United Nations*, 16 April 2018, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/member-states/non-member-states/index.html>.

¹⁸ William J. Novak, "Beyond Max Weber...", 56, 81-82.

¹⁹ Scott W. Lyons, "International Law Beyond the Nation State? From People to Power ISIL/Daesh," *ASIL Proceedings*, (2016): 221-229.

There are several deductions from this historical review of violence and state-hood which have direct applications to Daesh's conduct. The first is from Tudor England, where attaining a monopoly of state violence, both internal and external to the nation, consolidated the power of the ruling elite and allowed for the development of strong internal institutions. Amongst post-colonial nations, violence was recognised as an effective means to expel colonial powers. Lastly, from the Soviet Union and the PRC, the use of violence as a tool of state terror led to the control of state institutions and the eventual recognition of the states by the international community. In the absence of a better theory, the connection between statehood and violence within a territory has historic credence. In an extremely short period of time, Daesh has followed the path of past developing nations to monopolise violence, destroy their enemies, and assert their ideology to control their territory and population.

THE ORIGINS OF DAESH - IDEOLOGY MEETS OPPORTUNITY

In October 2004, a Salafist named Abu Musab al-Zarqawi made a move which would alter the power dynamics of the Middle East. Since the Muslim Brotherhood was first established in Egypt in 1928, there has been a strong movement within the Middle East to establish an Islamic State that harkens to the power of the Islamic Caliphate of the 7th century; an Islamic empire which dominated the known world of North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe.²⁰ Al-Zarqawi shared this vision of an Islamic State and saw the chaos following the fall of the Iraqi Baathist regime as the best opportunity to make a move. He amalgamated his fledgling armed organisation of 1500 insurgents, *al-Tawheed wal Jihad*, with Osama bin Laden's resource-rich

²⁰ Bernard Haykel, "ISIS and al-Qaeda...", 72-73.

al-Qaida to form al-Qaida in Iraq (AIQ).²¹ Yet the two organisations had fundamentally different viewpoints on how to achieve an Islamic State. Whereas Osama bin Laden believed the jihad should be waged against America, or the far war, there were those who disagreed.²² The two prominent opponents were al-Zarqawi and Abu Musab al-Suri, an author and strategist who revolutionised jihadi warfare. Al-Suri believed that the attacks against America on 11th September 2001 were a colossal strategic blunder. In attacking the US directly, al-Qaida incurred their full military wrath. Within two years, 80% of al-Qaida's forces had been destroyed and they had lost their safe haven in the Islamic State of Afghanistan.²³ Al-Suri wrote a doctrine, *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*, which synthesised the lessons from past jihad conflicts, Western ideology, and prior attempts to form Islamic States.²⁴ He concluded that any successful jihad would need to:

1. Use individual, secret, and separate terrorist cells to attack soft targets (including civilians) to disrupt the enemy in the far war (ie North America and Europe);
2. Participate in open jihad (open warfare on the battlefield) in the near war where the pre-conditions exist. Currently the US is too powerful to fight in open jihad; and
3. Seize territory to establish an Islamic State. Al-Suri recommended numerous areas, but the most critical was the region of the Levant, Egypt, and Iraq.²⁵

Al-Zarqawi enjoyed a close relationship with al-Suri and would take his tactical and strategic advice to heart.²⁶ He also fundamentally disagreed with Bin Laden that jihadists should

²¹ Youseff Aboul-Enein, "Abu Musaz al-Zarqawi," *Infantry*, (August 2009): 15.

²² Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri*, (New York: Oxford, 2014): 315.

²³ *Ibid.*, 314.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 305-306.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 371-373, 394.

be fighting a far war against the US. He believed that the true battle lay in the local region, or the near war, against those who were not following his interpretation of Islam, most notably Sunnis and apostate Muslims.²⁷ This sentiment carried a lot of weight with many amongst the Sunni populations in the Middle East. Roy writes that many Sunnis feel cheated out of history. They were the dominant demographic emerging from the Ottoman Empire but by 2003 the Shias held power throughout the region with Jordan being the only Arab state under Sunni leadership.²⁸ This concept of the Sunni majority feeling a need to correct historical injustice is an important factor in the emergence of Daesh.

In the anarchy following the 2003 Iraq war and the collapse of the Baath regime, al-Zarqawi would use al-Qaida's resources to pursue his ideology and launch an offensive on the civilian population of Iraq; particularly the Shia population around Fallujah and the North West of the country.²⁹ His onslaught upon fellow Muslims caught al-Qaida leadership by surprise. In a letter to al-Qaida, al-Zarqawi writes that he believed the Shia were "the lurking snake ... the spying enemy, and the penetrating venom" who had formed a deal with America to seize control of the Iraqi state.³⁰ In a response from Ayman al-Zawahiri, the then deputy-leader of al-Qaida, he expresses concern at AQI's tactics, highlighting that the primary aim should be to expel American forces as Shia and Sunni alike would all be needed to build a Caliphate in the aftermath.³¹ This marks the schism between AQI, the precursor to Daesh, and al-Qaida. Al-

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 328-331.

²⁷ Youseff Aboul-Enein, "Abu Musab al-Zarqawi...", 12-15.

²⁸ Olivier Roy, *Death and Jihad*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 78-79.

²⁹ Bernard Haykel, "ISIS and al-Qaeda...", 75-77.

³⁰ Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, "February 2004 Coalition Provisional Authority English translation of terrorist Musab al Zarqawi letter obtained by United States Government in Iraq," *2001-2009.state.gov*. 18 April 2018, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rls/31694.htm>.

³¹ Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Zawahiri's Letter to Zarqawi." *Combating Terrorism Centre at West Point*, 18 April 2018, <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/zawahiris-letter-to-zarqawi-original-language-2/>.

Zarqawi continued his onslaught against the vulnerable Shia civilian population while employing al-Suri's doctrine to launch an asymmetric guerilla offensive against the occupying US forces. By targeting the former ruling class (the Shia) and the US military with a series of frequent, high-profile, and violent attacks, AQI was constantly in the media and establishing its relevance amongst the like-minded within the region.³² The use of extreme violence established AQI as a credible force in the region, giving them tactical victories which had escaped al-Qaida since 9/11. Al-Zarqawi was winning the support of Sunnis and former Baathists and was able to recruit in droves.³³ Unfortunately for al-Zarqawi, his rise to prominence in the Iraq insurrection made him a high profile target and he was killed by a US air-strike on 7 June 2006.³⁴ Yet his movement lived on. AQI rebranded as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) and would continue their violent insurgency for several years until another opportunity for expansion presented itself: the 2011 civil war in Syria.

Like the chaos found in Iraq following the 2003 invasion, the Syrian civil war would provide a power vacuum which ISI would exploit. The new leader of ISI, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi sent trained formations of fighters into Syria to seize territory. By 2013, ISI had achieved the third tenet of al-Suri's doctrine: they occupied a region within Iraq and Syria the size of Great Britain and had subjugated a population of 8 million people.³⁵ In June 2014, al-Baghdadi declared his organisation was now the *Islamic State* (Daesh), a modern-day Caliphate.³⁶ To establish totalitarian rule of the newly founded Caliphate, Daesh employed a campaign of

³² Bernard Haykel, "ISIS and al-Qaeda...", 78.

³³ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

³⁴ Youseff Aboul-Enein, "Abu Musaz al-Zarqawi...", 14-15.

³⁵ Bernard Haykel, "ISIS and al-Qaeda...", 77-79.

³⁶ Miriam Mueller, "Terror or Terrorism?...", 443.

violence against the culture, the livelihood, and the vulnerable persons amongst those who opposed them.

UNFETTERED VIOLENCE

Mueller argues that Daesh employs two distinct forms of violence. The first is international terrorism.³⁷ In total, Daesh has claimed responsibility for 143 international attacks which have killed over 2000 people.³⁸ These attacks adhere to al-Suri's first tenet of deploying individual terrorist cells to erode the will to fight of Western adversaries; particularly the Atlantic alliance between American and European democracies.³⁹ The beheading of Western journalists on the internet, such as Nicholas Berg in 2014, or the slaughter of civilians, such as the bombing of a Belgian subway station in 2016, target the psychological resolve of the West.⁴⁰ The second form of violence is that used within their territory, which Mueller argues is not terrorism but rather state terror. Although not a formal state, Daesh has de facto governance over their seized territory; they are a terrorist group that wields state-like powers.⁴¹ And their acts of violence have been horrific. In their conquest of territory, the Washington Post reports over 33,000 killed.⁴² Methods have ranged from using conventional ground forces, to improvised explosive devices,

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 442-443.

³⁸ T. Lister et al, "ISIS Goes Global: 143 attacks in 29 Countries have Killed 2,043." *CNN*, 2 April 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2015/12/17/world/mapping-isis-attacks-around-the-world/index.html> .

³⁹ Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad...*, 333-339.

⁴⁰ T. Lister et al, "ISIS Goes Global..."

⁴¹ Miriam Mueller, "Terror or Terrorism?...", 443-446.

⁴² Adam Taylor, "ISIS and its Allies were Responsible for 26 Percent of Terrorism Deaths in 13 Years." *Washington Post*. 2 April 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/08/09/isis-and-its-allies-were-responsible-for-26-percent-of-terror-deaths-in-13-years/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.6847f7bf3c21 .

to choreographed violence such as public beheadings or the public immolation of a caged Jordanian pilot.⁴³

Like many conflicts, it is the civilian population which bears the brunt of the suffering. Daesh has targeted vulnerable populations, specifically women, with slavery and sexual violence.⁴⁴ Perhaps the cruelest example is the 2014 enslavement of Yazidi women and children in Iraq. Their offence is that they were a Kurdish-speaking ethnic and religious minority who happened to live in Iraq. In general, women throughout Daesh's seized territory have been subjugated to strict interpretations of *Sharia* law; regulating their dress, behaviour, and what punishments may be levied upon them.⁴⁵

Daesh has also dominated the people in the region by controlling regional infrastructure and utilities. For example, in 2014 Daesh seized the dams near Aleppo and Fallujah to control regional access to electricity and water. The local Shia populations often had access to these essential resources restricted.⁴⁶ In the most extreme example, Daesh unleashed the dam floodgates in Fallujah to literally wipe out downstream communities and croplands.⁴⁷

Yet through all of this violence, both internationally and within their territory, Daesh continues to attract recruits and funding from around the globe. Why do people willingly join an organisation which commits such heinous acts? The answer lies in the ideological narrative

⁴³ Rob Nordland and A. Barnard. "Militants' Killing of Jordanian Pilot Unites the Arab World in Anger," *NY Times*, 2 April 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/05/world/middleeast/arab-world-unites-in-anger-after-burning-of-jordanian-pilot.html>.

⁴⁴ Olivier Roy, *Death and Jihad...*, 59.

⁴⁵ Meredith Loken and A. Zelenz, "Explaining Extremism: Western Women in Daesh," *European Journal of International Security*, (17 October 2017): 51.

⁴⁶ Nadim Damluji, "Legal Analysis: Daesh Control of Watercourses in Syria and Iraq," *Washington International Law Journal*, Vol. 25 No. 2, (April 2016): 332.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 332-333.

promulgated by Daesh, one which is wholly dependent upon violence and runs squarely in contrast to the viewpoint presented by the West.

FINDING LEGITIMACY IN THE CARNAGE

There are two global and competing narratives for the legitimacy of Daesh. The first is the message that Daesh sends to its base: to persuade all Muslims the struggle to restore a caliphate on earth is a religious duty and that victory is inevitable.⁴⁸ The second is the one propagated by Western leaders that Daesh is not a legitimate state but merely a terrorist organisation run amok.⁴⁹ It is important to note that the narratives are not competing for the same target audience; Daesh is targeting the *ummah*, the Muslim world, while the Western message appears to be pointed inwards to convince the domestic audiences that fighting Daesh is merely an evolution of the war on terror.⁵⁰ Both the West and Daesh are using violence to support their narratives. The West conducts counter-terrorism operations and air strikes. Daesh commits atrocities in the Levant. Yet in many ways Daesh has proven the victor in the clash of narratives, at least with respect to the *ummah* and their success in recruiting and fund-raising. This section will argue that this clash of narratives lends credence to Daesh's pursuit of legitimacy and reinforces their use of violence.

⁴⁸ James P. Farwell, "The Media Strategy of ISIS," *Survival*, Vol. 56 no. 6, (January 2015): 49-50.

⁴⁹ Asaf Siniver and S. Lucas, "The Islamic State Lexical Battleground: US Foreign Policy and the Abstraction of Threat." *International Affairs*, (2016): 78.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

Daesh's Narrative to the Global Masses

Siniver and Lucas observe that since 2005, when President Bush declared the US would invoke a “forward strategy to bring democratisation to the Middle East,” no US President has articulated a coherent plan to achieve this aim.⁵¹ As previously mentioned, the anarchy in post-War Iraq allowed for the rise of Daesh.⁵² For Daesh's part, the message has been quite clear: they are on a divine mission to expel Western influences and build a home for Muslims. This notion of divine right was invoked by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi when he decreed that “whoever obeys me has obeyed Allah, and whoever disobeys me has disobeyed Allah.”⁵³ This message was broadcast to the *ummah* as a global call to form a state under the Caliph.⁵⁴ In response, the US has never recognised the caliphate or referred to Daesh as a *State*. The discourse has always been to address them as a terrorist organisation called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). These titles deliberately include Iraq and Syria, the recognised sovereign states, as parts of their name.⁵⁵ Siniver suggests that for the US to refer to Daesh as Islamic State would be akin to recognising them as a political, military, and ideological force.⁵⁶

This attitude to refuse to address Daesh as a state is reflected when the international community attempts to address problems like Daesh's abuse of the waterways in Iraq. International Humanitarian Law posits that whoever “exercises de facto authority over a population” has an obligation to exercise the law. Additionally, a 2006 UN report argues that “in

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁵² Jamal Hussein, "Daesh," *Defence Journal*, Vol. 19 Issue 9, (April 2016): 22.

⁵³ Miriam Mueller, "Terror or Terrorism?...", 447.

⁵⁴ Spencer B. Meredith, "Daesh and the Gray Zone...", 5-6.

⁵⁵ Asaf Siniver and S. Lucas, "The Islamic State...", 69.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

other words, if an ANSA acts like a state, in so much as it has an internal political structure and controls territory, it should be held to the same obligations as a state.”⁵⁷ This puts the West in a bind. According to international convention, they are obligated to work with Daesh to resolve access to electricity and water in order to alleviate human suffering. However, to openly work with Daesh on a diplomatic level would, to some extent, legitimise Daesh as a state actor and reward their use of violence.⁵⁸

Another aspect of Daesh’s narrative is to use choreographed examples of extreme violence against Sunnis to galvanise their Shia base.⁵⁹ As noted earlier, a powerful source of motivation for Daesh was their sense of historical injustice that the Sunni majority had been subjugated under the rule of Shia or other non-Sunni regimes. In this quest to restore historical wrongs, Lyon notes that Daesh’s message is similar to the Russian narrative in Crimea. Under the pretext of defending the interests of Russian speaking minorities, Russia invaded and annexed Crimea in 2014.⁶⁰ Daesh’s ability to use social media to broadcast acts of violence to protect the *oppressed Shia* from Sunni and Western oppressors is beyond reproach. A famous example was during the 2014 World Cup of Football. Daesh added World Cup hash tags to their tweets depicting attacks against Sunni and Western targets to attract youth viewership around the world.⁶¹ They then used the data collected from the sharing of these tweets to understand where their global support lies, not unlike how Western political parties track their support.⁶²

⁵⁷ Nadim Damluji, "Legal Analysis...", 357.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 356-357.

⁵⁹ James P. Farwell, "The Media Strategy of ISIS...", 49-50.

⁶⁰ Scott W. Lyons, "International Law...", 220.

⁶¹ James P. Farwell, "The Media Strategy of ISIS...", 50.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 50.

When Daesh imposed strict regulations on dress and movement for women, took women as sex slaves, or brutally punished women in accordance with their interpretation of Islamic Law, how did the narrative pan out? Loken and Zelenz remark the West painted a chronicle of horrid oppression by Daesh over women.⁶³ In contrast, Daesh promoted a tale that these acts were not acts of oppression but were in accordance with promoting God's law as written in the Quran.⁶⁴ Roy writes that, although taken out of context, Daesh quotes the Quran and instructs their believers that they are entitled to conquest, martyrdom, and the taking of sex slaves.⁶⁵ This strict interpretation of Islamic Law found global appeal. Loken and Zelenz determined that the vast majority of Daesh's female recruits willingly come from Western Europe and North America. They note that some Western Muslim women do not respond well to the Western narrative that Daesh is against women while they believe themselves to be victims of gender and religious discrimination in the West. In Australia, the majority of anti-Muslim violence is targeted towards women (50%) ahead of men (44%) and children (6%). Dataset survey results suggest Muslim women believe they are discriminated against freely wearing a hijab or niqab in Western society.⁶⁶ Women are thus leaving the West for Daesh. In 2015, 600 of the 5000 people who joined Daesh from the West were women (12%). France was most noticeable, where 40% of recruits were women.⁶⁷ By contrast, the United States Marine Corps has set a 2021 objective to achieve a recruitment rate of 10%.⁶⁸ Notwithstanding their treatment of women, Daesh rivals Western militaries with respect to recruiting females.

⁶³ Meredith Loken and A. Zelenz, "Explaining Extremism...", 46-51.

⁶⁴ Olivier Roy, *Death and Jihad...*, 50-51.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁶⁶ Meredith Loken and A. Zelenz, "Explaining Extremism...", 50-54.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 50-54.

⁶⁸ Douglas Yeung et al, *Recruiting Policies and Practices for Women in the Military: Views From the Field*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2017), 40.

Loken and Zelenz argue that the counter narrative by the West is to quote reports, such as the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, which have concluded that Daesh has declared a war on women. Therefore, any woman who has voluntarily joins Daesh must be desperate for marriage or has been tricked. Yet there is little empirical data to support this argument.⁶⁹ The reality is that Daesh has effectively reached out to some women. They are also successful in reaching out to other groups: ideologically motivated salafists from North Africa, poor and uneducated Muslims from southern Asia who need money, as well as disenfranchised members of the Muslim diaspora in Europe and North America who feel isolated.⁷⁰ It appears that Daesh's messaging to the *ummah* is far-reaching and effective, and their use of violence is consistently at the core of their message.

Daesh's Narrative Within Their Territory

Daesh perpetuates a narrative amongst its fighters to normalise their acts of violence. Bergholz notes many historical instances where the application of violence was not simply just a means to kill the adversary, but as a way to settle scores for those who felt slighted and as a way to restore a "sense of power."⁷¹ Citing case study from the Balkans civil war, he noted a sense of *joy* on behalf of those committing the violent acts.⁷² Roy observes a similar pattern with Daesh;

⁶⁹ Meredith Loken and A. Zelenz, "Explaining Extremism...", 50-51.

⁷⁰ Jamal Hussein, "Daesh...", 26.

⁷¹ Max Bergholz, *Violence as a Generative Force: Identify, Nationalism, and Memory in a Balkan Community*, (London: Cornell University Press, 2016), 238-239.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 239.

violence is scripted and rehearsed with a view to fulfilling a warrior fantasy amongst Daesh's fighters, making them feel like heroes for killing their religious and ethnic enemies.⁷³

Daesh has copied the tactics of the Taliban in Afghanistan to use violence to attack the culture and history of their enemies. Similar to their attacks on women, Daesh established a mantra which was selectively based on individual passages of the Quran to not tolerate false idols. A Daesh video contains the mantra "Destroy the idols and statues. Destroy the untruths of the Americans. The idols belong in hell."⁷⁴ Consequently, Daesh has launched a campaign to destroy artworks and monuments which represent an alternative to their myopic interpretation of Islam. Most noticeably was the destruction of the ancient city walls of Nineveh and the sack of the Museum of Mosul in early 2015.⁷⁵ Smith, Burke, and Jackson argue that the destruction of other cultures heritage reinforces a sense of inevitability and invincibility amongst their fighters. It also attracts a lot of international attention and resonates well with recruiting foreign nationals.⁷⁶

There is little evidence to suggest that Western governments, whose messaging is mostly aimed at their domestic audiences, have been able to influence the internal storyline of Daesh. Daesh, thus, enjoys a monopoly of both violence and controlling the narrative within their territory. This has allowed them to take rapid steps in state-making since 2014.

⁷³ Olivier Roy, *Death and Jihad...*, 50-52.

⁷⁴ Clair Smith et al, "The Islamic State's Symbolic War: Daesh's Socially Mediated Terrorism as a Threat to Cultural Heritage." *Journal of Social Archaeology*, (2016), 174-177.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 174-177.

Daesh as State-Makers

In accordance with Weber's maxim, by crushing all opposition and monopolising the use of violence in their seized territory, Daesh is the de facto governing authority. Mueller argues that the use of violence has allowed them to instill Kielmansegg's three pillars of totalitarianism:

- Monopolisation and centralisation of power;
- The abolishment of limits to the scope of their decisions; and
- The abolishment of limits to the use of sanctions and violence.⁷⁷

From 2014, Daesh developed their own flag, stamps, police stations, courts, and schools. They performed public services including building inspections, public notices, and built state infrastructure to maintain a state presence throughout their territory.⁷⁸ As a totalitarian Salafist regime, they were able to use violence to crush dissidents while they built their governance model. Their ability to control the use of violence within their territory has followed Tilley's notion of using violence for state-making while concurrently protecting their population and their ideology.

In terms of raising revenues, Tilley's notion of the state's monopoly of violence and extraction applies equitably to Daesh. A 2014 RAND study indicated 95% of Daesh revenues are internally generated through taxation, oil sales, and criminal enterprise. The criminal acts, which are Daesh sponsored and backed by violence, include human smuggling, ransom, and the sale of archaeological artefacts sacked from historical sites.⁷⁹ Ironically, Daesh exports millions of

⁷⁷ Miriam Mueller, "Terror or Terrorism?...", 446-447.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 445-447.

⁷⁹ Jamal Hussein, "Daesh...", 24.

barrels of oil to Syria.⁸⁰ This is reminiscent of the problem facing neighbouring nations with respect to Daesh's control of the watercourses. How can these states, on one hand, deny the legitimacy of Daesh while on the other hand, engage in open commerce for basic commodities? In effect, Daesh had met the Montevideo principles. They had control over a population with defended borders, they had established a government which provided public services, and by 2015 they were engaged in foreign relationships through international trade. However, in lieu of resolving this quandary of Daesh resembling a state actor through diplomatic means, the International Community elected to respond with overwhelming violence of their own.

A global coalition of seventy-five countries including Russia, the US, the United Kingdom, Canada and regional states such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia has united to militarily defeat Daesh. As warned by al-Suri, jihadist campaigns cannot survive in open conflict against overwhelming conventional forces. Since 2017, Daesh has lost approximately 90% of their territory with 7.3 million people liberated.⁸¹ Daesh is no longer the sole purveyor of violence within the Levant. Nevertheless, the global coalition's military solution likely does little to diminish the ideology upon which Daesh was founded. It does not resolve the issue of how to deal with ANSAs in the current global structure aside from using overwhelming military force. It is reinforcing the historic truth that violence is needed to secure the borders of nation states like Syria and Iraq and that Max Weber's maxim of statehood and the monopoly of violence is still relevant in 2018.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸¹ Global Coalition, *Guiding Principles from the Global Coalition to defeat Daesh*, 28 April 2018, <http://theglobalcoalition.org/en/home/>.

CONCLUSION

Whether Daesh can survive or whether it evolves into something new is unknown. What is known is that the rise of Daesh has reinforced many of the truths regarding Weber's definition of the state regarding the monopoly of violence within its territory. From Western Europe to the PRC, violence has been integral in state-making. However, the current global governance structure, particularly the UN charter, promotes peace and not the use of violence to create modern states. Yet this structure does not work well with ANSAs such as Daesh. With a strong sense of conviction to achieve their own state, to correct perceived historical wrongs, and with the military capacity to do it, violence proved an effective path for Daesh to carve out a de facto state from the civil strife consuming Iraq and Syria. Violence allowed Daesh to separate themselves from other terror groups, such as al-Qaida, and to unify the pre-eminent Jihadi movement in the region. Violence yielded international headlines which garnered global support and recruits from within the *ummah*. Although this carnage was renounced by the West, it was ineffective in slowing down Daesh's control over its territory and population. Daesh's careful control over their message permitted them to translate the enslavement of women, the destruction of cultural sites, and international acts of terror into noble acts of jihad in accordance with the teachings of the Quran. Ultimately, violence allowed Daesh to achieve Tilley's theory of state-making: to secure a territory, to protect its citizens, and extract resources. Having established local governance and by entering into international trade, Daesh began to meet the principles of statehood as defined in the Montevideo convention. The international community's response was one of overwhelming force. Daesh is rapidly losing territory against the global coalition and can no longer claim monopolisation of violence within their territory. Notwithstanding the current global structure of the UN and the rhetoric of Western narratives, the rise and fall of Daesh has

confirmed Weber's axiom linking the legitimacy of statehood with the monopolisation of violence within a given territory.

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