DAESH: MODERN TERROR IN THE LEVANT

By A.C. Berardinelli

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INTRODUCTION

One year after the Iraqi government declared 10 December a national holiday to celebrate victory over Daesh, dissent exists over the simplest facts on this group and what they represented. Some of the hydra heads of Daesh are clear, like the conventional military mobile forces that swarmed across the Nineveh plains to take Mosul. The social media presence and information projection pieces of the Daesh puzzle are harder to define, even with multiple and disparate sources available online. The truth about Daesh is complex, given incomplete narratives and the disparate views of Daesh’s many foes, analysts, and interlocutors. Daesh’s own narrative exists in the English language version of Dabiq. Audrey Kurth Cronin questioned if Daesh was a terrorist organization in the same vein as Al-Qaeda, arguing instead that Daesh was a state-like entity commanded by a conventional military. Media used vivid descriptors of “death cult” as labels. There are the multiple, overlapping, complementary and contradictory narratives emerging from the Daesh foot soldiers themselves. Each of these threads illustrates that this variety of narratives may not be exclusive to an organization like Daesh that has defied conventional classification. Daesh had state-like qualities, and the ability, at least for a time, to exert power in the Levant, specifically on its neighbours Iraq and Syria, from whom it wrested territory and exerted sovereignty from 2014 to 2015. There is no definitive agreement on whether Daesh existed as a state. Cronin and David Kilcullen are among the loudest proponents of not aggregating the group with Al-Qaeda or other modern insurgent analogs.

Daesh became a potent regional force in Iraq and Syria within a very short time through a core of military and information capabilities, the resolve of leadership and global social media support. While Daesh compulsory force through conventional and
hybrid warfare was certainly a critical aspect of their dramatic rise to power, information warfare was as responsible for success as the kinetic rifles and rockets of the Daesh fighters. Effectively, Daesh was a regional power following the capture of Mosul 10 June 2014 that projected military kinetic and non-kinetic power and used information to attract global support in Iraq and Syria. This paper seeks to explore the military and information warfare of Daesh in order to better understand the implications of continued insecurity in the Levant.

ORIGINS

Daesh in Syria and Iraq

Daesh survived the United States (US) military occupation of Iraq by maintaining a cellular network that waited in ungoverned spaces in Syria and Iraq, and with a lowered profile in sleeper cells within governed Arab Sunni populations. Daesh draws an origin story from 1999 and through many evolutions of leaders, fighters, and facilitators, a core of adaptable commanders prevailed to exert regional hard power in the Levant. This core of Daesh expanded in the Levant from 2014 to 2015 through military force aided by intimidation via information warfare. Daesh engendered conventional military dominance and territorial expansion in 2014 and 2015 under varied leaders, some from the fallen Saddam Hussein regime, others local insurgent commanders and foreign mujahideen. Daesh’s use of military force and information warfare combined coercion and threats to make others follow.

The window of opportunity for Daesh expansion arose when the US withdrew military forces in 2011. Syria and Iraq were left with the “perfect storm” of a vulnerable security situation that no government could fill. The deteriorating security situation
was because of in fighting and corruption in Iraq and a civil war in Syria.\textsuperscript{xv} The Iraqi military, the government, and the state itself were in a condition of disarray given to a purge in key Sunni Arab parliamentarians by Shia Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, including the minister of defence, minister of finance and the vice-president.\textsuperscript{xvi} The purge of key experienced Iraqi officials took place at a critical time in the power scramble following the 2003 US occupation, with increasing concerns of a sectarian rift and civil war among Shia and Sunni groups.\textsuperscript{xvii} Daesh adapted to the shifting situation and capitalized on weakness to militate their foreign and domestic Sunni base.\textsuperscript{xviii} After Daesh leader Abu Bakar Al-Baghdadi’s “Break the Walls” and “Operation Soldiers Harvest,” campaigns in 2012 and 2013 and military victories in early 2014, Daesh held the aura of a conquering army ready to continue unchecked expansion.\textsuperscript{xix} Daesh streamed across the border with Syria in multiple columns arranged in mobile, offensive action minded, and adaptive military formations.\textsuperscript{x} Daesh modified their approach and seized on the conditions set by the US military departure, civil war and sectarian in fighting.\textsuperscript{xxi}

THE STATE

Daesh continues to be a terrorist organization that conducts attacks globally and locally. Indeed, even while in decline, Daesh (not including affiliates) was responsible for more deaths and attacks worldwide than any other radical extremist group from 2014 to 2018.\textsuperscript{xxii} Since declaring a Caliphate in 2014, Daesh claimed responsibility for 143 attacks in 29 countries other than Iraq or Syria from June 2014 to February
Counterinsurgency and terrorism experts Daniel Byman, Audrey Cronin, David Kilcullen, and William McCants all treat Daesh not as an insurgency, but as a state-like party fighting a civil war against weakened governments in Syria and Iraq. Unlike Al-Qaeda, Daesh sought to take and hold territory. Kilcullen uses the Montevideo Convention together with customary international law to support his argument that not only did Daesh think and fight like a state, but for all intents and purposes was a state. Kilcullen supports this argument with facts from the height of Daesh’s power: Daesh territory held was equal to that of the British Isles; 6 million citizens were under the control of Daesh (this number would rise to an approximate total of 11 million at the peak of Daesh’s power); there was an organized ruling government composed of a military, police force and general services such as health care; there were tenuous relations with Syria selling oil and electricity and relations with Turkey selling oil. Based on this reasoning Daesh was a state, and definitely not what one western leader stated, that Daesh and Al-Qaeda were “… one and the same.” Moreover, Daesh’s Caliphate conforms to the classical Weberian definition of statehood—the monopoly of the legitimate use of the force in a given territory. However, the one issue with this application is legitimacy—the internal/external legitimacy of Daesh is contested and much depends on the narrative and perspective of the analysis.

ADAPTIVE WARFARE

A key tenet of Daesh’s physical superiority from 2013-2015 was maneuver warfare, including mission command and all arms offensive operations that stressed mobility, firepower, and concentration of force, in a classic state based approach. Former Ba’athist military commanders in key Daesh leadership positions, tactically,
operationally and strategically experienced in maneuver warfare, were instrumental in the seizing and holding of multiple objectives in the summer of 2014. A prime example of the influence of the old Ba’athist regime is that two former Ba’athist generals from the period when Saddam Hussein controlled Iraq were at the pinnacle of power for the self-declared Daesh emirate alongside Baghdadi. As deputies to Baghdadi, the two former Ba’athist generals Abu Ali al-Anbari and Abu Muslim al-Turkmani controlled operations in Syria and Iraq. They were the architects, along with Baghdadi, of a state based approach to conflict that encompassed a strategic shift from insurgency to hybrid and conventional warfare. The paradigm shift by senior Daesh leadership, most notable during the capture of Mosul in June 2014, represented a move towards a campaign plan with phased military objectives along the doctrine of “Clear, Hold, Build” in order to achieve a substantive military victory. The Daesh military operations were crafted with professional military acumen and sufficient operational foresight to allow for the phased expansion of Daesh’s regional power in Iraq from a power base Syria. Moreover, renewed operations of Daesh represented a departure from previous insurgent guerrilla tactics during US occupation, allowing for regional power exertion. Iraqi Security Force (ISF) resistance crumbled in the face of Daesh and Baghdad was in jeopardy of a conventional assault.

The change in Daesh tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) in 2014 was wide scale and orchestrated across their entire military to facilitate seizing and holding a huge swath of territory in Iraq and Syria. Daesh adaptive TTPs achieved success through multiple and complex attacks. Daesh attacks used suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (SVBIEDs) to create chaos at key tactical points such as opponent headquarters (HQ), acting in concert with indirect fire, while concentrating on defeating opponent weak points through mechanized assaults, creating breaches with
improvised engineer elements, and exploited success with infantry. Daesh was enabled by a manoeuvrist conventional military, leading to the capture of Mosul.

The battle for Mosul in 2014 serves as an illustrative case study for Daesh conquest and overall imposition of will through compulsory military force. The military success of Daesh in Mosul represented the use of momentum to expand first in a local sense and then across international borders. Daesh leadership instilled purpose in their subordinate commanders to project strength from their base in western Syria and eastern Iraqi Sunni strongholds to capitalize on the weaknesses of the ISF in Mosul. Three key elements of Daesh’s military kinetic power projection allowed them to take the second most populous city of Iraq: concentration of force, unity of purpose and adaptability.

Daesh concentrated forces for the initial Mosul break-in. 1000 to 2000 fighters established a foothold in the Western edge of Mosul, forming a launch point to support further operations in Mosul. The vanguard of Daesh fighters performed conventional armed reconnaissance and probing attacks in the area to assess and harass the ISF. Daesh vanguard forces quickly became the main thrust of a larger offensive that would capture Mosul once it became apparent that the ISF was providing little resistance. Daesh fighters reportedly fought with determination and coordination, combining the shock action of SVBIEs with the maneuver of mechanized and mobile forces to exploit success. Daesh fighters used these manoeuvre tactics to mass combat power at weak
points in the dispersed ISF defence of Mosul and capture and hold key infrastructure.\textsuperscript{xlv} Once ISF resistance was crumbling, Daesh leadership continued to buttress success on the Mosul offensive from Syria and adjacent Iraqi elements.\textsuperscript{xlvi} Daesh reinforced success and concentrated force to expand their territory by capturing the second most populous city in Iraq.

Daesh demonstrated adaptability in changing operational plans to expand territorial gains. For the battle of Mosul, Daesh captured US military weapons and equipment abandoned by the ISF, with further abandoned ISF stockpiles upgrading Daesh’s capabilities.\textsuperscript{xlvii} Daesh also mobilized guerrilla fighters in urban centres to fight adversary rear elements, with Mosul being ideal given a large and disenfranchised population to draw upon.\textsuperscript{xlviii} Low profile Daesh supporters living amongst the population in sleeper cells were activated, causing perhaps the greatest collateral damage to the physical and psychological foundation of the ISF.\textsuperscript{xlix} This adaptable approach suited the regional expansion agenda of senior Daesh leadership.

Daesh combined the offensive military imperatives of concentration of force with adaptability to instill a unifying purpose. Meanwhile, the ISF had no greater purpose imbued in their front-line soldiers, which became apparent during assaults by Daesh in 2014.\textsuperscript{I} Daesh exploited this in Mosul and other major Iraqi cities such as Fallujah and Ramadi. Daesh used this sense of purpose in all their fighters to defeat the ISF in the spiritual, intellectual and physical domains to expand their regional control in Iraq and Syria.\textsuperscript{II} Daesh used ruthless tactics to expand their regional power, even when faced with heavy resistance from scant ISF hold-out elements. A focused suicide bomber attack defeated a determined ISF unit, as reported by a first-hand account of the last Iraqi pocket of resistance in Western Mosul collapsing.\textsuperscript{III} The targeted suicide bomber,
like many others used by Daesh, caused resistance to evaporate; Daesh’s grasp on Mosul would then last three years. Finally, the Daesh sense of purpose demonstrated during the battle for Mosul highlighted a further strength that would be exploited fully: the use of information warfare.

INFORMATION WARFARE

Daesh weaponized their image to expand, beyond relying on tactical acumen and shrewd campaign design. Daesh cultivated an aura of unstoppable victory that would facilitate future operations during the aforementioned “Break the Walls” and “Operation Soldier’s Harvest” campaigns from 2012 to 2013. Organic Daesh social media broadcasts of victory and mainstream international media hyperbole facilitated a formidable narrative. Prisoners in orange jumpsuits were juxtaposed with black robe clad, scimitar-wielding executioners in social media to symbolize ancient conquest reborn, as well as rage over modern extrajudicial detention. Opponents of Daesh feared the black flags of Daesh, made evident in the media fixation and bystander horror surrounding the globally broadcast gruesome executions of detainees. The media sensationalized the Daesh narrative and amplified the imagery and messages through mass print, video and online circulation. The narrative included immolation of prisoners trapped in cages, drowning, or decapitation by explosive nooses. Iraq in turn garrisoned over half the national strength of the ISF in Baghdad at points in 2015 and 2016 due to the fear of Daesh assault. The ISF was reduced to a checkpoint military, unable to counter the manoeuvre force of Daesh. Daesh fixed their opponents in a location where they could not counterattack. The Iraqi government and military were so fearful of the image Daesh had created that they fled battles where they outnumbered Daesh 15:1 or greater, and centralized assets in urban centres when they
should have blocked Daesh in open terrain.\textsuperscript{lxii} The army of Daesh implemented control through military might enabled by the threats Daesh created through information warfare, achieving victory at times without resistance as evidenced by the Camp Speicher Massacre.\textsuperscript{lxii}

The Camp Speicher Massacre took place in the shadow of Saddam Hussein’s ruined Salahudin palace in Tikrit where 1,700 Shia members of the ISF were executed.\textsuperscript{lxiii} Only 100 Daesh fighters carried out the massacre and bolstered their stockpile of war matériel, capturing an array of US hardware.\textsuperscript{lxiv} The Camp Speicher Massacre was also a victory in the psychological domain, indicative of how crucial the spectre of the “invincible Daesh fighter” was to their victory in 2014. Daesh coerced others to capitulate without a fight and seized large swaths of territory, ruled over millions, appropriating modern US military armoured fighting vehicles and small arms and extracted billions of dollars in oil wealth and hard currency. The ISF was rendered ineffective in part by the strength of Daesh in the psychological domain.

Two elements Daesh mastered over their adversaries facilitated these victories: conventional military all arms maneuver centric warfare and internet-enabled information warfare. Daesh required a stream of recruits to be part of the assault and logistical apparatus to serve in roles such as fighters, social media propagandists, and
key technical expertise. Daesh would inspire recruits to draw from countries around the world as diverse as Tunisia, Russia, Canada, Indonesia and France.\textsuperscript{lxv}

**A NETWORKED IDEOLOGY**

Daesh’s top down military acumen and capabilities would be irrelevant without the mass of fighters, logistical support or cyber influencers to win decisive engagements and hold territory. Daesh drew upon a pool of global recruits to achieve goals and objectives using attraction instead of coercion.\textsuperscript{lxvi} Daesh used a two-pronged narrative approach, one part apocalyptic and one part centered on immediate gratification, to appeal to worldwide followers to journey to the Levant at a rate of 1250 individuals per month from 2014 to 2015.\textsuperscript{lxvii} The message comprised of equal parts messianic and earthly gratification served to captivate and assimilate those seeking meaning and adventure, opening the Daesh fight against the West to a global audience. William Faizi McCants argues that Daesh is the most successful modern Islamic extremist group and has surpassed Al-Qaeda because of their overt apocalyptic vision.\textsuperscript{lxviii} Daesh also did what Al-Qaeda was unwilling to do by embracing the power of the immediate, reaping global support unprecedented by a modern extremist organization.\textsuperscript{lxix} Moreover, understanding the individuals that joined and comprised Daesh provide a fulsome picture of this organization.

A great deal of information available on Daesh resides in the two largest unclassified primary source repositories available to date: data on thousands of recruits courtesy of a defector and an electronic leak of Daesh’s own database of thousands of recruit questionnaires.\textsuperscript{lxx} Daesh members represented a diverse mix of nationalities, hailing from any one of at least 86 countries.\textsuperscript{lxxi} Typically, Daesh volunteers came from Middle Eastern and North African states and were better educated than other insurgent
groups in the region. Members of Daesh were not necessarily veterans of previous
wars or even willing to martyr themselves, with only 10 percent having previous military
experience and 12 percent identifying as wanting to conduct suicide operations. Daesh
learned about and applied empathy to their recruit pool to exploit recruit
strengths and weaknesses to further organizational objectives. Daesh attempted to use
the talents and desires of their members, matching backgrounds with strengths to create
an avalanche of popular support. The “heroic journey” Daesh narrative drew
fighters, equipment and financing on an extraordinary global scale, peaking 30,000
foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq alone. Daesh crafted this message to appeal to
recruits, provide premeditated guidance, and strove to further enhance the Caliphate’s
legitimacy.

Daesh’s quest for legitimacy in the eyes of their current and prospective
followers created the framework for a wider captivating strategy. The power of
Daesh rested upon a foundation of appeal to a supposed higher cause greater than the
individual, coupled with the immediacy of primal earthly rewards. Daesh instilled
their messages of self-sacrifice and opposition to the West to such an extent that in July
2014 one quarter of youths aged 18 to 24 (of all religious backgrounds) in France viewed
the group favourably. This strong Daesh narrative was a critical factor to building
a foundation of “true believers.” The Daesh global doomsday message to potential
recruits entwined immediate visions of conquest and material gain in the forms of
capturing territory, killing and enslaving opponents, and sex. Daesh exemplified this
in their video “Flames of War” to present the duality of immediate reward through
conquest with everlasting commitment to Daesh’s ideology. Daesh portrayed the US
coalition as defenders of the cross in a multilingual voice over, as bullet time video
effects mixed with apocalyptic intonations of true believers fighting for a higher
cause. The "Great Satan" (the US) allowed for a mighty opponent to exist within the end of times narrative - an opponent that Daesh could align potential followers against. Daesh used the trope of the end of times and the final battle on the plains of Dabiq as a backdrop to conquest. Daesh pushed their message to adolescents through indoctrination, in an effort to prepare the next generation for their cause.

The cyber realm offered an avenue of approach and possibility, with a low barrier to entry that an asymmetrical actor like Daesh used to shape world politics. Modern technology provided Daesh a key tool to achieve their objectives of conquest.

Social media remains a key component for spreading the message of Daesh and garnering legitimacy. Daesh first identified a target audience and then sought to attract these individuals to further organizational goals. Daesh did this through a media campaign that resembled a political public relations approach or refined business communications strategy. The virtual world enabled a new shared reality, with current Daesh fighters documenting their lives in real time for global followers to draw inspiration. Their social media communications machine attracted followers and bolstered capabilities in Syria and Iraq, with online tools allowing for autonomous and decentralized messaging.

Daesh’s strategic use of Twitter has bequeathed to researchers an archived electronic database of information that shows the power of social media to meet a non-traditional state’s objectives. 12 million raw tweets from 16,634 suspected Daesh accounts from 2014-2015 present a message combining images of utopian life in the Caliphate, military conquest and atrocities. Initial internet drag nets created by social media-skilled Daesh web operators were able to initiate contact in the native language of foreign recruits at a time and opportunity that benefited Daesh’s information
campaign. Messages between recruiter and prospect then moved to encrypted platforms as the relationship matured to start the prospect’s journey to Syria or Iraq. The social media operations to target a potential flow of recruits to Syria and Iraq would provide the lifeblood of the fighters and support Daesh required to meet regional objectives from 2014 to 2015. Social media effectively functioned as a recruiting primer.

Daesh recruiters were able to use a targeted approach to bring foreigners to the cause of strengthening and expanding the Caliphate, similar to those found in direct marketing.

While disseminators of Daesh’s message were not necessarily official sources, they remained true to the core principles espoused by the group. Official Daesh social media sources in 2014 and 2015 were the major contingent that brought in global recruit support; however unaffiliated disseminators were a major minority. 11 of the 32 most popular pro-Daesh Twitter accounts from 2014 were unaffiliated disseminators, as Daesh’s partial outsourcing of information distribution strengthened network resiliency by disaggregating vulnerable information nodes. The Daesh narrative was contagious to the disenfranchised, potentially a deliberate product of the original architects, but one that took on a life of its own with the omnipresence of social media.
resiliency of Daesh’s network attracted followers to allow regional territory gains even when facing increased global opposition in late 2014 and early 2015. Daesh multiplied their force and capabilities by constantly expanding strength through the flow of material support and recruits to Iraq and Syria.\textsuperscript{xcviii} Attracting support through official and unofficial sources helped create the “Digital Caliphate.”\textsuperscript{xclix} The brand created by Daesh allowed for an actionable outlet for ideology to be presented to global followers.\textsuperscript{c} Global and regional social media successes resulted in a steady flow of fighters and supporters into Iraq and Syria in 2014 and 2015.\textsuperscript{ci}

Moreover, Daesh used social media to support global broadcasting of their message through official and unofficial sources, but at times was assisted by the West.\textsuperscript{cii} Charlie Winter argues that Daesh wormed their narrative into the consciousness of an enraptured world where Daesh propaganda fed the 24/7 news cycle.\textsuperscript{ciii} The net result was that more foreign fighters and foreign supporters joined the cause of Daesh than any other conflict-centric cause since 1945. This was through the power of attraction, bringing willing volunteers to Iraq and Syria to pursue the objectives of senior Daesh leadership.\textsuperscript{civ} The seat of the Daesh Caliphate crumbled in 2017 but the Digital Caliphate survives through virtual tendrils of information that still exhibit social media pull.\textsuperscript{cv} As well, the ongoing Daesh narrative serves as a blueprint for the future, regardless of actual geographic footprint, with an endless digital repository of media to inspire lone actors or groups. Daesh branding and information distribution have left an underlying cause that remains networked globally, in a virtual world that does not forget.
CONCLUSION

Daesh had the capability, resolve and popular support to exert regional power in Iraq and Syria through hard and soft power in 2014 and 2015. Daesh went from a minor local terrorist network to a regional power by exercising the functions of a state using a conventional military while projecting information to the world. Daesh created a modern blueprint for how an insurgency can emerge as a regional power. That a previously amorphous group could establish a proto-state, giving form and physical substance to an ideology stoked through decades of strife in the Levant, is a testament to success.

The initial success of Daesh suggests an emerging proto-state model for future similar global actors operating in failing states: a trend worth studying to better understand and react to an adversary during the initial confusion of unchecked conquest. Understanding Daesh is critical for a sustainable victory. After all, Daesh was defeated as a state, but not an ideology. The ideology of Daesh is resilient in the networked cyber realm, remaining an influential ideological force to inspire future attacks globally and locally. Daesh’s censorship online is a double-edged sword. While the whack-a-mole game of closing down Twitter accounts of Daesh supporters has produced initial success, second-order effects suggest that other platforms are now used. These platforms are encrypted, difficult to track and it may be problematic to follow a patchwork of gateways. An adaptive network like Daesh’s must be countered with an equally adaptive approach.

The next regional power vacuum in the Levant or elsewhere may allow for Daesh’s cyber blueprint to be improved upon by another analogous group. It is too early to know what the leadership of Daesh actually believed, however their tangible results
were challenging to overcome. Legions of devoted, and in many cases fanatical, members gave up on their homelands to pursue conquest, basic urges and a perceived utopia. Those who left Daesh or were captured cannot be assumed to be indicative of the whole; however, they may offer insight. The members of Daesh who survived and returned to the West may hold the key to understanding how an insurgent group came to exert regional power in the Levant. Surviving members are certainly worth further study to help prevent another group exercising the kind of regional power that Daesh exerted in 2014 and 2015.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Sham - are in flux depending on the source and the underlying messaging that is occurring from the originator. The use of names by all parties to the conflict could be an entire line of study in of itself, and potentially very meaningful. However, for simplicity, Daesh will be used here as it is both what is used by the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and a derogatory term (“one who sows discord/crushes underfoot” in Arabic) that is abhorred by the group.


Daesh traces an origin story that predates the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. In the mid-1990s and in early 2000, two prominent extremist Jihadists bear the mantle of the founding ideological and tactical leadership of Daesh - Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Abu Ali al-Anbari. While Daesh has been known under other names, especially during a tumultuous relationship with Al-Qaeda while known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), the trademark extreme ideology has remained very similar throughout. Anbari has been credited for the underpinnings of this ideology, while Zarqawi had been the prominent operational commander. Zarqawi was recognized as the brutish tactician who led through physical presence and force, while Anbari was the nominal second in command who likely formulated the extreme ideology that Daesh embodied. From 2003-2006 Zarqawi led insurgent AQI forces against the ISF and US
Coalition in Iraq until his death in a targeted strike by US SOF. At the junction of the death of Zarqawi, Egyptian Abu Ayyub al-Masri took over and announced the creation of the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) which was successful from 2006-2008 in taking over Anbar province. The US surge in 2008 defeated ISI militarily in Anbar and killed Masri in 2010. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the current leader of Daesh, survived detention at the infamous Camp Bucca prison, the killing of his predecessor Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, and also the CIA proclaimed defeat of Daesh in 2010. Baghdadi maintained a low profile in rebuilding Daesh, drawing upon his radicalized Camp Bucca former detainee associates as well as Anbari to form a core of extremist true believers. Baghdadi announced the “Islamic Caliphate” June 29th, 2014 following the Daesh capture of Mosul, with Baghdadi proclaimed “Caliph Ibrahim.”


xvii Ibid.

xviii Ibid.

xix Patrick Cockburn, The Rise of Islamic State. ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution (London: Verso, 2015), 11-14. “Break the Walls” was a campaign to free imprisoned insurgent fighters in 2012 and “Operation Soldier’s Harvest” was a campaign to target members of the ISF. Both campaigns were used for Daesh propaganda, with the “Break the Walls” campaign being particularly successful with 24 prisons breached and 500 insurgents freed from the notorious prison Abu Ghrabal alone.


xxiii Ibid.


Hybrid warfare refers to the combination of conventional, irregular, and sometimes cyber warfare into a greater military strategy that may be influenced by the political level.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


[xxvii] Ibid.


[xxx] Ibid.


[xxii] Ibid.


[xxvi] Ibid.


[xxx] Ibid.


xxvi Ibid.
xxvii Ibid.
xxviii Ibid.
xxix Ibid.


xxvi Ibid.
xxvii Ibid.
xxviii Ibid.
xxix Ibid.


Abdel Bari Atwan, Islamic State: The Digital Caliphate (London: Saqi Books, 2016), 137-190. Abdel Bari Atwan coined the term Digital Caliphate and argues that the capability of Daesh to use social media is as relevant a capability as kinetic attacks.


This paper was written by a student attending the Canadian Forces College Toronto. Opinions expressed remain those of the author and do not represent Department of National Defence or Canadian Forces policy.

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