

Committee: Special Political and Decolonization Committee
Issue: Eliminating the funding of ISIL via anti-money laundering strategies
Student Officer: George Kantzis
Position: Co-Chair

Introduction

In the last decade, a rapid increase of terrorist operations carried out in many countries throughout the world has taken place, jeopardizing global security. The core of these operations is thought to be the Middle East where some of the most powerful terrorist and extremist organizations have their headquarters, such as the “Islamic State of Iraq and Syria”. These facts have intensified the political debates trying to extinguish the jihadist organization and in conjunction with the Syrian civil war and the general political instability, they have caused great political turmoil in the region.



Figure 1: Regions controlled by ISIS marked as red

The Islamic State’s growing presence in the global actuality has been clearly manifested through a series of terrorist attacks in many cities internationally. These attacks are principally supported by the massive funds ISIS acquires via means such as but no limited to smuggling and extorting. Moreover, an important part of the funds are laundered, disguised and then introduced into the official banking system, thereby creating a serious problem, as far as the accountability of this laundered capital is concerned. As a result, countries have yet to find effective techniques to ensure the accountability for this international money laundering and to minimize the actions of ISIS in the international community. However, to achieve that, countries shall first understand the ideology of the group and its goals and then unite their forces against the self-declared “Sunni Caliphate”.

Definition of Key-Terms

Money Laundering

According to the “International Compliance Association (ICA)” the term money laundering is “used to describe the process by which criminals disguise the original ownership and control of the proceeds of criminal conduct by making such proceeds appear to have derived from a legitimate source.”

Money Laundering can be accomplished via an extensive process. The International Compliance Association (ICA) claims that this process is divided in three key-stages. The first stage is “the placement”, when funds coming from criminal activities are inserted into the economic system. The second is “the layering”, when these funds are laundered and the source is concealed, and the last stage is “the integration”, when the import of the disguised funds into the financial system takes place.

Caliphate

According to the News Agency “The Wire”, a caliphate is “an Islamic state, which is led by a caliph, who is a political and religious leader and a successor to the Islamic prophet Muhammad. The power and authority of the caliph is absolute and caliphates usually operate under the Sharia Law”.

Terrorism

Until now, the international community has failed to meet a consensus regarding the definition of “terrorism”. Therefore, on account of the absence of a universal definition of the term, the United Nations (UN) has been restricted from creating and actualizing an applicable strategy against terrorist acts. However, many definitions have been formed on a national or continental level, such as the “Convention on Combating International Terrorism” which defines terrorism as “any act of violence or threat with the aim of terrorizing people or threatening to harm them or imperilling their lives, honor, freedoms, security or rights or exposing the environment or any facility or public or private property to hazards or occupying or seizing them, or endangering a national resource, or international facilities, or threatening the stability, territorial integrity, political unity or sovereignty of independent States”.

Sunni Islam

Sunni Islam is the largest denomination/branch of the Islamic religion enumerating up to 940 million out of approximately 1.1 billion Muslim adherents worldwide, officially renowned as Sunnis or Sunnites. The term “Sunnis” derives from the Arab word “sunnah”, which is translated as “custom” or “tradition” and it basically means that the Sunnis follow the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad. The Sunnites believe that Prophet Muhammad’s successor, namely the caliph, is selected by the Muslim

community and vigorously oppose to the other Islamic denomination, the Shi'a, which claims that Muhammad appointed Ali, his son-in-law, to be his successor. Furthermore, the Sunnis invigorate the power of Allah and consequently in the Arab states where the Sunnis are a vast majority, the Sharia Law is strictly implemented.

Background Information

The formation and the goals of ISIS

The "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria", also known as the "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant", is an extremist terrorist jihadist military group located and operating mainly in the Middle East.

In 1999 the group was formed by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was a Jordanian Islamist. Later on, in 2004 the group was allied with Al-Qaeda and as a result it was officially named "Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)". Following the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi by a US airstrike in 2006, several jihadist groups merged in October 2006, establishing the "Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)", which was led by Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi, who was succeeded subsequent to his death by Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi in 2010.



Figure 2: ISIS soldiers in combat wielding their black flag

After the Arab Spring and the commencement of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi sent troops in 2012 to Syria to fight alongside the rebels against Bashar al-Assad's regime. In April 2013 the forces known as "Al-Nusra Front (ANF)" were consolidated with ISI creating the "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)". Finally, in June 2014 ISIS was self-announced as an international caliphate called "Islamic State (IS)" led by the caliph Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi.

Until the present, the Islamic State has performed numerous terrorist operations on a worldwide scale endangering global security and has managed to control a vast part of Iraq and Syria, with Al-Raqqah in Syria being the group's headquarters. The main goal of the organization is to create a caliphate and to establish a Sunni Islamic State. Moreover, they mainly aim at expanding this caliphate first by conquering Europe and thereafter the whole world. They generally seek to "fill the world with the truth and justice of Islam and to put an end to the falsehood and tyranny of jihiliyyah (state of ignorance)" as the 5th edition of "Dabiq" named "Remaining and Expanding", the Islamic State's magazine, conveys.

Funding means of ISIS

The ability of the “Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)” to accomplish ruthless attacks around the globe is due to the fact that since its formation, the organization has been successfully developed, taking over wealthy regions of Iraq and Syria. It has managed to become one of the world’s richest organizations, with a roughly estimated \$2 billion USD GDP. Having achieved that, ISIS is now able to acquire powerful weapons, to recruit Muslims who have pledged bay’ah (allegiance) to the group and to coordinate diverse perilous terrorist assaults and strikes all over the world.

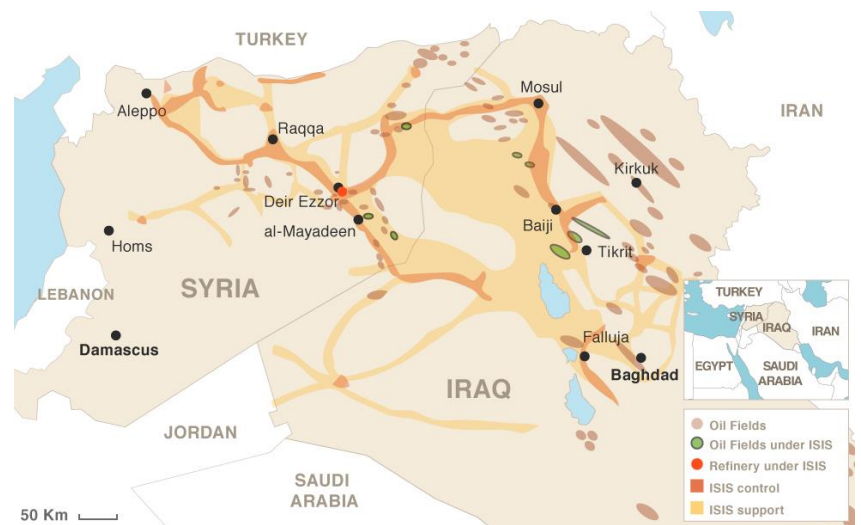


Figure 3: Oil fields controlled by ISIS

The Islamic State has found several ways to generate funds, so as to finance its missions and its existence. Some of the most profitable means are listed below:

- Donations from prominent and wealthy individuals from Qatar, Saudi Arabia and other countries in the Persian Gulf: The first years of operation of ISIS were largely financially supported by rich Muslims who had the same ideology and ambitions with the extremist group. The funds were supposedly raised as donations for charity and for humanitarian purposes. Additionally, through the use of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter platforms, ISIS manages to acquire funds by contacting a wider worldwide audience willing to provide financial aid.
- Recruitment of like-minded individuals: The “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)” recruits people habitually of younger ages over social media platforms. These people, arriving from all over the world, such as from the United States of America or from the United Kingdom, are used both to execute criminal terrorist activities and to fight in Syria and help find funders for the organization.
- Abductions and Ransoms: One of the most low-risk and simultaneously high-profit method to solicit funds is the kidnapping of people. ISIS takes hostages and imprisons victims from European and other Western countries and afterwards demands massive amounts of dollars paid in ransoms to release them. Furthermore, the victims can also be employees of national or international companies and corporations, which agree to provide the ransoms in order to ensure the safety of their personnel.

- **Human Trafficking:** The extension of ISIS over immense parts of Syria and Iraq is highly correlated with the fact that a lot of young girls and women are separated from their families and their villages and are either presented as gift to ISIS soldiers or are sold as slaves in local slave auctions, thus providing money to the ISIS militants.
- **Extortion and Taxes:** The provision of taxes also plays a key-role in the financing of the ISIS organization. ISIS imposes taxes not only on local businesses and other items of value, such as vehicles and telecommunication towers, but also on people that are not Islam adherents. The non-Muslim population in the region is made to deposit high taxes, so as to ensure their lives and their security. Hence, with the enforcement of taxes, ISIS predominantly seeks to extort businesses and to terrorize people to alter their religion.
- **Exploitation of Natural Resources:** Since the jihadist group administers a remarkable part of Iraq, it has captured fecund fields, where around 40% of the country's wheat is cultivated and therefore Iraq's food industry has been greatly affected. In addition, the group also exploits the hydroelectric power and the water resources of the Mosul Dam in Iraq, which they have recently gained control of. Both ways guarantee ISIS not only huge capitals but also the opportunity to dominate over the provision of the aforementioned resources and over (mainly) Iraq's food production line.
- **Robbery and Destructions:** Another lucrative source of funding is the Black Market. ISIS steals ancient artifacts, antiquities and other precious goods from archaeological sites and sells them on the Black Market, where the organization is able to evade taxes and other inspections. A similar example was the conquest and the destruction of the city of Palmyra in the summer of 2014, when ISIS blew up thousands of years of history and damaged invaluable treasures both in the city's museum and in the ancient site.

How Isis hijacked oil leaves Iraq

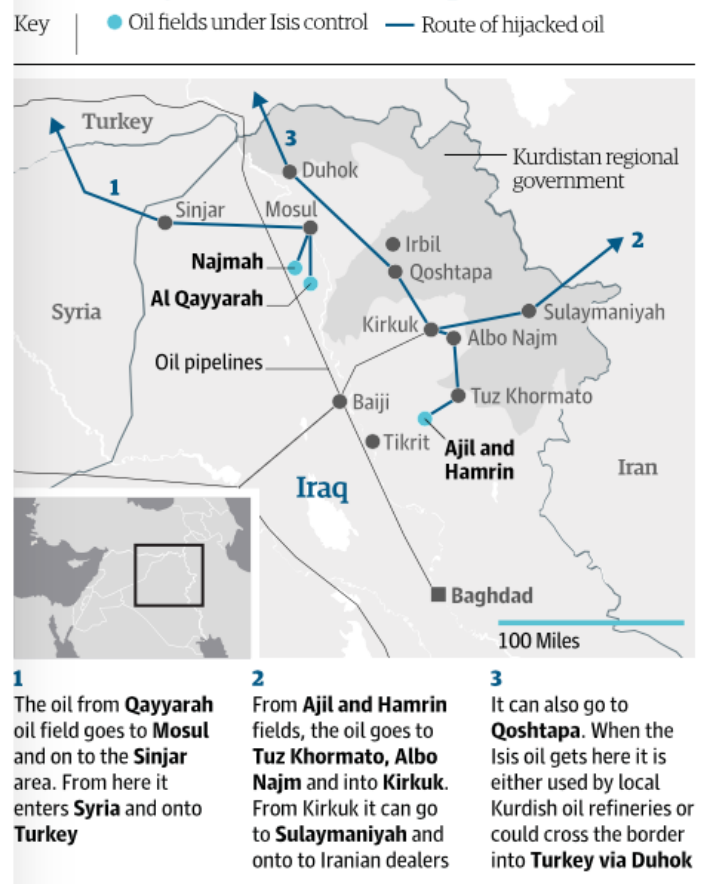


Figure 4: Oil smuggling routes of ISIS

- Smuggling of Oil Resources: In its territory in Syria and in Iraq, ISIS controls many oil fields and smuggles oil resources, such as gasoline and heating oil, to other regions. According to “the Guardian”, it is said that ISIS produces more than 25.000 barrels of oil per day and smuggles tons of resources to Iraqi Kurdistan, Turkey and Iran or sells them to oil refineries on the black markets, thus gaining large amounts of money.
- Drug Smuggling and Trafficking: A main profit resource for all terrorist organizations is the trafficking of illicit drugs. In accordance with the “Russian Federal Drug Control Service (FSKN)”, ISIS generates up to \$1 billion USD per year from smuggling heroin and other drugs through Iraq.

In conclusion, ISIS’s multiple ways to fund itself and its missions around the world clearly rely on the organization’s ability to efficiently launder its financial property. Through the laundering methods, the Islamic State is capable of entering the global bank system without being traced and of performing actions, which endanger the world’s prosperity. On that account, ensuring the accountability of and fighting against the Islamic State’s money laundering, will result in triumphantly preventing further attacks and stopping the expansion of the jihadist militant group.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United States of America (USA)

The United States of America have held numerous attacks against the jihadist group. In addition to that, the USA has taken the initiative to create the Jeddah Communique, which creates a coalition between certain countries and to lead the fight against the Islamic State by suppressing the financial resources and reducing the influence of ISIS in the region. According to administration officials of the US government, the applied strategy has been proved efficient in some operations, with forces, such as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), and sea-launched missiles, being deployed.

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation is also a key-power in the fight against ISIS. According to “the Guardian” of March 30, 2016, Russia is planning to release coordinated attacks in al-Raqqah, the headquarters of the jihadist organization. Additionally, since the intervention of Russia in the Syrian civil war in September 2015, Russia has managed to eliminate the Islamic State’s army by 35%, as Russia’s Deputy Security Chief has conveyed.

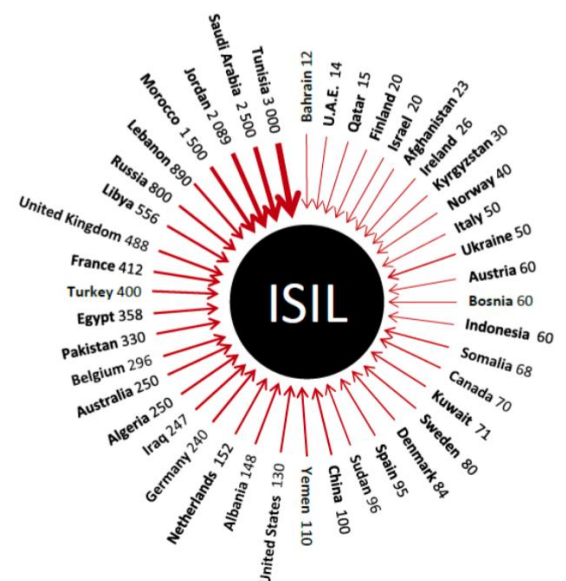


Figure 5: Where do ISIS foreign fighters come from?

United Kingdom (UK)

The United Kingdom has been accused that a lot of its British citizens have joined ISIS and fight alongside the terrorist group. Notwithstanding these accusations, the UK's Parliament agreed to assist to the fight against the ISIS threat by authorizing extensive "Royal Air Force" airstrikes on September 2014 and again on December 2015, consequently partly joining the coalition of the United States.

France

France also plays a significant role in defeating ISIS, as according to "the Guardian" France was the first country that has united its forces with the coalition in Iraq led by the US. By and large, France has carried out plenty airstrikes destroying ISIS-claimed camps resulting in making noteworthy progress. France has also been the target for ISIS-led or ISIS-inspired attacks, such as the multiple coordinated attacks in Paris on the 13th November of 2015.

Republic of Iraq

Iraq was the initial territory, where the Islamic State started operating and for this reason ISIS controls around one third of the country. Iraq has also signed the Jeddah Communique.

Syrian Arab Republic

Syria is the second country, where ISIS operates. The extremist group has conquered al-Raqqah, a Syrian city and now it is considered to be the caliphates capital and headquarters. ISIS has committed countless atrocities within Syria and has destroyed diverse archaeological sites, such as the ancient city of Palmyra, for its benefit.

State of Qatar

Qatar has been repeatedly accused that rich individuals are supporting the Islamic State through financial and military donations, yet the government has denied these accusations on various occasions. Nevertheless, Qatar has signed the Jeddah Communique and takes part in the US-led alliance against ISIS accomplishing airstrikes.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has also been accused that individuals provide financial assistance to ISIS and because of this, the country now prohibits unauthorized donations, so as to prevent such form of funding. On top of that, many Saudi Arabians have fled to Syria and joined ISIS. Nonetheless, the Saudi Arabian government has signed the Jeddah Communique and helps in the US-led attacks in Syria.

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

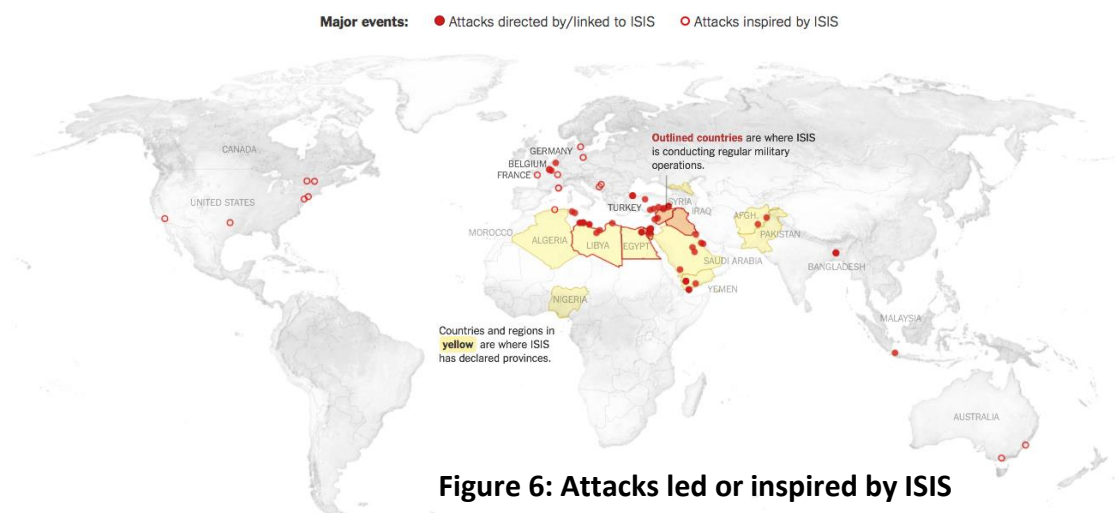
The main purpose of the “Financial Action Task Force (FATF)” is the disruption of the financial aid to terrorist organizations, such as ISIL, that use money laundering techniques and other methods. FATF has carried out a research-project in October 2014 in order to understand the financial flows of ISIS. In accordance with the “FATF Recommendations of 2012 on combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism”, FATF has proposed specific measures that member-states should implement to criminalize money laundering. Some of the most important ones being the “identification, the tracing and the evaluation of property that is subject to confiscation; the prevention of transfers or disposals of such property by freezing and seizing and the investigation of suspicious properties and capitals”.

For further information, please read the report: http://www.fatf-gafi.org/media/fatf/documents/recommendations/pdfs/FATF_Recommendations.pdf

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of the Event
October 2004	Formation of the “Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)”
October 2006	Creation of the “Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)” led by Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi
April 2013	Consolidation with “Al-Nusra Front” and creation of the “Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)”
June 2014	Announcement of the worldwide caliphate named “Islamic State (IS)” led by the caliph Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi
July/August 2014	ISIS has taken control of the archaeological site of Palmyra in Syria and has blown up the UNESCO’s World Heritage Monument
January 7, 2015	The Charlie Hebdo Shooting in Paris by “Al-Qaeda in Yemen”, where 12 people lost their lives and another 11 were injured
October 10, 2015	100 people gathered for a peace rally in Ankara, Turkey, were killed by two explosions, believed to have been caused by ISIS
November 13, 2015	Terrorist attacks across Paris, where 130 victims were killed. The coordinated attacks happened in various locations, such as in Stade de France, in Bataclan Theatre and in other cafés and restaurants. After the attacks, ISIS claimed responsibility.
March 22, 2016	ISIS suicide bombings take place in a subway station and in the international airport of Brussels, Belgium.

It must be mentioned that the events revolving around the “Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)” are not circumscribed by the above-mentioned occurrences. However, these events are crucial points that illustrate the issue.



Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

Security Council Resolution 2170 of 2014 [S/RES/2170 (2014)]

The Resolution 2170 was voted on the 14th of August 2014 by the Security Council at its 7242nd meeting. The Resolution condemns the foreign terrorist fighters and their recruitment by ISIS and focuses on the financing of terrorism, deciding that “all States shall ensure that no funds, financial assets or economic resources are made available, directly or indirectly for the benefit of ISIS”, as the twelfth clause proposes. Moreover, the fourteenth clause reprimands “any engagement in direct or indirect trade involving ISIS”, thereby basically incriminating all states that assist or benefit from the illegal drug or natural resources trafficking.

Security Council Resolution 2178 of 2014 [S/RES/2178 (2014)]

The Resolution 2178 was adopted unanimously on the 24th of September 2014 by the Security Council at its 7272nd meeting. Through this resolution, the Council decided that “member States shall, consistent with the international laws, prevent the recruiting, organizing, transporting or equipping of individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of perpetration, planning of, or participation in terrorist acts”, as it is mentioned in the fifth operative clause, thus attempting to condemn the augmentation of extremism and terrorism.

The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy was voted by the General Assembly on the 8th of September 2006. The Strategy consists of four so-called “Pillars”, which

are reviewed every two years by the General Assembly and aims at tackling global terrorism and ceasing future attacks. The first Pillar revolves around “addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism”, the second deals with “measures to prevent and combat terrorism”, the third composes “measures to build states’ capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in that regard” and finally the fourth comes up with “measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism”.

Security Council Resolution 2253 of 2015 [SC/RES/2253 (2015)]

The Resolution 2253 was unanimously passed on the 17th of December 2015 by the Security Council at its 7587th session. The Resolution affirms that all entities supporting or financing ISIS should be held accountable and mostly cover topics such as “asset freeze, travel ban and arms embargo”.

The Jeddah Communique

The Jeddah Communique is an official document signed in September 2014 by Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and the United States, which forms an alliance between the relevant countries aiming at countering ISIS by eliminating possible funding methods and by preventing people from joining ISIS from the neighboring countries. Other countries have joined the coalition as well, without having signed the communique, such as the UK and France.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

In the previous years, different resolutions have been adopted proposing the implementation of multifarious measures and emphasizing the importance of immediate action. Despite that, little progress has been made to ensure the accountability of the money laundering to ISIS and to cease all financial flows of the organization.

First of all, the UN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2170 and S/RES/2178 have not tackled the problem efficiently, even though they have condemned the recruitment of people in terrorist organizations and have prohibited any trade or financial transaction with ISIS and other affiliates. This is mainly due to the fact that ISIS operates with ultimate stealth and all its transactions with third parties are covered and kept confidential. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has attempted to counter this secrecy and intrude ISIS’s financial network through different projects, however since the organization is really dispersed and has a lot of ways to solicit laundered capital, these attempts have been mostly deemed unsuccessful. Therefore, FATF’s research report of October 2014 aimed at first investigating the

financial flows of ISIS and then propose practices that would avert and stop these routes, so as to be fully informed about all financial operations of ISIS before attempting to fight the group again.

Secondly, although many countries have initiated attacks and airstrikes against ISIS, the jihadist group continues its expansion in the Middle East and acquires even more funds and supporters around the world every day, since many people are being blackmailed and threatened to join. Moreover, notwithstanding that the Security Council Resolution S/RES/2178 clearly states that countries shall prevent individuals from being enrolled in extremist terrorist groups like ISIS and from participating in terrorist attacks, member states have not suggested sufficient legislative frameworks to combat this phenomenon yet and therefore more and more people choose to leave their countries for “the purpose of perpetration and terrorism”.

Accordingly, stronger and enhanced measures and other anti-terrorism techniques must be applied with the cooperation of all UN forces, in order to achieve the desired result, meaning the effacement of ISIS.

Possible Solutions

As Ban Ki-moon, the current United Nations Secretary General, has claimed, “terrorism is a significant threat to peace and security, prosperity and people”. In consequence, countries shall implement applicable measures that tackle the problem at hand.

One possible solution to the issue could be the creation of a sub-commission of FATF only dedicated to the elimination of the actions of ISIS. The commission could run frequent investigations on suspicious bank transactions or institutions, minimize possible threats of money laundering through the enactment of special measures and generally collect information regarding the organization.

Another effective solution would be the creation of a UN body that would primarily attempt to block ISIS’s smuggling routes of natural resources and oil and prevent the group from introducing its disguised property to the international banking system via extensive controls and inspections.

Last but not least, countries should recommend measures to strengthen and enhance the existing international banking system regarding money laundering and the concealment of funds, in order to complicate the transactions between the extremist terrorist group and other sources. For instance, countries could follow the

example of Saudi Arabia and effectuate a closely monitored banking system where unauthorized donations to organizations would be outlawed.

All these measures and many more will guarantee that ISIS will be defeated, which will only happen if countries manage to ensure accountability for the group's money laundering and to hinder the Islamic State's supplies and funds.

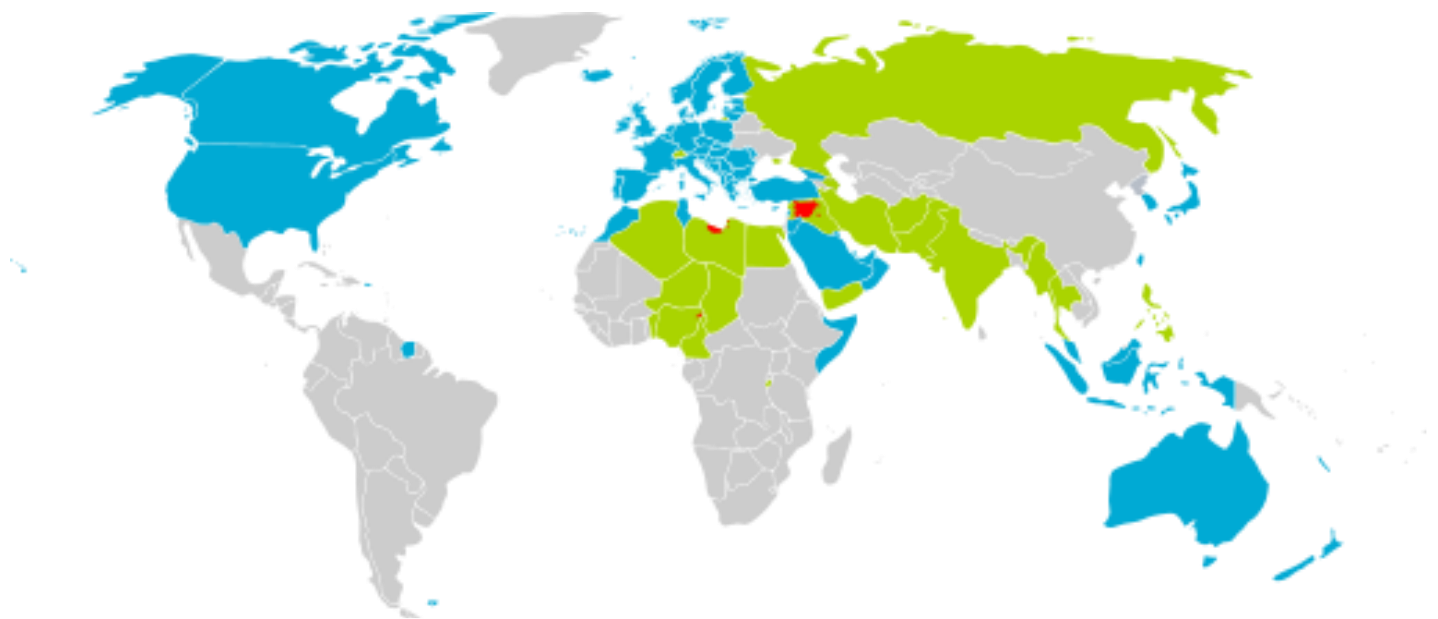


Figure 7: Countries publicly against ISIS

Regions controlled by ISIS

FATF member states

Other countries opposed to ISIS

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