

# A Counter-Social Movement Approach to Deconstructing Daesh

A Monograph

by

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## Abstract

A Counter-Social Movement Approach to Deconstructing Daesh, by MAJ Jacob Sweatland, United States Army, 68 pages.

Current operational approaches against Daesh are predicated upon its categorization as either a state or terrorist organization. When viewed as a state, Daesh seems most likely to succumb to the application of decisive action as described in US Army unified land operations doctrine. For those who see Daesh as a terrorist organization, Army counterinsurgency doctrine seems to offer the best approach. If, however, Daesh does not fit neatly into either of these categories, one must question the effectiveness of combating Daesh according to either of these operational approaches. As an alternative, the US military could view Daesh as a transnational social movement organization (SMO), and by doing so, planners could develop a more effective operational approach to counteract movements like Daesh. This argument hinges on analyzing Daesh according to the political process model (PPM) of social movement theory (SMT) to determine lines of effort (LOE) against which US military forces could best apply resources to counteract the SMO.

This study is divided into four sections. The first section constitutes an overview of SMT as a form of contentious politics. The second section presents a comprehensive history of Daesh. The third section explicitly applies the PPM to Daesh. The final section analyzes the US government's counter-Daesh strategy, and offers, as an alternative based upon the PPM, a set of LOE against which resources could best be applied to effectively counteract the movement.

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## Acronyms

AQI	al-Qaeda in Iraq
CJOA	Combined Joint Area of Operations
CM	Classical Model
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
DOD	Department of Defense
DOS	Department of State
IS	Islamic State
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
JTWJ	Jamaat al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad
PPM	Political Process Model
RMM	Resource Mobilization Model
SMO	Social Movement Organization
SMT	Social Movement Theory
SOCCENT	Special Operations Command Central
SOF	Special Operations Forces
ULO	Unified Land Operations
UN	United Nations

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## Introduction: A Counter-Social Movement Approach to Deconstructing Daesh

Political Islam matters, and it is not going away any time soon. It is a powerful ideology and social movement, running deep within and across most Muslim countries today and among minority Muslim populations in Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Asia. A source of hope to millions, an atavistic nightmare to millions of others.

—John M. Owens IV, *Confronting Political Islam*

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), locally referred to as *ad-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi al-Iraq wash-Sham*, or Daesh, shocked the Western world in June of 2014 when it seized Iraq's second largest city, Mosul, and routed two Iraqi Army Divisions in the process.<sup>1</sup> After this victory, Daesh's leaders proclaimed the establishment of the caliphate, God's kingdom on earth, drawing both international attention and supporters to its cause. The fall of Mosul was the most recent and significant victory in a campaign in which Daesh had seized several key cities across northwestern Iraq and eastern Syria with little opposition, including Fallujah, Hawija, Tikrit, Tal Afar, and Raqqa.<sup>2</sup> Upon their occupation of these cities, Daesh committed mass executions and public crucifixions, enslaved women and children as the spoils of war, destroyed historical artifacts, and committed larceny on a grand scale.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The US government uses the acronym ISIS, consistent with National Security Presidential Memorandum-3 of January 28, 2017, while the media typically refers to this movement of militants as the Islamic State (IS). The analysis presented here refers to the movement as Daesh—the Arabic acronym commonly used in the Middle East, and a strategically better choice because it denies the movement the legitimacy its leaders desire from their self-declaration of statehood.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Chulov, "Iraq Army Capitulates to ISIS Militants in Four Cities," *The Guardian*, June 11, 2014, accessed September 7, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/11/mosul-isis-gunmen-middle-east-states>; Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic*, March 20, 2015, accessed August 25, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>; Luis Tome, "The 'Islamic State': Trajectory and Reach a Year after Its Self-Proclamation as a 'Caliphate,'" *Janus.net e-journal of International Relations* 6, no. 1 (May-October 2015): 116-39, accessed October 12, 2016, [http://observare.ual.pt/janus.net/en\\_vol6\\_n1\\_art8](http://observare.ual.pt/janus.net/en_vol6_n1_art8); BBC, "Militants seize Iraq's second city of Mosul," *BBC News*, June 10, 2014, accessed October 12, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27778112>.

<sup>3</sup> For articles on atrocities committed by Daesh, see Charlotte Alfred, "ISIS Releases Video Claiming to Show Mass Execution in Ancient Palmyra," *World Post*, July 4, 2015, accessed

Seemingly in an instant, as William McCants wrote, Daesh “threatened to topple American allies in the Middle East, destabilize world energy markets, foment revolution abroad, and launch attacks against Europe and the United States.”<sup>4</sup> And yet, just three years earlier Daesh stood on the brink of defeat, after having lost favor with Sunni tribal leaders during a period known as the Awakening (*Sahwa*) which began in 2007. Observing the meteoric resurgence of Daesh from its state of irrelevancy left American political-military leaders scrambling to craft an operational approach as a solution to the problem. However, crafting a suitable solution to a problem first requires that it be properly understood.<sup>5</sup> Daesh is a complex threat, one that American political-military leaders have had difficulty categorizing, variously referring to Daesh as a state, a terrorist

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October 12, 2016, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/07/04/isis-palmyra-execution-video\\_n\\_7727258.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/07/04/isis-palmyra-execution-video_n_7727258.html); Stephanie Nebehay, “ISIS Reportedly Crucified, Buried Children Alive in Iraq: UN,” *World Post*, February 3, 2015, accessed October 12, 2016, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/04/isis-crucified-children\\_n\\_6613578.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/04/isis-crucified-children_n_6613578.html); Rick Gladstone and Maher Samaan, “ISIS Destroys More Artifacts in Syria and Iraq,” *New York Times*, July 3, 2015, accessed October 12, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/04/world/middleeast/isis-destroys-artifacts-palmyra-syria-iraq.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/04/world/middleeast/isis-destroys-artifacts-palmyra-syria-iraq.html?_r=0); Amnesty International, “Escape from Hell-Torture, Sexual Slavery in Islamic State Captivity in Iraq,” *Amnesty International USA*, December 22, 2014, accessed October 12, 2016, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/research/reports/escape-from-hell-torture-sexual-slavery-in-islamic-state-captivity-in-iraq>.

<sup>4</sup> William McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2015), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Myriam Benraad, “Iraq’s Tribal ‘Sawha’: Its Rise and Fall,” *Middle East Policy* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2011), accessed October 1, 2016, <http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/iraqs-tribal-sawha-its-rise-and-fall>; Islamic State, *Black Flags from the Islamic State: How al-Qa’idah Became the Islamic State (1989-2016)*, accessed October 13, 2016, <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/misc/864.pdf>; Charles Lister, “Profiling the Islamic State,” Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper, December 1, 2014, accessed October 13, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/profiling-the-islamic-state>; Josh Levs, “Will Anyone Stop ISIS?” *CNN*, August 7, 2014, accessed October 13, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/08/07/world/meast/stopping-isis/index.html>; Jennifer Steinhauer and Michael D. Shear, “Obama’s Plans to Stop ISIS Leave Many Democrats Wanting More,” *New York Times*, December 8, 2015, accessed October 13, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/09/us/politics/obamas-plans-to-stop-isis-leave-many-democrats-wanting-more.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/09/us/politics/obamas-plans-to-stop-isis-leave-many-democrats-wanting-more.html?_r=0); Barack Obama, *Transcript: President Obama’s Speech on Combatting ISIS and Terrorism*, September 11, 2014, *CNN*, accessed October 17, 2016, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/10/politics/transcript-obama-syria-isis-speech/>; Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants,” 201.

organization, or something else altogether. This is not a trivial issue—the categorization of Daesh will determine, in large part, the way to pursue its defeat.<sup>6</sup>

Although Daesh has claimed state status, the international community has not recognized it as such. More importantly, most jihadists and Islamic scholars in the Muslim world have rejected Daesh’s claim to statehood. To establish its legitimacy, Daesh has, in Joby Warrick’s words, “maintained the pretense that the organization was a real country, with an administration and departments and even a flag,” however, “that the state was fictional was clear even to family members” of senior Daesh leaders.<sup>7</sup>

Article 1 of the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States—the codified criteria for statehood accepted in international law—requires a state to satisfy the following requirements: preside over a permanent population; maintain a defined territory; uphold an established government; and have the capacity to engage in relations with other states. In addition to the requirements of statehood codified in the Montevideo Convention, political

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<sup>6</sup> “[Daesh] is certainly not a state . . . It is recognized by no government, nor the people it subjugates . . . [Daesh] is a terrorist organization, pure and simple.” Obama, *Combating ISIS and Terrorism*. Officially, the US government categorizes Daesh as a terrorist organization, not a state. Others have disagreed with the simple classification of Daesh as a terrorist organization. The Director of the International Security Program at George Mason University wrote “Though it [Daesh] uses terrorism as a tactic, it is not really a terrorist organization at all . . . If [Daesh] is purely and simply anything, it is a pseudo-state led by a conventional army.” Audrey Kurth Cronin, “ISIS is not a Terrorist Group: Why Counterterrorism Won’t Stop the Latest Jihadist Threat,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2015, accessed October 17, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/isis-not-terrorist-group>. A Senior Lecturer in Public International Law at the University of Aberdeen, describes this challenge of defining Daesh as something other than a state or terrorist organization. He dismisses Daesh’s claim of statehood, but also says that Daesh is “different from terrorist groups or organizations, [that Daesh] has acquired the ability to mobilize thousands of fighters and impose its will on millions, which is broadly comparable to the abilities of sovereign states.” Zeray Yihdego, “The Islamic ‘State’ Challenge: Defining the Actor,” *E-International Relations*, June 24, 2015, accessed October 17, 2016, <http://www.e-ir.info/2015/06/24/the-islamic-state-challenge-defining-the-actor/>.

<sup>7</sup> Joe Boyle, “Islamic State and the idea of Statehood,” *BBC News*, January 6, 2015, accessed October 17, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30150681>; McCants, *ISIS Apocalypse*, 18, 128; Joby Warrick, *Black Flags: The Rise of ISIS* (New York: Doubleday, 2015), 244.

scientists widely agree with Max Weber's condition that a state must maintain a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence in its occupied territory.<sup>8</sup>

Even a cursory analysis reveals that Daesh fails to satisfy the minimum requirements of statehood. First, although tens of thousands of foreign fighters have emigrated from around the world to join Daesh in its supposed role as the harbinger of the apocalypse, millions of people are fleeing the land it occupies. Thus, at best Daesh is attempting to preside over a transient population. Daesh rejects the notion of controlling a defined territory. In its propaganda, Daesh spokesmen symbolically destroy border markers between Iraq and Syria, declaring that prophecy requires Daesh to conquer every country on earth. Although prophecy holds that Daesh must occupy a swath of land from Iraq to Syria to maintain its status as a caliphate, conceptually its dominion is to be unbounded. Daesh claims to have established a government and goes to great lengths to show its fighters distributing humanitarian aid, regulating commerce, maintaining infrastructure, and providing basic services to people trapped in its occupied territory, but these efforts are mostly symbolic.<sup>9</sup>

As William McCants has written, Daesh is “more focused on fighting than on governing,” and its administrators are coming to realize that “running a state is nothing like running a war.” Daesh rejects the notion of entering into relations with other states out of hand; to do so would contradict its foundational doctrine that claims all states but itself are illegitimate, essentially

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<sup>8</sup> Malcom N. Shaw, *International Law*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 178; Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. and trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 77-128, accessed September 7, 2016, <http://polisci2.ucsd.edu/foundation/documents/03Weber1918.pdf>; Andre Munro, “State Monopoly on Violence,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 6, 2013, accessed October 17, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/state-monopoly-on-violence>; Matt Ridley, “Government Begins as a Monopoly on Violence,” *Blog Rationaloptimist.com*, September 4, 2014, accessed October 17, 2016, <http://rationaloptimist.com/blog/government-begins-as-a-monopoly-on-violence.aspx>; Melanne A. Civic and Michael Miklaucic, “The State and the Use of Force: Monopoly and Legitimacy,” in *Monopoly of Force: The Nexus of DDR and SSR*, eds. Melanne A. Civic and Michael Miklaucic, (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 2011), xv-xxv.

<sup>9</sup> Wood, “What ISIS Wants.”

denying its *sine qua non* for existence. Contrary to accepted definitions of statehood, Daesh can hardly claim to maintain a monopoly on the use of violence in its occupied territory—Daesh shares that capability with the actual governments of Syria, Iraq, and Libya, and shows no signs of establishing the level of control needed to achieve this characteristic of a modern state. As these various factors demonstrate, simply claiming statehood does not make it so, and experts such as William McCants have written that Daesh lacks “the essential characteristics of any government, modern or otherwise.”<sup>10</sup>

Although Daesh uses terrorism as a tactic for advancing its purposes, one should not view Daesh as merely a terrorist organization. In the territory that it occupies, Daesh acts as a beacon for jihadists by establishing state-like institutions, organizing politically, and creating a formal military structure to serve a religious purpose. Daesh holds a post-state vision of the future, one in which the modern state system no longer exists; as such, Daesh does not simply use violence to create fear and thereby gain political concessions. Daesh uses violence to attract supporters to its cause, supporters who share the same apocalyptic vision and who are excited about the prospect of carrying out extreme acts of violence as a religious obligation. Accordingly, as noted by Jessica Lewis, Research Director at the Institute for the Study of War, “It is necessary to avoid framing a US counter-terrorism strategy to defeat [Daesh] as if it were a terrorist organization.”<sup>11</sup> Daesh concomitantly shares the features of a governing body, religious assembly, and modern military, which make the organization durable and resistant to any surgical counterterrorism strategy.

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<sup>10</sup> McCants, *ISIS Apocalypse*, 135, 139; Yuval Shany, Amichai Cohen, and Tal Mimran, “Is the Islamic State Really a State?” The Israel Democracy Institute, September 14, 2014, accessed October 17, 2016, <http://en.idi.org.il/analysis/articles/isis-is-the-islamic-state-really-a-state/>.

<sup>11</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 40; Jessica D. Lewis, *Middle East Security Report 21: The Islamic State: A Counter-Strategy for a Counter-State* (Institute for the Study of War, 2014), 4, accessed August 25, 2016, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Lewis-Center%20of%20gravity.pdf>.

Current operational approaches against Daesh are predicated upon the categorization of Daesh as either a state or terrorist organization.<sup>12</sup> When viewed as a state, Daesh seems most likely to succumb to the application of decisive action as described in US Army unified land operations (ULO) doctrine. For those who see Daesh as a terrorist organization, Army counterinsurgency doctrine seems to offer the best approach. If, however, Daesh does not fit neatly into either of these categories, one must question the effectiveness of combating Daesh according to either of these operational approaches.<sup>13</sup> As an alternative, the US military could view Daesh as a transnational social movement organization (SMO), and by doing so, planners could develop a more effective operational approach to counteract Daesh than either decisive action or counterinsurgency.<sup>14</sup> This argument hinges on analyzing Daesh according to the political process model (PPM) of social movement theory (SMT) to determine lines of effort (LOE) against which US military forces could best apply resources to counteract the organization.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Countering complex threats such as Daesh requires the application of all elements of national power—diplomatic, economic, informational, and military—however, the analysis presented in this paper focuses on the employment of military power.

<sup>13</sup> Linda Robinson, *Assessment of the Politico-Military Campaign to Counter ISIL and Options for Adaptation* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016) accessed August 25, 2016, [http://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1290.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1290.html); Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014); Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> SMOs are the orienting, focal unit of analysis, responsible for assembling and deploying the resources necessary to mount movement campaigns effectively. SMOs are the “doers” within a social movement—those who nurture the ideas and guide the actions of a social movement. John McCarthy and Mayer Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory,” *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6 (May 1977): 1212-14, accessed October 17, 2016, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/2777934?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2777934?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents); William A. Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1975); John Lofland, *Social Movement Organizations: Guide to Research on Insurgent Realities* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 38. McAdam was the first to propose the PPM. For precursors to the PPM see David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007); and Steven M. Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements: Theories from the Classical Era to the*

This paper is divided into four sections, beginning with an overview of SMT as a form of contentious politics by describing how social movements act as catalysts for political change.<sup>16</sup> This section describes the common elements of all social movements, highlighting the concept of collective identity which unites its members—be it a local, regional, or transnational social movement. This section also identifies the leading models of SMT (the classical, resource mobilization, and political process models), compares the models, and identifies the PPM as the most appropriate for application against Daesh.<sup>17</sup>

The second section presents a history of Daesh against which the PPM can be applied. This section traces Daesh from its roots in the precursor organizations of Ansar al-Islam and al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) under the leadership of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, to the transnational SMO that Daesh has become under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. This historical survey emphasizes the

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*Present* (New York: Paradigm Publishers, 2011). Buechler describes the CM (59-104), RMM (109-24), and PPM (125-39).

<sup>16</sup> Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 16-36. A comprehensive literature review and theoretical synthesis on social movements as a form of contentious politics.

<sup>17</sup> The origins of the CM of SMT are credited to Ralph H. Turner and Lewis M. Killian, *Collective Behavior* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1957); Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: New York Free Press, 1962); who wrote on collective behavior, James. C Davies, “Toward a Theory of Revolution,” *American Sociological Review* 27, no. 1 (February 1962): 5-19, accessed October 17, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2089714>; and Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970) who wrote on the origins of collective group actions. The RMM is originally attributed to Anthony Oberschall, *Social Conflict and Social Movements* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), and further developed by John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, *The Trend of Social Movements in America: Professionalization and Resource Mobilization* (Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press, 1973), accessed October 20, 2016, <https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/50939/164.pdf;sequence=1>, and J. Craig Jenkins and Charles Perrow, “Insurgency of the Powerless: Farm Worker Movements (1946-1972),” *American Sociological Review* 42, no. 2 (April, 1977): 249-68, accessed October 17, 2016, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/2094604?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2094604?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents). McAdam is credited with developing the PPM, however, the work of Gamson, *Strategy of Social Protest*, and Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1978) laid the theoretical foundations for McAdam’s model.

environmental conditions that allowed these organizations to grow, the factors that led to their demise, and ultimately to the emergence and rapid ascent of Daesh.<sup>18</sup>

The third section applies the PPM to Daesh, through an examination of its employment of socioeconomic processes, political opportunities, organizational strength, and cognitive liberation. This analysis reveals the socioeconomic processes that gave rise to grievances that allowed Daesh to win local, regional, and transnational support; the political opportunities that created sanctuary for Daesh in both Iraq and Syria; the organizational strength of Daesh that has sustained the movement during its regeneration since the death of Zarqawi in 2006; and Daesh's use of cognitive liberation to recruit supporters and dissuade opposition.

The final section analyzes the US government's counter-Daesh strategy, and offers, as an alternative, a set of logical LOE against which national resources could best be applied to counteract Daesh, focusing on the US military's operational approach. These LOE are based upon the variables of the PPM, which Daesh has thus far exploited to its advantage, resulting in sustained organizational regeneration despite various efforts to counteract this trend.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Warrick, *Black Flags*; Mary Anne Weaver, "The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi," *The Atlantic*, June 8, 2006, accessed October 1, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-zarqawi/304983>; Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger, "ISIS and the Foreign Fighter Phenomenon: Why do people travel abroad to take part in somebody else's violent conflict?" *The Atlantic*, March 8, 2015, accessed August 25, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/03/isis-and-the-foreign-fighter-problem/387166>; Wood, "What ISIS Wants."

<sup>19</sup> Some analysts criticize US efforts as a containment as a strategy that is inherently ineffective against a movement; Lawrence P. Rubin, "An ISIS Containment Doctrine," Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa, June 14, 2016, accessed October 17, 2016, <http://www.asmeascholars.org/resources/an-isis-containment-doctrine/>; Barry R. Posen, "Contain ISIS," *The Atlantic*, November 20, 2015, accessed October 17, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/11/isis-syria-iraq-containment/416799/>; Thomas Ricks, "Fighting ISIS: We Should Admit That What We are Doing is a Containment Strategy," *Foreign Policy*, accessed October 17, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/10/30/fighting-isis-we-should-admit-that-what-we-are-doing-is-a-containment-strategy>. The US government has outlined its counter-Daesh strategy at the following: Office of the Press Secretary, "Fact Sheet: Strategy to Counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)," *The White House.com*, September 10, 2014, accessed October 17, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/fact-sheet-strategy-counter-islamic-state-iraq-and-levant-isil>; "Operation Inherent Resolve," *US Centcom*, accessed October 21, 2016,



## Social Movement Theory

As an interdisciplinary study that predominantly draws from sociology, SMT seeks to explain why social movements occur and in what form they manifest.<sup>20</sup> The theory generally focuses on the group rather than the individual as the unit of analysis. Analysis of three variables explains the initiation and lifecycle of a social movement: changes in political opportunity structures, the existence and exploitation of mobilizing structures, and cultural framing. Changes in political opportunities impact the acceleration or deceleration of collective action; these opportunities come in many forms, including changes in international structures, domestic regime or government change, or changes in domestic policy and law. Mobilizing structures can be formal or informal and, in Glen Robinson's words, "it is through these structures that movements recruit like-minded individuals, socialize new participants, overcome the [collective action] problem, and mobilize contention."<sup>21</sup> Cultural framing—arguably the most important of the three variables—provides meaning and purpose for action through the interpretation of events within a certain ideological context.<sup>22</sup>

According to one source, social movements consist of "collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the

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<http://www.centcom.mil /OPERATIONS-AND-EXERCISES/OPERATION-INHERENT-RESOLVE>.

<sup>20</sup> SMT is rooted in early studies of collective behavior Robert Ezra Park and E.W. Burgess, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1921) and Herbert Blumer, "Collective Behavior," in *New Outline of the Principles of Sociology*, ed. Alfred McClung Lee, 167-224 (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1946). Modern SMT did not truly emerge until the 1960-70s, resulting from the study of protest movements taking place in the United States.

<sup>21</sup> Glenn E. Robinson, " Hamas as Social Movement," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 116, accessed August 25, 2016, <http://www.eden.rutgers.edu/~spath/385/Readings/Robinson%20-%20Hamas%20as%20Social%20Movement.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

purpose of defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organization, society, culture, or world order of which they are a part.”<sup>23</sup> More narrowly defined, for the purpose of this paper, social movements are a form of collective action, resulting from the mobilization of resources, to achieve political purposes through non-institutionalized means. In recent years, the study of social movements has taken place under the theoretical paradigm of contentious politics. This approach emphasizes the purpose of such movements—the accomplishment of political aims outside of formal political processes. Therefore, this perspective has helped make the term “social insurgency” synonymous with the term social movement within the literature of SMT.<sup>24</sup>

Social movements are inextricably linked to the concept of collective identity. Social movements provide a sense of fellowship with others because members share common attitudes, interests, and goals. Social movements provide members with a collective identity and satisfy the demand for meaningful political participation.<sup>25</sup> This sense of collective identity affords a social movement a characteristic that the social scientist Francis Fukuyama calls social capital. Fukuyama defines social capital as “an instantiated set of informal values or norms shared among members of

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<sup>23</sup> Snow, Soule, and Kriesi, eds., *The Blackwell Companion*, 11.

<sup>24</sup> Sidney Tarrow, “Social Movements in Contentious Politics: A Review Article,” *American Political Science Association* 90, no. 4 (December 1996): 874-83, accessed October 19, 2016, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/2945851?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2945851?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents); Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Snow, Soule, and Kriesi, eds., *The Blackwell Companion*, 21; McAdam, *Political Process Black Insurgency*, 12.

<sup>25</sup> Mario Diani, “Social Movement Networks Virtual and Real,” *Information, Communication, & Society* 3 (December 2000): 386-401, accessed October 19, 2016, [www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13691180051033333](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13691180051033333); Cristina Flesher Fominava, “Collective Identity in Social Movements: Central Concepts and Debates,” *Sociology Compass* 4, no. 6 (2010): 40, accessed October 19, 2016, <http://courses.arch.vt.edu/courses/wdunaway/gia5274/fominaya.pdf>. Both Fominava and Diani address collective identity while Diani also describes how this can be fostered between members across political boundaries using modern communication technology in social movement networks virtual and real.

a group that permits them to cooperate with one another.”<sup>26</sup> It is this concept of social capital that allows social movements to function smoothly, by helping members overcome the collective action problem—encouraging individuals to willingly sacrifice for each other, and for the movement.

Social movements exist at the local, national, and transnational level. The geographic proximity between movement members differentiates these categorical levels, making the definition of either a local or national social movement self-evident. The term transnational social movement, however, warrants elucidation. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* provides clarity, defining a transnational social movement as “a collectivity of groups with adherents in more than one country that is committed to sustained contentious action for a common cause or a common constellation of causes, often against governments, international institutions, or private firms.”<sup>27</sup>

As social movements move upwards in scale from the local to transnational level, the concept of collective identity becomes more abstract, and consequentially, social movement members lose their sense of common identity and shared political purpose, reducing the likelihood that individuals will assume personal risk for the benefit of the movement. For this reason, transnational social movements are typically bound together either by ethnicity or religion, two

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<sup>26</sup> Francis Fukuyama, “Social Capital,” in *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, eds. Lawrence. E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 98; Mancur Olson Jr., *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, UK: Harvard University Press, 1965). Noted by Olson, the collective action problem arises when a group is faced with a problem that cannot be solved without individual members agreeing to suffer a burden for the benefit of the group, while themselves receiving only a portion of benefit in return.

<sup>27</sup> Jorg Balsiger, “Transnational Social Movement,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2014, accessed September 7, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/transnational-social-movement>. Tarrow defines transnational social movements as “sustained contentious interactions with opponents—national or international—by connected networks of challengers organized across national boundaries . . . it is important that the challengers themselves be both rooted in domestic social networks and connected to one another more than episodically through common ways of seeing the world, or through informal or organizational ties, and that their challenges be contentious in deed as well as in word.” Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 184.

characteristics which transcend international boundaries and help form a strong sense of collective identity regardless of geographic proximity between members.<sup>28</sup>

The authors of a recent study pointed out that scholars using the theory have primarily “focused on secular Western movements such as environmentalism, student movements, gay and lesbian movements, feminism, disabled people’s movements and others.”<sup>29</sup> Few scholars have applied SMT to the study of religious movements because, as sociologist Anthony Oberschall has argued, “Many Western academics are fixated on a poverty-social injustice-exploitation interpretation of discontent and grievance in the third world and on secular ideologies and justifications for action. They are confused and bewildered by religious crusaders who dedicate their lives to realizing God’s will on earth by violence if necessary.”<sup>30</sup> Such a view is unfortunate, because SMT has the potential to inform the conversation about the resurgence of a radical interpretation of Islam that is focused on transforming contemporary Muslim societies and to unite the global Islamic community. According to sociologists Phillip Sutton and Stephen Vertigans, “Bringing some of the central elements of [SMT] to bear on radical Islamic movements offers the potential to better explain the emergence and development as an alternative to currently popular, individualistic explanations of violence in the name of religion as the consequence of brainwashing by irrational madmen or the last resort of the materially deprived.”<sup>31</sup> The analysis that follows

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<sup>28</sup> Robin Cohen, “Transnational Social Movements: An Assessment,” (paper presented at the Transnational Communities Programme Seminar at the School of Geography, University of Oxford, June 19, 1998), 5, accessed September 7, 2016, <http://163.1.0.34/working%20papers/cohen.pdf>; John McCarthy, “The Globalization of Social Movement Theory,” in *Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity Beyond the State*, eds. Jackie Smith, Charles Chesterfield, and Ron Pagnucco (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 243-59.

<sup>29</sup> Phillip Sutton and Stephen Vertigans, “Islamic ‘New Social Movements’? Radical Islam, AL-QA’IDA and Social Movement Theory,” *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (February 2006): 102.

<sup>30</sup> Anthony Oberschall, “Explaining Terrorism: The Contribution of Collective Action Theory,” *Sociological Theory* 22, no. 1 (March 2004): 34, accessed September 7, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3648957>.

<sup>31</sup> Sutton and Vertigans, “Islamic New Social Movements,” 112.

seeks to correct that oversight by applying the central elements of SMT to Daesh using a comprehensive approach selected from the three leading models of SMT.

### The Classical Model

The earliest—and most simplistic—model proposed within SMT, the classical model (CM) follows a general causal sequence for the emergence of social movements. The sequence originates within a society that has undergone some structural strain, causing a disruptive psychological state for an aggrieved segment of the domestic population. Sociologist Tedd Gurr wrote, “The primary causal sequence in political violence is first the development of discontent, second the politicization of that discontent, and finally its actualization in violent action against political objects and actors.”<sup>32</sup>

The CM focuses on the individual rather than the group, viewing individual discontent as the immediate cause of a movement’s emergence. Proponents of the CM see social isolation and status inconsistency of the individual as prerequisites for alignment with an SMO. Individuals who feel as though they are isolated from society become atomized and look for other like-minded individuals to bond with. The bonding of like-minded individuals creates the popular base which gives real political power to the SMO. However, the motivation for individuals to join a movement comes primarily from their need to manage psychological tensions—the achievement of political goals by the group is a secondary result of an individual’s need to relieve this tension.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Davies, “Toward a Theory of Revolution.” Davies first wrote on disrupted psychological state, a central tenet of the classical model, as an explanation for why revolutions occur. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 12.

<sup>33</sup> Gurr offered the term “relative deprivation” to describe the disruptive psychological state individuals experience resulting from a change in their socio-economic security resulting from some structural strain in society and was the primary topic of *Why Men Rebel*. The study of relative deprivation is a key component of the CM; later works discussing relative deprivation include: Thomas J. Crawford and Murray Naditch, “Relative Deprivation, Powerlessness, and Militancy: The Psychology of Social Protest,” *Psychiatry* 33, no. 2 (1970): 208-23, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1521/00332747.1970.11023625?journalCode=upsy20>; Denton E. Morrison, “Some Notes Toward Theory on Relative Deprivation, Social Movements,

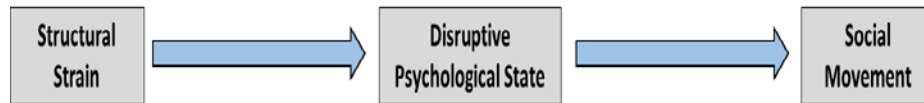


Figure 1. Classical Model of Social Movement Theory. Adapted from Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*, 2nd ed, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 7.

## The Resource Mobilization Model

The resource mobilization model (RMM) emerged as a reaction to the deficiencies noted in the CM. Proponents of this model claim that discontent in societies generally remains constant over time and that an acute psychological strain among an aggrieved population does not provide an adequate explanation for the initiation of a social movement. To those who hold this view, the key variable in a society is the amount of social resources available to an aggrieved population at any one time; a lack of resources prevents SMOs from forming, or, in the very least, from achieving any substantive political power. Additionally, the RMM does not exclusively focus on the aggrieved population, but also accounts for sponsors from society's elite population who provide the SMO with tangible resources. This model sees powerful groups external to a movement's aggrieved population as the crucial catalysts for action. Consequentially, the RMM is concerned with the sustainment of an SMO by a steady input of resources over time—the absence of access to resources will prevent the initiation of a movement, or will cause an upstart movement to atrophy.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast to the CM, the RMM suggests that social movements are plainly understood by their political, rather than their psychological character. The RMM attributes rationality to

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and Social Change,” *The American Behavioral Scientist* 14, no. 5 (May, 1971): 675, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/openview/88700669ae5ed72768bcae0aa593746b/1?pqorigsite=gscholar>; Walter Korpi, “Conflict, Power, and Relative Deprivation,” *American Political Science Review* 68, no. 4 (Dec. 1974): 1569-78, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1959942>.

<sup>34</sup> Oberschall, *Social Conflict and Social Movements*; McCarthy and Zald, *The Trend of Social Movements*; Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*; J. Craig Jenkins, “Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 9, (1983): 527-53, accessed October 20, 2016, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2946077.pdf?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2946077.pdf?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).

movement participants and their elite sponsors—although emotion remains a factor, participants act based primarily upon calculated political risk. Taking advantage of the deep-seated socioeconomic grievances of a disenfranchised minority group, elite sponsors simultaneously manipulate those grievances, inject material resources, and provide the leadership required for an SMO to grow and achieve a political purpose in a sequential process. The mobilization of collective action is dependent upon collective control of resources. Sociologist Craig Jenkins identified the most significant contribution of the RMM to SMT as its emphasis of “the significance of outside contributions and the cooption of institutional resources by contemporary social movements.”<sup>35</sup>

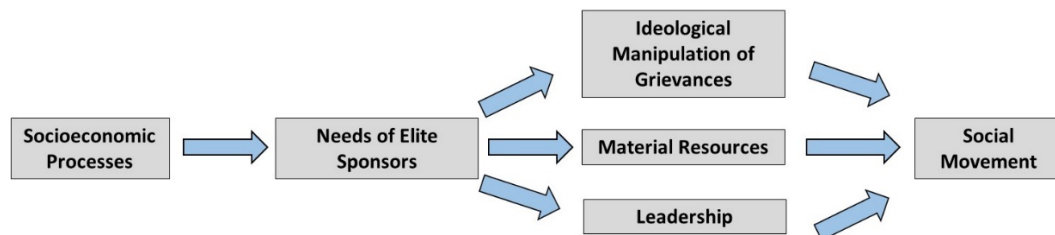


Figure 2. Resource Mobilization Model of Social Movement Theory. Adapted from Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*, 2nd ed, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

## The Political Process Model

Sociologist Doug McAdam developed the PPM as an alternative to both the CM and RMM, but he described the PPM as an outgrowth of the latter.<sup>36</sup> Like the RMM, McAdam explained that the PPM rests on the central idea that social movements are above all a “political rather than a psychological phenomenon.”<sup>37</sup> The PPM differs from the RMM in that it envisions a social

<sup>35</sup> Jenkins, “Resource Mobilization Theory,” 533; McAdam, *Political Process Black Insurgency*, 20-23.

<sup>36</sup> Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest*; Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*; James Rule and Charles Tilly, “Political Process in Revolutionary France: 1830-1832,” in *1830 in France*, ed. John M. Merriman, 41-85 (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975). McAdam developed the PPM based upon the previous work of Gamson and Tilly, who identified deficiencies with the RMM—stressing the importance of collective identity, while downplaying the importance of elite sponsorship in the generation of a social movement. McAdam borrowed the term political process from the article by Rule and Tilly.

<sup>37</sup> McAdam, *Political Process Black Insurgency*, 36.

movement as a continuous process, rather than as a series of distinct stages. Additionally, while the PPM describes the growth of a social movement as a product of both internal and external factors, it places more emphasis on the internal leadership of the movement to mobilize resources. While the PPM recognizes the utility of elite sponsorship, it rejects the timing of external involvement proposed by the RMM. The PPM views the involvement of elite sponsors as reactive rather than proactive. In McAdams' words, "external involvement will only occur after the outbreak of [the movement] as a response to the perceived threat or opportunity embodied in the movement."<sup>38</sup>

The PPM expresses the growth rate of SMOs as a function of four variables: socioeconomic processes, political opportunities, organizational strength, and cognitive liberation. Socioeconomic processes refer to those conditions in the environment that give rise to grievances. They provide a source of inspiration for action, becoming catalysts for commitment to the SMO by otherwise uncommitted actors, or spurring to action already committed members. Examples of these grievances include poverty, income inequality, lack of political participation, and political illegitimacy. Thus, manipulation of socioeconomic processes can either reduce or increase an aggrieved population's sense of disenfranchisement.<sup>39</sup>

Political opportunities refer to changes in the environment that affect the expectation of success or the perceived cost of collective action. Examples of such opportunities include a decrease in the ability of opposition elements to repress the SMO or the provision of external support to the SMO. Political opportunities are consistent, but not necessarily formal or permanent signals to social or political actors that either encourage or discourage them from using their internal resources to form collective action.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 40, 52.

<sup>40</sup> McAdam, *Political Process Black Insurgency*, 40-43. For a more detailed description of political opportunities also see McAdams chapter, "Conceptual Origins, Current Problems, and Future Directions," in McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives*, 23-40.



Organizational strength refers to the ability of the SMO to sustain collective action; this is measured in terms of the SMO's ability to communicate and coordinate, as well as the capability of its leaders, and its resiliency to repression by opposition elements. Organizational strength is concerned with the formal and informal collective vehicles through which people mobilize and engage in collective action. Examples of these collective vehicles include social networks, religious institutions, and professional associations. Collective vehicles provide the function of recruitment, social incentives, and a means for communication and coordination amongst group members.

Cognitive liberation (also known as framing) refers to the use of information by the SMO to transform objective conditions regarding socioeconomic processes into perceptions of the conditions for an aggrieved population. Examples of this include blaming, vilification, justification, and motivational framing. To gain support from an aggrieved population, the SMO fosters a common identity, identifies a source of injustice or grievance, frames its struggle as a righteous cause, and provides a call to action. Cognitive liberation serves the function of recruitment, mobilization, activation of collective action, and helping to overcome the collective action problem. Of the four variables of the PPM, cognitive liberation is the most crucial element for the development, initiation, and sustainment of a social movement.<sup>41</sup>

Taken together these four variables—socioeconomic processes, political opportunities, organizational strength, and cognitive liberation—have a direct effect on the growth rate of an SMO. To grow large enough to have real political power, the SMO—however small it starts—must take advantage of and improve upon these variables in a continuous and iterative fashion. Incremental increases in these four interconnected areas can eventually lead to a tipping point towards real political power for the SMO, unless opposing elements provide an effective counter to

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<sup>41</sup> McAdam, *Political Process Black Insurgency*, 48-51. For the purpose of this paper also see David Snow and Scott Byrd, "Ideology, Framing Processes, and Islamic Terrorist Movements," *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (June 2007): 119-36, accessed October 20, 2016, doi: 10.17813/mai.12.2.5717148712w21410.

its growth. Consequently, an SMO can slip into decline in various situations: contraction in political opportunities; decline or disruption of organizational strength; decline in the salience of cognitions required to sustain the movement; removal or relief of grievances motivating movement participants; or significant increase in repression of the SMO by the movement's opponents.<sup>42</sup>

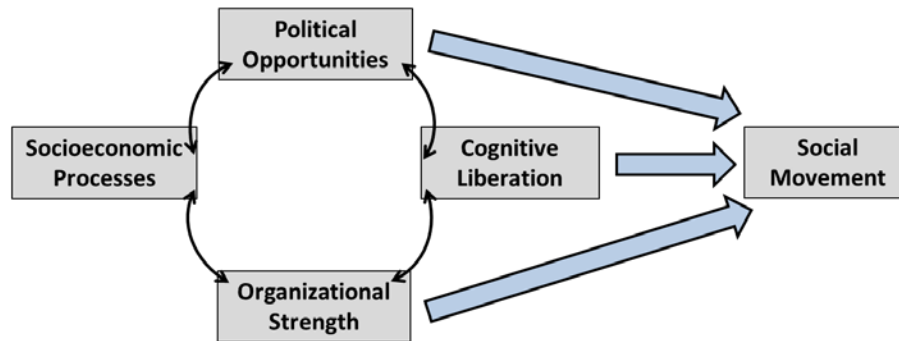


Figure 3. Political Process Model of Social Movement Theory. Adapted from Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 51.

### Comparative Analysis of the Models

While each of the models presented has its own merits, the CM and the RMM have significant limitations when compared to the PPM. The CM provides no empirical judgment on what amount of strain will be sufficient to induce collective action. The model ignores the reality that societies are constantly in a state of social agitation to some degree, and that it is impossible to rely on the presence of strain to explain the development of a social movement. Additionally, the CM does not specify the nature of this unique psychological profile or the threshold at which psychological strain will trigger a reaction affecting individuals. This leads to the most damning criticism of the CM—the fact that a psychological phenomenon of the individual, rather than a political phenomenon of the group serves as the proximate cause of social movement formation.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> McAdam, *Political Process Black Insurgency*, 63.

<sup>43</sup> The following have levied wide-ranging criticisms of the CM: Elliott Currie and Jerome H. Skolnick, "A Critical Note on Conceptions of Collective Behavior," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 391, (September 1970): 34-45, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1040023.pdf>; Oberschall, *Social Conflict and Social Movements*; McCarthy and Zald, *The Trend of Social Movements*; Gamson, *Strategy of Social*

Although the RMM is more advanced than the CM, it remains a deficient alternative when compared to the PPM. The RMM suffers from overreliance on elite sponsorship as a sufficient condition for movement formation. Critics of the RMM acknowledge the sponsorship of societal elites, but they argue that such sponsorship only occurs after the SMO has built sufficient political power to force elite alignment with the SMO. Although meager in its access to tangible resources such as capital and positions of authority, an aggrieved population often has access to an abundance of intangible resources such as moral commitment, trust, legitimacy, and informal social networks.<sup>44</sup> In criticism of the RMM, what led McAdam to develop the PPM was his assertion that

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*Protest; Rule and Tilly, "Political Process"; Charles Tilly, Louise Tilly, and Richard Tilly, The Rebellious Century: 1830-1930 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975); Kenneth Wilson and Tony Orum, "Mobilizing People for Collective Action," Journal of Political and Military Sociology 4, is. 2 (Fall 1976): 187, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=fe70ed73-ce89-4411-b816-165d4b719cdb%40sessionmgr106&vid=4&hid=125>; Michael Schwartz, Radical Protest and Social Structure: The Southern Farmers' Alliance and Cotton Tenancy 1880-1890 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1976); Jenkins and Perrow, "Insurgency of the Powerless;" Ron Aya, "Theories of Revolution Reconsidered: Contrasting Models of Collective Violence," Theory and Society 8, no. 1 (July 1979): 39-99, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/656921>; McAdam, Political Process Black Insurgency. Gurney and Tierney address the CM with pointed criticism: "While the relative deprivation perspective was an advance over earlier approaches which viewed social movements as resulting from the expression of irrational impulses, the relative deprivation perspective is itself affected by too many serious conceptual, theoretical, and empirical weaknesses to be useful in accounting for the emergence and development of social movements." Joan Neff Gurney and Kathleen J. Tierney, "Relative Deprivation and Social Movements: A Critical Look at the Last Twenty Years of Theory and Research," The Sociological Quarterly 23, no. 1 (Winter 1982): 33-47, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4106351>.*

<sup>44</sup> Sociologist Robert D. Benford wrote: "Resource mobilization scholars, in their haste to recast movement factors as highly rationalistic and thus to overthrow what they erroneously referred to as the collective behavior tradition, unwittingly neglected a vital social movement resource—emotions." "An Insider's Critique of the Social Movement Framing Perspective," *Sociological Inquiry* 67, issue. 4 (October 1997): 409-30, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1475-682X.1997.tb00445.x>. The following have collectively levied criticisms against the RMM presented here: Charles Perrow, "The Sixties Observed," in *The dynamics of social movements: resource mobilization, social control and tactics*, Pamphlet from Frontiers of Sociology Symposium held on the Vanderbilt University, 192-211, (Cambridge, Mass: Winthrop, 1979); Louis A. Zurcher and David A. Snow, "Collective Behavior: Social Movements," *Social Psychology: Sociological Perspectives* (1981): 447-82; Ralph H. Turner, "Collective Behavior and Resource Mobilization as Approaches to Social Movements: Issues and Continuities," *Research in Social Movements, Conflict, and Change* 4 (1981): 1-24; Joseph R. Gusfield, "Social Movements and Social Change: Perspectives of linearity and fluidity,"

“Even the most deprived groups possess greater potential for the successful exercise of political leverage than they have been given credit . . . The fact that these groups fail to exercise this potential much of the time is more often attributable to their shared perception of powerlessness than to any inherent impotence on their part.”<sup>45</sup>

The PPM accounts for more variables than the other leading models of SMT, while also accounting for the fluidity that social movements display throughout their life cycles. Arguably the PPM is more robust and applicable to a broader range of SMOs because, by comparison, it was developed after the CM and the RMM—allowing for the PPM to account for the criticisms levied at these earlier models. The PPM is not without its own critics, who claim that the variables of the model are not clearly enough defined—and by extension not quantifiable—and that the PPM, as a whole, is too general a model for universal application.<sup>46</sup> However, these same critics still recognize that the PPM “is currently the hegemonic paradigm among social movement analysts.”<sup>47</sup> Therefore, because of its established acceptance, comprehensiveness, and wider applicability when compared

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*Research in Social Movements, Conflict, and Change* 4 (1981): 317-39. The PPM as proposed by McAdam, *Political Process Black Insurgency*, refocused attention on emotions as a crucial factor in social movements.

<sup>45</sup> McAdam, *Political Process Black Insurgency*, 31.

<sup>46</sup> The following have collectively levied wide-ranging criticisms against the PPM presented here: William A. Gamson and David S. Meyer, “Framing Political Opportunity,” in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, eds. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, 275-90, (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Jaswinder Khattrra, “Caught in a Winding, Snarling Vine: The Structural Bias of Political Process Theory,” *Sociological Forum* 14, no. 1 (March 1999): 27-54, accessed October 20, 2016, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/685013.pdf?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/685013.pdf?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents); Aldon Morris, “Reflections on Social Movement Theory: Criticisms and Proposals,” *Contemporary Sociology* 29, no. 3(May 2000): 445-54, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2653931.pdf>.

<sup>47</sup> “Although not all scholars deploy its concepts, [the PPM] dominates the field of social movement research by powerfully shaping its conceptual landscape, theoretical discourse, and research agenda. Scholars from other theoretical camps cannot help but sit up and take notice. [The PPM] may be criticized, but it cannot be ignored.” Goodwin, Jasper, and Khattrra, “Caught in a Winding, Snarling Vine,” 48.

to the CM and RMM, the PPM acts as the theoretical lens to facilitate analysis of Daesh and determine the potential value of viewing Daesh as an SMO.

## The History of Daesh: Birth, Death, and Rebirth

Truly understanding Daesh requires knowledge of its historical roots.<sup>48</sup> The story of Daesh begins with a Jordanian street tough named Ahmad Fadil al-Khalayleh, better known by his *nom de guerre*, Abu Masab al-Zarqawi. Al-Zarqawi translated literally as “from Zarqa,” refers to the industrial town in northern Jordan where Zarqawi was born in 1966. Zarqawi grew up as an insignificant youth from an unimportant family and village. In his younger days, Zarqawi had been a notorious bully, drinker, and alleged pimp; before dropping out of high school Zarqawi carried a rap sheet that included bootlegging, armed robbery, and murder.<sup>49</sup> Before his first trip to Afghanistan to fight against the Soviets in 1989, Zarqawi’s lifestyle was hardly compatible with that of a pious and non-secular Islamic warrior. However, his service amongst the mujahedeen in Afghanistan changed Zarqawi’s life, and by the time he returned to Jordan in 1993 Zarqawi had also returned to Islam with a zealous fervor.

Zarqawi came back to Jordan with the ideology of jihad and was intent on reforming his home country, and ultimately “to set up an Islamist state.”<sup>50</sup> Back in Zarqa, Zarqawi continued to nurture the friendships he made in Afghanistan “that would lead to the formation of an international

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<sup>48</sup> David Ignatius, “How ISIS Spread in the Middle East: And How to Stop It,” *The Atlantic*, October 29, 2015, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/how-isis-started-syria-iraq/412042/>. References on the evolution of Daesh include: Jay Sekulow, *Rise of ISIS: A Threat We Can't Ignore* (New York: Howard Books, 2014), 15-42; Gwynne Dyer, *Don't Panic: ISIS, Terror and Today's Middle East* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2015), 75-146.

<sup>49</sup> Warrick, *Black Flags*, 50. Before departing for his first trip to Afghanistan Zarqawi had thirty-seven criminal charges pending against him—this might partially help explain the reason he chose to leave Jordan in the first place.

<sup>50</sup> Weaver, “The Short, Violent Life.”

support network for his activities.”<sup>51</sup> Of most profound importance was the relationship Zarqawi maintained with a revered and militant Salafist cleric named Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. In the early 1980s, Maqdisi has published *The Creed of Abraham*, which is considered to be “the single most important source of teachings for Salafist movements around the world.”<sup>52</sup> Having originated in Egypt at the end of the nineteenth century, as a modernist Sunni reform movement, Salafism violently rejects other interpretations of Islam, and aims to see the Muslim world overcome “the challenges posed by Western science and political thought.”<sup>53</sup> Unified under this extreme interpretation of Islam, Zarqawi and Maqdisi began recruiting followers and attempted to foment an Islamic revolution in Jordan. Their revolutionary careers were, however, short-lived.

After several botched operations, Jordanian security officials finally captured Maqdisi and Zarqawi in 1994 and sentenced them to fifteen years in a prison named Swaqa. Located on the edge of a desert nearly sixty miles from Amman, Swaqa houses Jordan’s political prisoners. While serving his sentence in this prison, Zarqawi, under the tutelage of Maqdisi, began developing his revolutionary interpretation of Islam based on Salafism. In time, he established a cult of personality among the inmates, and in time he amassed an international following as he and Maqdisi broadcast their message of jihad across three continents using the Internet. In May of 1999, Zarqawi and a substantial number of other inmates—turned converts to his cause—were released following the granting of a general amnesty by Jordan’s King Abdullah II. Upon his release, Zarqawi emigrated from Jordan before the mistake of his release could be rectified. After first arriving in Pakistan, Zarqawi eventually made his way to Afghanistan, intent on seeking resourcing and employment from al-Qaeda.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

While senior al-Qaeda leaders thought that Zarqawi was too much of a liability to fully adopt into the fold—due to his preference for the use of extreme violence and his disdain for those belonging to the Shia sect of the faith—they did believe that he could be useful to the organization. Accordingly, after Zarqawi traveled to Afghanistan in 1999 the senior leadership of al-Qaeda provided him resources to establish a training camp in the province of Herat. They intended the camp to cater specifically “to Islamist volunteers from Jordan and the other countries of the Levant as well as Iraq and Turkey.”<sup>54</sup> Al-Qaeda hoped that Zarqawi could attract at least a modicum of dedicated fighters to the cause; what Zarqawi accomplished far exceeded such expectations. By 2001 Zarqawi had grown his camp from a handful of fighters, to nearly three thousand, including their families. In the words of an al-Qaeda deputy, Zarqawi and his men were doing more than starting a training camp, “they were establishing a mini Islamic society.”<sup>55</sup> First deemed as a satellite project by al-Qaeda, Zarqawi’s newly formed group, which he called *Jamaat al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad* (JTWJ), quickly took on a life of its own. Daesh spokesmen credited JTWF for their origin in a November 2015 propaganda video.<sup>56</sup>

When the United States launched its campaign inside Afghanistan in October 2001, Zarqawi and his fighters became targets of airstrikes, one of which caused a building to collapse on Zarqawi, seriously injuring him. Fleeing these airstrikes, Zarqawi, accompanied by some three hundred fighters, relocated to Iran and eventually to northern Iraq. Having established a new base of operations in Iraq, Zarqawi began traveling throughout the region—to Syria and Lebanon in

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<sup>54</sup> Warrick, *Black Flags*, 67. Safy al-Adel, a senior deputy in al-Qaeda, proposed to bin Laden that the organization could best employ Zarqawi as a recruiter of foreign fighters from the Levant.

<sup>55</sup> Weaver, “The Short Violent Life”; Warrick, *Black Flags*, 68.

<sup>56</sup> Aaron Y. Zelin, “The War Between ISIS and al-Qaeda for Supremacy of the Global Jihadist Movement,” *Washington Institute for Near East Policy: Research Notes*, no. 20 (June 2014): 1, accessed August 25, 2016, [http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote\\_20\\_Zelin.pdf](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote_20_Zelin.pdf); Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants.”

particular—expanding his network, recruiting fighters, and garnering resources.<sup>57</sup> Simultaneously Zarqawi sought to solidify his image as a jihadist leader, an effort made much easier after Secretary of State Colin Powell’s presentation to the United Nations (UN) Security Council on February 5, 2003.

Secretary Powell’s presentation to the UN Security Council, now known to be fraught with errors, was intended to establish Washington’s case against the Iraqi regime. During the presentation Secretary Powell made the tenuous link between al-Qaeda and Zarqawi, claiming that Zarqawi and his fighters, as representatives of al-Qaeda, had established terrorist training camps in Iraq following their ouster from Afghanistan, and that they had in their possession, and were continuing to produce, chemical and biological agents such as Ricin.<sup>58</sup> According to Warrick, although previously just an upstart, and having never officially been a part of al-Qaeda, “With one speech, the White House had transformed Zarqawi from an unknown jihadist to an international celebrity and the toast of the Islamist movement.”<sup>59</sup>

In the summer of 2003, following the American invasion of Iraq, Zarqawi moved into the Sunni triangle—a densely populated Sunni region northwest of Baghdad—and became infamous almost instantly. At the time, the political environment in Iraq was fertile for the planting of Zarqawi’s organization. Several factors made the moment opportune, including the US-established Coalition Provisional Authority’s (CPA) decision to de-Baathify the Iraqi government, its inability to prevent widespread looting, and its failure to provide essential services to Iraqi civilians. Amidst the chaos, Zarqawi and his fighters carried out several high-profile attacks in August, including a car bomb attack on the Jordanian embassy, the bombing of the UN Headquarters which killed

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<sup>57</sup> Weaver, “The Short, Violent Life.”

<sup>58</sup> Colin Powell, “Full text of Powell speech (pt I),” (presentation to the United Nations Security Council), *BBC News*, February 5, 2003, accessed October 1, 2016, [http://new.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/2729525.stm](http://new.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2729525.stm).

<sup>59</sup> Warrick, *Black Flags*, 97.



twenty-two people along with the UN Special Representative in Iraq, Sergio Vieira, and the bombing of Shia Islam's holy shrine in Najaf which killed over a hundred people. Such attacks established Zarqawi as the symbol of the resistance in Iraq, gaining support for his organization from the marginalized Sunni tribes, former Baathist party members, and foreign fighters who wanted to travel to Iraq to wage jihad against the American invaders. As stated by Warrick, “[Zarqawi’s] movement, now supported by thousands of embittered Iraqis and sympathetic Islamists from across the Muslim world, would soon pose the greatest single threat to American ambitions in Iraq.”<sup>60</sup>

In the political black hole created by the American invasion and subsequent overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime, Zarqawi continued to cultivate his image of brutality by conducting, and then broadcasting over the Internet, the beheading of hostages, as well as directing waves of suicide bombings against Shiite targets—eventually earning himself the moniker “the sheikh of slaughterers.”<sup>61</sup> Zarqawi argued that this use of extreme violence would simultaneously achieve his three objectives of “destabilizing Iraq, eliminating a hateful apostasy, and, most important, forcing Sunnis to take up arms in a war that would lead to their liberation—a war that would ignite—an ‘awakening of the slumberer and rousing the sleeper.’”<sup>62</sup> Zarqawi intended to plunge Iraq into chaos by instigating a civil war, with the intent of developing a Sunni movement in Iraq and across the region based on a Salafist interpretation of Islam.<sup>63</sup> Through his use of extreme violence,

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<sup>60</sup> Warrick, *Black Flags*, 121; see also Weaver, “The Short, Violent Life.”

<sup>61</sup> Warrick, *Black Flags*, 128.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 138-50, 160. Regardless of his success in Iraq, Zarqawi always kept the overthrow of the Jordanian monarchy and the instigation of a social revolution in his home country as a top priority. This is evident by numerous plots Zarqawi schemed for execution in Jordan, to include the failed plot to bomb the Jordanian intelligence service headquarters in 2004 which had the potential to kill approximately 80,000 civilians.

Zarqawi was forging new enemies and allies, and was forcing those who had previously been unwilling to commit to the conflict to do so.

Having independently achieved notoriety, Zarqawi finally paid allegiance to, and was accepted by, al-Qaeda's top leadership in October 2004. In doing so, Zarqawi earned the title of "Emir of al-Qaeda's Operations in the Land of Mesopotamia."<sup>64</sup> Although neither Islamist favored the other, the merger and subordination of Zarqawi's JTJWJ under that of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda benefited both leaders. For Zarqawi, the acceptance by and endorsement from bin Laden augmented his credibility and strengthened his grip on the Iraqi Sunni tribes. Zarqawi saw the merger as something more than a mere partnership—he saw it as "a new beginning, the birth of a movement that would cleanse Muslim lands of 'every infidel and wicked apostate' and pave the way for the restoration of the Islamic caliphate."<sup>65</sup> For bin Laden the acceptance of Zarqawi gave al-Qaeda a foothold in Iraq, but more importantly it helped to forestall Zarqawi's "emergence as the single most important terrorist figure in the world."<sup>66</sup> The agreement between Zarqawi and bin Laden ushered in a name change for JTJWJ, known henceforth as al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers, or more commonly as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).<sup>67</sup>

The relationship between the two jihadists remained tumultuous, with bin Laden chastising Zarqawi over the tactics he employed in Iraq such as hostage beheadings, mass execution of Shiites, and attacks against mosques, because they negatively affected Muslim opinion of al-Qaeda.<sup>68</sup> Despite chastisement by the senior leaders of al-Qaeda, however, Zarqawi continued unabatedly with his approach. In AQI propaganda videos Zarqawi began to reveal a conviction "regarding his

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<sup>64</sup> Weaver, "The Short, Violent Life."

<sup>65</sup> Warrick, *Black Flags*, 175.

<sup>66</sup> Weaver, "The Short, Violent Life."

<sup>67</sup> Zelin, "The War Between ISIS and al-Qaeda," 1.

<sup>68</sup> Weaver, "The Short, Violent Life."

own destiny as a midwife for the new golden age of Islam. He referred to apocalyptic passages in the Hadith describing the end-times struggle that would lead to Islam's ultimate triumph."<sup>69</sup>

Capable of inspiring cultish behavior, it was this type of messianic thinking that would set AQI, and subsequently Daesh, apart from that of al-Qaeda central. As noted by journalist Joby Warrick, Zaraqawi's use of extreme violence, packaged with appealing rhetoric, promulgated over the Internet, began to draw a substantial influx of foreign fighters into Iraq:

The hard-core jihadists—the ones willing to fight and die on Zaraqawi's orders—were streaming into Iraq at a rate of 100 to 150 a month to join “the sheikh of slaughterers.” Zaraqawi had embraced the emerging power of the Internet to craft a reputation as a fierce warrior who killed Allah's enemies without mercy. The images he posted, though repulsive to most people, made him an icon and a hero to many thousands of young men who saw him as avenging the Muslim nation for centuries of perceived humiliations and defeats.<sup>70</sup>

After the merger with al-Qaeda, Zaraqawi became the de facto jihadist frontrunner in Iraq; he held enough clout to bring “together several other groups to form the Mujahedeen Shura Council in early 2005.”<sup>71</sup> Zaraqawi was now directing the efforts of multiple jihadist groups across the country. Then, with the bombing of the al-Askari mosque in February 2006, the most holy Shia site in Iraq, Zaraqawi finally initiated his civil war; the destruction of the mosque set off a series of killings and reprisals by roving Shia and Sunni gangs.<sup>72</sup>

As Iraq was careening towards the abyss a series of fortunate events coincided that brought the country a period of stability. First, Zaraqawi was killed in an American airstrike in June 2006. Second, a spontaneous mobilization of the Sunni tribes in the province of Anbar set off a period known as the *Sahwa*, whereby Sunni tribal leaders ousted AQI from its previously protected sanctuaries in Iraq. The tribes opposed AQI's “Salafist-inspired ambition to establish an Islamic

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<sup>69</sup> Warrick, *Black Flags*, 170.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>71</sup> Richard Barrett, *The Islamic State* (Soufan Group, November 2014), 11, accessed August 25, 2016, <http://www.soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/TSG-The-Islamic-State-Nov14.pdf>.

<sup>72</sup> Warrick, *Black Flags*, 203.

emirate in their regions,” and were alienated by the “organization’s extreme combat methods and killings campaign that had targeted hundreds of their leaders.”<sup>73</sup> Third, the American troop surge in 2007 allowed for more aggressive targeting of AQI members. These three events soon initiated the decline of AQI. The group lost its funding, sanctuary, freedom of movement, and its cause.<sup>74</sup>

No longer bound by its former leader’s pledge of loyalty to al-Qaeda, Zarqawi’s organization tried to reinvent itself. Soon it adopted a new name, the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), it introduced new leaders, and attempted to reassert itself over the Sunni tribes. However, this organization, also referred to as Daesh, was becoming increasingly irrelevant due to more effective targeting by coalition forces, resulting from the provision of better intelligence from Iraq’s Sunni population. Daesh was only able to find new life because of three occurrences. First came the announcement that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi would take over as the leader of Daesh following a US airstrike which killed its previous leader in April 2010. Baghdadi had the religious credentials, capability, and aggressiveness needed to rebuild Daesh. Next, following the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq in December 2011, the Iraqi government, under the direction of Prime Minister Nuri al-Malaki, began to marginalize and persecute the country’s minority Sunni population. This allowed Daesh to regain support and sanctuary from the disgruntled Sunnis. Finally, civil war broke out in Iraq’s neighboring country of Syria. Daesh found new life in Syria—with its development of a startup rebel group named *Jabhat al-Nusra*—garnering much-needed resources in the form of fighters, funding, and weapons.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Benraad, “Iraq’s Tribal ‘Sawha.’”

<sup>74</sup> Warrick, *Black Flags*, 250.

<sup>75</sup> Dyer, *ISIS, Terror and Today’s Middle East*, 111-29; Stern and Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror* (New York: Harper Collins, 2015), 25-51. Many Daesh operatives were sent to establish *Jabhat al-Nusra*; the mission was specifically entrusted to Syrian-born AQI member Abu Mohammed al-Jawlani. *Jabhat al-Nusra*, (al-Nusra Front), first positioned itself as an independent entity in the Syrian civil war—neither affiliating itself with al-Qaeda nor Daesh. Within a year, al-Nusra had established itself as the dominant rebel group in Syria, siphoning off fighters and resources from other rebel groups fighting against the regime of Bashar al-Assad. When Daesh announced their merger with al-Nusra in April 2013—in an attempt to regain control over its

Following its initial success in Syria, Daesh continued seizing control of ever larger swaths of ungoverned territory throughout the summer of 2014.<sup>76</sup> By June Daesh controlled territory from Aleppo in Syria to the Salah ad Din province in Iraq, an area larger than the United Kingdom.<sup>77</sup> Daesh had also seized several key cities in both countries—most notably Mosul, Fallujah, Hawija, Tikrit, Tal Afar, and Raqqa as previously mentioned; was flush with funds received from donors or acquired through various illegal means; and had confiscated large amounts of supplies and military equipment from Iraqi army units fleeing Daesh’s drive towards Baghdad.<sup>78</sup> Then, on June 29, 2014, the chief spokesmen of Daesh, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, declared that the organization was going to “reconstitute the caliphate, a historical Islamic empire with vast resonance for Muslims

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startup—infighting broke out between Daesh, al-Nusra, and al-Qaeda. This infighting resulted in al-Qaeda officially disavowing Daesh in February 2014, the total separation of al-Nusra from Daesh, Daesh absorbing the majority of al-Nusra’s resources, and the establishment of Daesh’s capital in the Syrian city of Raqqa.

<sup>76</sup> Dyer, *ISIS, Terror and Today’s Middle East*, 120-25; Hassan Hassan, “More than ISIS, Iraq’s Sunni Insurgency,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 17, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2014/07/24/more-than-isis-iraq-s-sunni-insurgency/hdvi>. The regime of Bashar al-Assad was either unwilling or unable to wrest control of its eastern Syrian territory from Daesh, and the government of Iraq—under the leadership of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki—had alienated the Sunni tribesmen in its western territories, allowing Daesh to regain a foothold there. Reportedly, more than eighty Sunni tribes were fighting alongside Daesh against the government of Iraq in early 2014.

<sup>77</sup> Charles Lister, “Assessing Syria’s Jihad,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 56, no. 6 (2014): 87-112, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://iiss.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00396338.2014.985439>; Patrick Cockburn, “ISIS Consolidates,” *London Review of Books* 36, no. 16 (August 2014): 3-5, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n16/patrick-cockburn/isis-consolidates>. Notably, this stretch of land was also once ruled by Nur al-Din Zengi, a sultan of the Zengi dynasty, who successfully defended Muslim lands against Christian crusaders during the 12<sup>th</sup> century—Nur al-Din was an inspiration for Zarqawi’s founding of AQI. See Alexander Mikaberidze, ed., *Conflict and Conquest in the Islamic World: A Historical Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 663.

<sup>78</sup> Stern and Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*, 45-46; Matthew Levitt, “Terrorism Financing and the Islamic State,” Statement to the House Financial Services Committee, November 13, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-113-ba00-wstate-mlevitt-20141113.pdf>. By November 2014 Daesh had access to cash reserves ranging up to a billion dollars and it was generating between one to three million per day through charitable donations, the selling of artifacts, ransoming of hostages, taxation of locals, and oil smuggling—the last being Daesh’s most important source of revenue.

around the world, but especially for Salafi jihadists, whose efforts were all nominally in the service of that goal.”<sup>79</sup> A few days later, Baghdadi provided a sermon at the al-Nuri Mosque in Mosul, claiming the position of caliph for himself and providing a call for support from the ummah—the worldwide Muslim community. As stated by McCants, “With that, the caliphate was supposedly reborn and [Muslim] prophesy was fulfilled. All Muslims had to now bend the knee to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, renamed Caliph Ibrahim al-Baghdadi.”<sup>80</sup>

## Daesh as a Transnational Social Movement Organization

Over the last decade there has been an increased research focus on the integration of religious movements within social movement studies; of interest to this paper, is emerging research on the radical Islamic movement.<sup>81</sup> This movement is comprised of several SMOs adhering to “a radical interpretation of Islam that seeks to transform majority-Muslim societies into Islamic states and/or unite the ummah,” but differ in their willingness to use violence as a means to achieve such political aims.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Stern and Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*, 46. There had not been a credible claimant to the position of caliph since the last caliphate was dissolved with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. See McCants, *ISIS Apocalypse*, 122.

<sup>80</sup> McCants, *ISIS Apocalypse*, 122.

<sup>81</sup> Paul M. Lubeck, “The Islamic Revival: Antinomies of Islamic Movements Under Globalization,” in *Global Social Movements*, eds. Robin Cohen and Shirin Rai (New Brunswick, NJ: Althone Press, 2000), 146-64; Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Quintan Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001); Quintan Wiktorowicz, ed., *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004); Janine Clark, “Social Movement Theory and Patron-Clientelism: Islamic Social Institutions and the Middle Class in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen,” *Comparative Political Studies* 37, no. 8 (October 2014): 941-68; Oberschall, “Explaining Terrorism,” 26-37; Sutton and Vertigans, “Islamic ‘New Social Movements,’” 101-16.

<sup>82</sup> Sutton and Vertigans, “Islamic ‘New Social Movements,’” 104. Those organizations which elect to employ violence to achieve their political aims have alternatively been sub-grouped by some analysts as the global jihadist movement under the overall phenomenon of radical Islam. McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse*, 146.

Those organizations in the radical Islamic movement which elect to employ violence—such as Hamas, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, and Daesh—share a common theoretical foundation in the historical writings of Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi (1903 to 1979), Hassan al-Banna (1906 to 1949), Sayyid Qutb (1906 to 1966), and Abdullah Yusuf Azzam (1941 to 1989), as well as contemporary theorists such as Mohammad Hasan Khalil al-Hakim (also known as Abu Bakr Naji, 1961 to 2008) and Abu Musab al-Suri (1958). Each of these theorists offered a justification for militant jihad and articulated sophisticated political programs to be advanced using force. The works of Hakim and Suri were especially instrumental in the construction of al-Qaeda's political agenda.<sup>83</sup>

With al-Qaeda's decline following the death of bin Laden in 2011, Daesh became the most prominent SMO of the radical Islamic movement.<sup>84</sup> And although Daesh shares similarities with other organizations of the movement, it is set apart by its use of ultraviolence to achieve its goals of immediately establishing the caliphate; galvanizing the ummah for revolutionary action; and instigating a cataclysmic battle between the “camp of Islam and faith” and the “camp of the *kufir* (disbelief) and hypocrisy” that will usher in the apocalypse.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Peter Mandaville, *Global Political Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 58-82; Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, trans. William McCants (John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies: Harvard University, 2003), accessed November 24, 2016, [http://www.physics.wisc.edu/undergrads/courses/206-f07/files/reference\\_chapter07/Management\\_of\\_Savagery.pdf](http://www.physics.wisc.edu/undergrads/courses/206-f07/files/reference_chapter07/Management_of_Savagery.pdf); Jim Lacey, ed., *A Terrorist's Call to Global Jihad: Deciphering Abu Musab al-Suri's Islamic Jihad Manifesto* (Annapolis, MD: US Naval Institute Press, 2008). The most impactful writing on Daesh has been al-Hakim's *The Management of Savagery*, which the organization uses as an operational guide for the taking of hostages, using violence for maximum psychological effect, and conducting media campaigns to influence foreign audiences. See Stern and Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*, 23-24, 73, 115, 117, 122, 252.

<sup>84</sup> See Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Jonah Goldberg, “How ISIS came to eclipse al Qaeda,” *New York Post*, June 14, 2015, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://nypost.com/2015/06/14/how-isis-came-to-eclipse-al-qaeda/>.

<sup>85</sup> Wood, *What ISIS Really Wants*; Stern and Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*, 219-32; Dabiq Magazine 1, (Ramadan 1345), accessed November 24, 2016, <http://media.clarionproject.org/files/09-2014/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-Issue-1-the-return-of-khilafah.pdf>, 10. The Syrian city of Dabiq (near Aleppo) is of great importance to Daesh. Sunni end times prophecy claims that the armies of Rome (modernly conceived of as the Western nations, represented primarily by the

While impossible to determine exact numbers, analysts estimate that tens of thousands of persons have emigrated to Iraq and Syria since 2012 to join with Daesh.<sup>86</sup> Most of those emigres hail from either the Middle East or North Africa—from the countries of Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Jordan, and Turkey in particular—though many emigrated from Western countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, Holland, and Australia.<sup>87</sup> Daesh attracts the majority of its recruits with the prospect of combat. However, it also lures professionals—men and women alike—to serve as engineers, doctors, and administrators for the organization. In addition to the influx of foreigners from at least eighty-one countries, Daesh draws recruits from the population of six million persons living in the territory it currently occupies.<sup>88</sup> By coupling the number of foreigners and local Iraqis and Syrians joining with Daesh, along with the pledging of *bayat* (loyalty) to it from over sixty different jihadist groups in thirty countries, Daesh has acquired a transnational status.<sup>89</sup>

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United States) will meet with the armies of Islam on the plains outside of Dabiq, where the armies of Rome will be defeated, and the apocalypse will begin. McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse*, 162-81; provides an overview of the Sunni Islamic end times prophecies.

<sup>86</sup> Robinson, *Politico-Military Campaign to Counter ISIL*, 1. Robinson reports that more than 38,000 foreign fighters have emigrated to Iraq and Syria since 2012, while US intelligence estimates range somewhere between 20,000 and 32,000. Jim Sciutto, Jamie Crawford, and Chelsea Carter, “ISIS can ‘muster’ between 20,000 and 31,500 fighters, CIA says,” *CNN*, September 12, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/11/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq/index.html>; Eyder Peralta, “CIA Doubles Its Estimate of Islamic State Fighters in Iraq and Syria,” *NPR.org*, September 11, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/09/11/347796283/cia-doubles-its-estimate-of-islamic-state-fighters-in-iraq-and-syria>; Mario Trujillo, “CIA: ISIS Has 20,000 to 31,500 Fighters,” *The Hill*, September 11, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://thehill.com/policy/217514-cia-isis-made-of-20000-to-31500-fighters>.

<sup>87</sup> Stern and Berger, “ISIS and the Foreign-Fighter Phenomenon.” *Hijra* is the Arabic word for emigration, which evokes an image of Muhammad’s flight from Mecca to Medina to escape assassination. “For most Islamic extremists today, the concepts of *hijra* and *jihad* are intimately linked.”

<sup>88</sup> Richard Barrett, *Foreign Fighters in Syria*, The Soufan Group, June 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://soufangroup.com/foreign-fighters-in-syria/>.

<sup>89</sup> Robinson, *Politico-Military Campaign to Counter ISIL*, 20-24; Barret, *The Islamic State*, 10; Riyadh Mohammed, “ISIS Beheads Another American as 60 New Terror Groups Join,” *The Fiscal Times*, September 11, 2016, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.thefiscaltimes.com/>



US intelligence experts admit that they did not foresee the resurgence of Daesh from its state of irrelevancy in 2007. Many also seem perplexed by Daesh's magnetic attraction of Sunnis from around the world. However, the rebirth of Daesh and its alluring appeal are anything but inexplicable. As described by the PPM of SMT, the initial and continued growth of Daesh as an SMO results from the interaction of four variables.<sup>90</sup>

### Socioeconomic Processes

Daesh exploits conditions in the political environment that encourage and foster the grievances of committed members and potential sympathizers. Through cognitive liberation, defined below, Daesh capitalizes on these grievances to appeal to various audiences through reference to pragmatic factors such as security, stability, and livelihood, as well as perceptual factors such as in-group, out-group, and crisis and solution constructs.<sup>91</sup>

In Iraq, Daesh initially exploited the Iraqi government's rigid adherence to the policy of de-Baathification which prohibited the service of any persons affiliated with the Baath Party in the new Iraqi government. This policy, originally enacted by the US-established CPA in June 2003, removed thousands of Iraqi professionals—most notably professors, bureaucrats, and military officers—from their positions and denied them future employment in the Iraqi government. Most of

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2014/11/16/ISIS-Doubles-Down-Infidels-Boosted-60-New-Terror-Groups#sthash.eYktEthB.dpuf. Robinson also notes that an estimated 1,000 recruits a month continue to emigrate into Iraq and Syria in support of Daesh.

<sup>90</sup> Sam Frizell, "Obama Admits US Intelligence Didn't See ISIS Coming," *Time*, September 28, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://time.com/3442254/obama-u-s-intelligence-isis/>; Barack Obama, Statement by the President on Iraq, The Office of the Press Secretary, August 9, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/09/statement-president-iraq>; Simon Cottee, "Pilgrims to the Islamic State," *The Atlantic*, July 24, 2015, accessed August 25, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/07/isis-foreign-fighters-political-pilgrims/399209/>; Stern and Berger, "ISIS and the Foreign-Fighter Phenomenon."

<sup>91</sup> Haroro J. Ingram, "The strategic logic of Islamic State information operations," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 69, no. 6 (August 2015): 729-52, accessed November 24, 2015, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2015.1059799>.

these former Baathists were Sunni Arabs who had enjoyed near-exclusive political control in Iraq for decades; however, because of de-Baathification, these disenfranchised professionals had few prospects for legitimate employment and many reasons to fight against the Shia government and occupying American forces. Ex-Baathists dominated the initial insurgency in Iraq between 2003 and 2005 but were later eclipsed and subsumed under the leadership of Salafi-jihadist organizations such as Zarqawi's AQI. Today most of Daesh's senior level leaders are former Baathists, who maintain a marriage of convenience with the organization—the former Baathists gaining resources from Daesh, with Daesh gaining administrative talent and local legitimacy from the former Baathists.<sup>92</sup>

Daesh also took advantage of the Iraqi government's persecution of its Sunni population, which led to a lack of economic opportunities in the Sunni heartland, which grew increasingly isolation over the past decade.<sup>93</sup> This persecution predominantly occurred under the leadership of former Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki—in office from 2006 to 2014—whose hard-sectarian line on security and political challenges resisted the integration of Sunnis into the Iraqi Army; led to the denouncement of many Sunni politicians for having suspected ties to terrorism (to include al-Maliki's former Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi); allowed for violent repression of

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<sup>92</sup> Shane Harris, "The Re-Baathification of Iraq," *Foreign Policy*, August 21, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/08/21/the-re-baathification-of-iraq/>; Johnston et al., *Foundations of the Islamic State*, 13-14; Liz Sly, "The hidden hand behind the Islamic State militants? Saddam Hussein's," *Washington Post*, April 4, 2015, accessed November 24, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/the-hidden-hand-behind-the-islamic-state-militants-saddam-husseins/2015/04/04/aa97676c-cc32-11e4-8730-4f473416e759\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/the-hidden-hand-behind-the-islamic-state-militants-saddam-husseins/2015/04/04/aa97676c-cc32-11e4-8730-4f473416e759_story.html).

<sup>93</sup> Another key grievance that Daesh was able to capitalize on was the failure of the Iraqi government to adequately integrate the members of the *Sahwa* into positions within the Iraqi government. Myriam Benraad criticizes the *Sahwa* when saying that, "From the very beginning of its existence, the *Sawha* was therefore intrinsically driven by the economic motives, not to say the overt opportunism, of its members." Many of the western Sunni tribes felt betrayed by the US and Iraqi governments as a result of this failed integration. Benraad, "Iraq's Tribal 'Sahwa.'"

peaceful Sunni protests; and denied governmental assistance to areas dominantly populated by Sunnis.<sup>94</sup>

In Syria, Daesh continues to take advantage of the turmoil born out of that country's ongoing civil war. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's ongoing brutal persecution of his Sunni population breeds resentment and grievances that offer opportunities for Daesh to capitalize on. Syrian recruits to Daesh see it as the best opportunity to rid themselves of al-Assad's incompetent and corrupt regime. For Sunnis living in Syria (as well as Iraq) Daesh provides an attractive opportunity to escape a troubled and undignified life.<sup>95</sup>

Outside of Iraq and Syria, Daesh appeals to potential recruits who, in John Graham's words, "feel inadequate, disrespected, full of unfulfilled ambitions, angry at real or perceived injustices, and who are blaming other people or institutions for their woes."<sup>96</sup> Daesh finds recruits

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<sup>94</sup> Warrick, *Black Flags*, 120; Nussaibah Younis, "Why Maliki Must Go," *New York Times*, May 2, 2013, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/03/opinion/why-prime-minister-maliki-must-resign.html>; Tim Arango, "Dozens Killed in Battle Across Iraq as Sunnis Escalate Protests Against Government," *New York Times*, April 23, 2013, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/24/world/middleeast/clashes-at-sunni-protest-site-in-iraq.html>. For an in-depth reading on the political turmoil within Iraq during the time period when Daesh made its resurgence (2010-14) see Kirk Sowell, "Iraq's Second Insurgency," *Hudson Institute*, August 9, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.hudson.org/research/10505-iraq-s-second-sunni-insurgency>.

<sup>95</sup> Daniel Larison, "Allying with Assad Still Doesn't Make Sense," *The American Conservative*, September 4, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/allying-with-assad-still-doesnt-make-sense/>; Letters to the Guardian, "How ISIS exploits the civil war in Syria," *The Guardian*, November 15, 2015, accessed November 24, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2015/nov/15/how-isis-exploits-the-civil-war-in-syria>; John Graham, "Who Joins ISIS and Why," *World Post*, December 29, 2015, accessed November 24, 2016, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-graham/who-joins-isis-and-why\\_b\\_8881810.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-graham/who-joins-isis-and-why_b_8881810.html).

<sup>96</sup> Graham, "Who Joins ISIS and Why." During a Senate hearing on September 16, 2014, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, testified that "grievances" had caused the rise of Daesh in the first place, and that addressing those grievances would be a key component to any counter-Daesh strategy in Iraq and Syria. See US Senate Armed Services Committee, "Testimony on US policy towards on Iraq and Syria and the Threat Posed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)," *Senate.gov*, September 16, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/14-66%20-%209-16-14.pdf>.

in a growing population of young Muslim males in Europe who are unable to find employment, feel socially rejected by increased European ethnocentrism, and are under constant scrutiny by law enforcement officials. Across North Africa, Daesh draws recruits from a population reeling from disillusionment because of the failed Arab Spring which took place from December 2010 to mid-2012. Within the United States, Daesh recruits those Muslims who feel alienated due to their ethnicity, religious affiliation, and who are encountering a “period of rapid social change,” according to psychologist Nigel Barber.<sup>97</sup>

### Political Opportunities

Daesh capitalizes on changes in the political environment that increase the expectation of success and lower the perceived cost of collective action for its committed and potentially committed members and supporters, by recruiting in locations with limited or nonexistent central government authority. The onset of civil war in Syria in 2011 allowed Daesh to find a foothold amidst the chaos. While Russia and Iran openly backed the Assad regime, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Jordan supported the “moderate rebels” opposing Assad while continuing attempts to target radical Islamists, such as Daesh and al-Nusra. The posturing between the major powers concerning the fate of Assad has led to a political stalemate, which helped Daesh by severely hindering any attempts at coordinated international efforts to root the organization out of eastern Syria. At the same time, having to contend with multiple opposition forces in and around the major cities in the western half of Syria, the Assad

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<sup>97</sup> Graham, “Who Joins ISIS and Why;” Shadi Hamid, “Islamism, the Arab Spring, and the Failure of America’s Do-Nothing Policy in the Middle East,” The Brookings Institute, October 14, 2015, accessed November 24, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/10/14/islamism-the-arab-spring-and-the-failure-of-americas-do-nothing-policy-in-the-middle-east/>; Nigel Barber, “ISIS-What Motivates Western Recruits,” *Huffington Post*, May 8, 2015, accessed November 24, 2016, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nigel-barber/isis-what-motivates-western-recruits\\_b\\_6809692.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nigel-barber/isis-what-motivates-western-recruits_b_6809692.html).

regime committed fewer security forces in the east, allowing Daesh to establish control over key cities such as Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, and Abu Kamal.<sup>98</sup>

An equally important power vacuum emerged in 2011 when US forces completed their two-year long withdrawal from Iraq. The Iraqi government could not offer adequate security throughout the vast ungoverned territory of al-Anbar province. The Sunni tribal leaders who once supported the US “surge” with a grassroots security uprising called the *Sahwa* in 2007 no longer enjoyed the support of US resources and were once again vulnerable to attack by both Daesh and Shia; and a resurgence in sectarian violence was sweeping the country. Conducting retaliatory attacks on its opposition and providing protection from the Shia to its supporters, allowed Daesh to regain sanctuary amongst the alienated Sunnis in western Iraq.<sup>99</sup>

### Organizational Strength

Daesh’s ability to sustain collective action is a function of its leadership and structure. Salafist fanatics and former Baathist party members who intermingled under the direction of Zarqawi, or while in detention at the Camp Bucca military prison in southern Iraq, serve as the leadership of Daesh.<sup>100</sup> While Baghdadi holds the top position within the organization, many former

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<sup>98</sup> Robinson, *Politico-Military Campaign to Counter ISIL*; Barrett, *The Islamic State*, 8, 12-13; Kareem Shaheen, Paul Torpey, Pablo Gutierrez, and Cath Levett, “Who backs whom in the Syrian conflict,” *The Guardian*, December 2, 2015, accessed November 24, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2015/oct/09/who-backs-whom-in-the-syrian-conflict>.

<sup>99</sup> Benraad, “Iraq’s Tribal ‘Sahwa;’” Rick Brennan et al., *Ending the U.S. War in Iraq: The Final Transition, Operational Maneuver, and Disestablishment of United States Forces-Iraq*. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), accessed November 24, 2016, [http://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR232.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR232.html); Craig Whiteside, “ISIL’s Small Ball Warfare: An Effective Way to Get Back Into a Ballgame,” *War on the Rocks.com*, April 29, 2015, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://warontherocks.com/2015/04/isils-small-ball-warfare-an-effective-way-to-get-back-into-a-ballgame/>.

<sup>100</sup> Martin Chulov, “ISIS: The Inside Story,” *The Guardian*, December 11, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/11/-sp-isis-the-inside-story>; Gareth Stansfield, interview by Rudaw written by Alexander Whitcomb, “Iraq Expert: ‘Insurgency Is as Much Old Baathist as It Is ISIS,’” *Rudaw.net*, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?PageID=52785>.

Baathists occupy key leadership positions throughout Daesh. This arrangement has proven beneficial to both the Salafists and the former Baathists. Baghdadi gives the organization legitimacy because of his credentials and connections. He belongs to the Quraysh tribe, which aligns his lineage with Muhammad; he holds a BA, MA, and PhD in Islamic Studies; he served as imam in multiple mosques; he was a member of the Shura Council with close ties to Zarqawi; and he holds tribal connections amongst the Sunnis that helped Daesh make its resurgence.<sup>101</sup> The ex-Baathists installed by Baghdadi and his second in command, Hajji Baker—the former head of Daesh’s military council and colonel in Saddam’s army, who was killed by Syrian rebels in January 2014—fulfill key roles within the organization, serving as its administrators, commanders, and propagandists.<sup>102</sup>

Aside from its leadership, Daesh also draws strength from its highly centralized and disciplined planning structure, coupled with a decentralized network for the execution of operations. Daesh is managed by seven councils—including the Shura, Sharia, Security and Intelligence, Military, Provincial, Finance, and Media Council—which are responsible for its military and administrative organization. Baghdadi and his two senior deputies—one for Iraq and one for Syria—control the strategic objectives of the organization, and pass information down through a robust system of subordinate commands—twelve in Iraq and twelve in Syria—which operate with a high degree of autonomy. Overall Daesh’s network is characterized by unified leadership presiding over a command structure with strong vertical ties between superiors and subordinates, as well as a diverse network of strong horizontal ties between its members. Redundancy of leadership positions across this network ensures that the organization remains unfazed by the neutralization of all but Daesh’s most senior members.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> McCants, *ISIS Apocalypse*, 77-78.

<sup>102</sup> Barrett, *The Islamic State*, 18-20.

## Cognitive Liberation

An SMO needs all four variables of the PPM working together for the organization to grow; however, cognitive liberation is the most crucial variable because it unites SMO members under a common cause, prompting their collective behavior. Daesh adroitly uses cognitive liberation to gain support from aggrieved populations by fostering a common identity, revealing sources of shared grievances, framing its struggle as a righteous undertaking, and offering a call to action for its sympathizers. One can analyze Daesh's ability to do these things by considering five key elements: narrative, actions, messengers, media, and audiences. Such analysis leads to understanding of Daesh's propaganda—a key to understanding the organization's ability to recruit and sustain itself.<sup>104</sup>

The rhetoric of Daesh draws from a narrative composed of four elements. The first is commonly held by other radical Islamic organizations—that the governments of the Muslim countries of the Middle East are corrupt, ungodly, and severely influenced by the Western powers; this vilifies these governments as apostate puppets of the West who marginalize and oppress their Muslim citizens. Next, Daesh claims that it is a divinely chosen agent for change, that it is god's

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<sup>103</sup> Barrett, *The Islamic State*, 28-34; Derek Raymond, "Combatting Daesh: A Socially Unconventional Strategy," (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2015), 39-55; Robinson, *Politico-Military Campaign to Counter ISIL*, 24.

<sup>104</sup> For more information on Daesh's use of propaganda see Stern and Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*, 101-46, 199-218; Terrence McCoy, "The apocalyptic magazine the Islamic State uses to recruit and radicalize foreigners," *Washington Post*, September 12, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morningmix/wp/2014/09/16/the-apocalyptic-magazine-the-islamic-state-uses-to-recruit-and-radicalize-foreigners/>; Olivia Becker, "ISIS Has a Really Slick and Sophisticated Media Department," *Vice News*, June 12, 2014, <https://news.vice.com/article/isis-has-a-really-slick-and-sophisticated-media-department>; Alice Speri, "ISIS Fighters and Their Friends Are Total Social Media Pros," *Vice News*, June 17, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <https://news.vice.com/article/isis-fighters-and-their-friends-are-total-social-media-pros>; Staffan Truve, "ISIS Jumping from Account to Account, Twitter Trying to Keep Up," *Recorded Future Blog*, September 3, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <https://www.recordfuture.com/isis-twitter-activity/>; Sheera Frenkel, "Meet The ISIS Fanboys Spreading the Message of Iraq's Most Feared Terror Group," *BuzzFeed News*, June 16, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, [https://www.buzzfeed.com/sheerafrenkel/meet-the-isis-fanboys-spreading-the-message-of-iraqs-most-fe?utm\\_term=.cwz5oE955#.esmWRYQWW](https://www.buzzfeed.com/sheerafrenkel/meet-the-isis-fanboys-spreading-the-message-of-iraqs-most-fe?utm_term=.cwz5oE955#.esmWRYQWW).

will for Daesh to restore the caliphate immediately, and that all faithful Muslims have a religious obligation to serve under its banner; this justifies the organization's use of violence, legitimizes its right to rule, and necessitates the emigration of true believers to its territory. The Daesh narrative also professes that the Day of Judgment is near and that the actions of Daesh will prompt the return of the *Mahdi*—the prophesied redeemer of Islam; this creates a need for the immediate support of the organization's sympathizers. Finally, Daesh stresses that it continues to gain strength and amass power and that its victory is inevitable; this sustains its followers by reinforcing the certainty and righteousness of Daesh's cause.<sup>105</sup>

Besides its rhetoric, Daesh also communicates to various audiences through its actions—something known as propaganda of the deed.<sup>106</sup> Daesh uses violence to inspire certain audiences and to prevent the opposition from others. Stern and Berger, have argued that the shocking violence displayed by Daesh serves “to awaken potential recruits to the reality of the jihadis' war and to intimidate enemies by showing the price they would pay for their involvement.”<sup>107</sup> While al-Qaeda's leadership regularly chastised Zarqawi for his use of extreme violence, Daesh embraces the late jihadist's understanding of its utility as promoted in the jihadist tract, *The Management of Savagery*. Daesh uses violence as a macabre act of theater to fulfill a variety of purposes. The flagrant display of ultraviolence is meant to prompt a large-scale military response from Western governments to validate Daesh's rhetoric further; to frighten its opponents in Syria and Iraq into

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<sup>105</sup> James P. Farwell, “The Media Strategy of ISIS,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 56, no. 6 (November 2014): 49-55, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2014.985436>; McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse*, 121-44; Pamela Engel, “White House press secretary: We're in a 'narrative fight' with ISIS,” *Business Insider*, September 19, 2016, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.businessinsider.com/josh-earnest-narrative-fight-with-isis-2016-9>.

<sup>106</sup> For a discussion on jihadists' use of “propaganda of the deed,” see Andrew Exum, “The Spectacle of War: Insurgent video propaganda and Western response, 1990-present,” *Arab Media & Society* (May 2008), accessed November 24, 2016, [http://www.arabmediasociety.com/articles/downloads/20080510194225\\_AMS5\\_Andrew\\_Exum.pdf](http://www.arabmediasociety.com/articles/downloads/20080510194225_AMS5_Andrew_Exum.pdf).

<sup>107</sup> Stern and Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*, 115.



submission; and to help Daesh gain support from disenfranchised Sunni Muslims worldwide by providing an example of empowerment which is exciting and demonstrates the ability to force revolutionary change.<sup>108</sup>

Daesh employs a variety of messengers, both real and virtual, to communicate with various audiences. The most famous of these messengers, Daesh's spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, was killed by an airstrike in August 2016. Adnani praised and encouraged the organization's supporters, admonished its enemies, and provided Daesh with its powerful slogan, "enduring and expanding." Fulfilling his role as chief propagandist, Adnani also directed Daesh's most powerful propaganda videos. These videos featured a supposed cross-section of the organization, with spokespeople from around the world, all of them very charismatic and well-rehearsed. Daesh continues to follow the techniques established by Adnani; tailoring its selection of messengers to most effectively communicate its propaganda, in variety of languages, to various audiences.<sup>109</sup>

Daesh has mastered the ability to mix media and promulgate its propaganda to local, regional, and transnational audiences. Under the guidance of its media council, Daesh launched the al-Hayat Media Center in May 2014 and staffed it with Daesh's most talented members.<sup>110</sup> Working like a Western media corporation, al-Hayat keeps a central office in Raqqa with regional hubs in Deir ez-Zor in Syria, and Diyala, Saladin, Mosul, and Kirkuk in Iraq. The central office and regional hubs collaborate for the production and dissemination of messages through a variety of social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Tumblr, Justpaste.it, and Scribd.

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<sup>108</sup> Barrett, *The Islamic State*, 9.

<sup>109</sup> Feras Hanoush, "Who was the ISIS Propaganda Chief Killed by a US Airstrike," *Newsweek*, August 31, 2016, accessed October 23, 2106, <http://www.newsweek.com/who-was-isis-propaganda-chief-killed-us-airstrike-494785>.

<sup>110</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of Daesh's media department see Craig Whiteside, "Lighting the Path: The Evolution of the Islamic State Media Enterprise (2003-2016)," International Centre for Counter Terrorism, November 2016, accessed November 24, 2016, <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ICCT-Whiteside-Lighting-the-Path-the-Evolution-of-the-Islamic-State-Media-Enterprise-2003-2016-Nov2016.pdf>.

Daesh also communicates through blogs and chat forums, and even maintains a customized smartphone application called Dawn of Glad Tidings, which feeds users with the latest news about the organization. Using these platforms, Daesh propagandists distribute audio, visual, and audiovisual content around the world, which is shared and intermingled with more traditional forms of media such as newspapers and billboards. Al-Hayat also disseminates its propaganda through transportable media, such as DVDs or flash drives, which are easily exchanged between individuals. Al-Hayat even oversees the production and distribution of two online magazines, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, which The Clarion Project described as “sophisticated, slick, beautifully produced and printed in several languages.”<sup>111</sup>

In the words of Haroro Ingram, a research fellow with the Coral Bell School, Australian National University, Daesh “seeks to resonate its message across a diverse ‘global’ constituency and supercharge supporters towards action.”<sup>112</sup> Marginalized Sunni Muslims throughout the Middle East and North Africa are the primary target audiences for Daesh propaganda. As previously mentioned, Daesh takes advantage of those Muslims disillusioned by the failure of the Arab Spring,

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<sup>111</sup> “The Islamic State’s (ISIS, ISIL) Magazine,” The Clarion Project, September 10, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq#>; Stern and Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*, 113; Harleen K. Gambhir, “Dabiq: The Strategic Messaging of the Islamic State,” Institute for the Study of War, August 15, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, [http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Dabiq%20Backgrounder\\_Harleen%20Final.pdf](http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Dabiq%20Backgrounder_Harleen%20Final.pdf); J.M. Berger, “How ISIS Games Twitter,” *The Atlantic*, June 16, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/06/isis-iraq-twitter-social-media-strategy/372856/>. Al-Hayat releases its online magazines with varied frequency. The first issue of *Dabiq* was published in July 2014, with 15 total issues thus far. *Dabiq* narrates the practical ideology upon which Daesh is founded and articulates the organization’s vision. *Rumiyah*, the newest online magazine released by Daesh, was first published in September 2016. There have only been two issues of *Rumiyah* thus far, which promotes Daesh’s political and theological stance, and encourages lone-wolf style attacks in Western countries. Both *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* are published in multiple languages, though most notably in Arabic, English, German, and French. Although widely available on the deep web, accessing these magazines using a standard search engine is difficult. For the convenience of analysts, the non-profit organization, The Clarion Project, provides Daesh’s latest publications on its website.

<sup>112</sup> Ingram, “Islamic State information operations,” 729.

whose lives the United States disrupted by its invasion of Iraq, or who believe that the return of the *Mahdi* is imminent.<sup>113</sup> Daesh propaganda appeals to these audiences who desire security, stability, and the chance to avenge perceived injustices done to Muslims. However, as indicated by the number of languages used in its propaganda, Daesh also invests a significant amount of resources to target potential recruits throughout the world. Daesh casts its net far and wide, attempting to draw in recruits and funding from countries throughout Europe, Asia, and North America. Obtaining support from these secondary audiences provides Daesh with increased operational reach and the ability to endure as a transnational SMO.<sup>114</sup>

## Current and Suggested Strategies to Combat Daesh

In a press release dated September 10, 2014, the Obama administration outlined its strategy to “degrade and ultimately destroy” Daesh, which it characterized as “a comprehensive and sustained counterterrorism strategy . . . that harnesses all elements of national power.” The US government’s counter-Daesh strategy includes the following elements: supporting effective governance in Iraq; denying safe-haven to Daesh fighters; building capacity of coalition partners; enhancing intelligence collection on Daesh; disrupting the finances of Daesh; exposing the true nature of Daesh; disrupting the foreign fighter flow; providing humanitarian support to displaced and vulnerable populations in Syria and Iraq, and protecting against domestic threats to the United States. And, while deemed a whole-of-government approach, this strategy predominantly relies

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<sup>113</sup> A Pew Research Center survey conducted in 2012 noted a rise in the belief by Muslims in the Middle East and North Africa that the return of the *Mahdi* was imminent. The vast majority of Daesh supporters come from countries whose population believes that it is living through the end times; perhaps this helps to explain why the narrative of ISIS resonates particularly well. Of note those populations believing in the *Mahdi*’s imminent return were Afghanistan (83%), Iraq (72%), Turkey (68%), and Tunisia (67%). “Chapter 3: Articles of Faith,” in *The World’s Muslims: Unity and Diversity*, Pew Research Center, August 9, 2012, accessed November 24, 2016, [http://www.pewforum.org/2012/08/09/the-worlds-muslims-unity-and-diversity-3-articles-of-faith/#\\_ftn20](http://www.pewforum.org/2012/08/09/the-worlds-muslims-unity-and-diversity-3-articles-of-faith/#_ftn20).

<sup>114</sup> Stern and Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*, 74, 81-99.

upon the efforts of the US Department of State (DOS) and Department of Defense (DOD) for implementation.<sup>115</sup>

For its part, the DOS has taken the lead in forming a coalition of sixty-seven global partners to prevent further expansion by Daesh, help stabilize and reform the government of Iraq, and seek a political solution to the ongoing war in Syria. Through the DOS, the United States has also partnered with the United Arab Emirates to found The Sawab Center, “the first-ever multinational online messaging and engagement program, in support of the Global Coalition Against Daesh.”<sup>116</sup> Although not codified in a coherent campaign plan, these efforts by the DOS align with the Obama administration’s overarching strategy to degrade and defeat Daesh by pursuing stable and effective governance in the region while countering Daesh propaganda through online debate and dissemination of inclusive and constructive narratives.<sup>117</sup>

The overall strategy, implemented in the current DOD campaign, Operation Inherent Resolve, is arranged along three LOE: enabling the military defeat of Daesh in the combined joint area of operations (CJOA); enabling sustainable military partner capacity in the CJOA; and leveraging cohesive coalition effects. The campaign relies on the employment of special operations

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<sup>115</sup> Office of the Press Secretary, “Strategy to Counter the Islamic State;” Regarding the current strategy to defeat Daesh and funds appropriated to the agencies currently implementing this strategy see: Office of the Inspector General, “Lead Inspector General for Operation INHERENT RESOLVE: FY 2015 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan,” March 31, 2015, accessed October 23, 2016, [https://oig.state.gov/system/files/fy2015\\_joint\\_strategic\\_oversight\\_plan\\_lead\\_ig\\_op\\_inherent\\_resolve.pdf](https://oig.state.gov/system/files/fy2015_joint_strategic_oversight_plan_lead_ig_op_inherent_resolve.pdf).

<sup>116</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Media Note: Launch of the Sawab Center,” Office of the Spokesperson, July 8, 2015, accessed October 23, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/07/244709.html>.

<sup>117</sup> Global Coalition.org, last modified October 20, 2016, accessed October 23, 2016, <http://theglobalcoalition.org/>; Vice News, “The US and United Arab Emirates Built an Anti-Jihad Propaganda Center,” Vice News, July 8, 2015, accessed October 23, 2016, <https://news.vice.com/article/the-us-and-united-arab-emirates-built-an-anti-jihad-propaganda-center>; Richard Stengel, and Anwar Gargash, “The Right Path to Counter Daesh: Column,” *USA Today*, July 9, 2015, accessed October 23, 2016, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2015/07/09/isil-daesh-counter-strategy-joint-sawab-center-column/29906271/>.

forces (SOF), combat aviators, and a broad international coalition. SOF advisors do not serve in direct combat roles, instead training and equipping local security forces—Iraqi, Kurdish, and moderate Syrian militants—to oust Daesh from its strongholds in Iraq and Syria. Combat aviators conduct daily airstrikes against Daesh ground forces and infrastructure, with the results of those strikes reported through the US Central Command (CENTCOM) homepage. Meanwhile, the international coalition arrayed against Daesh, composed of more than sixty nations, provides limited air support, personnel, equipment, humanitarian aid, and funding.<sup>118</sup> The campaign also relies on the employment of effective partner forces to combat Daesh and to clear and hold the vast territory it has seized in Iraq and Syria. In Linda Robinson’s words, “The rationale for this pillar of the strategy is that only effective and competent indigenous forces can hold terrain permanently with the backing of the population.”<sup>119</sup>

Since late 2014 the coalition against Daesh has made great strides under the current strategy. Together the coalition has recaptured nearly fifty percent of Daesh-held territory in Iraq, and twenty percent in Syria; it has liberated the Iraqi towns of Ramadi and Fallujah; it has destroyed and seized tens of millions of dollars in currency from Daesh; and it has killed a number of top Daesh leaders to include Fadhil Ahmad al-Hayali (August 2015), Omar al-Shishani (August

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<sup>118</sup> “CJTF Campaign Design,” Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve, accessed October 1, 2016, <http://www.inherentresolve.mil/campaign/>; Tanaya Somanader, “5 Things to Know: The President Lays Out the U.S. Plan to Degrade and Destroy ISIL,” *The White House.gov*, September 17, 2014, accessed October 1, 2016, [www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/09/17president-lays-out-us-plan-degrade-and-destroy-isil/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/09/17president-lays-out-us-plan-degrade-and-destroy-isil/); “Strike Releases,” accessed October 23, 2016, <http://inherentresolve.mil/>; Colin Freeman, “Who Is in the Anti-Islamic State Coalition and what they are contributing?” *Telegraph*, September 26, 2014, accessed October 23, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11124070/Who-is-in-the-anti-Islamic-State-coalition-and-what-they-are-contributing.html>

<sup>119</sup> Robinson, *Politico-Military Campaign to Counter ISIL*, 1, 38-41. Counter-Daesh forces in Iraq include: Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), Counter-Terrorism Service, Kurdish Security Forces (Peshmerga), Sunni Tribal Forces, and Popular Mobilization Forces. Counter-Daesh forces in Syria include: People’s Defense Unit (Syrian Kurdish Yekineyen Parastina Gel or YPG), Syrian Democratic Forces, Free Syrian Army, and al-Nusra Front.

2016), Abu Muhammed al-Adnani (August 2016).<sup>120</sup> Yet, despite these successes, some have warned that the current strategy is not sufficient to eradicate Daesh because it is growing more resilient to coalition targeting, regenerating and resupplying its forces, and is gaining legitimacy in the eyes of disaffected Sunni Muslims. Critics also claim that metrics, such as the percentage of territory liberated from Daesh or numbers of its leaders killed, are inadequate measures of success for the current strategy.<sup>121</sup>

Despite criticisms of the current counter-Daesh strategy, the analysis presented here does not support a major revision. The nine elements of the strategy are sound, and, taken together, they present a coherent and comprehensive approach to defeating Daesh if appropriately pursued. However, they lack a proper understanding of Daesh, necessary to offer context for the strategy's implementation. The necessary understanding of Daesh includes identification of the population

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<sup>120</sup> At the time of writing this paper, ISF were attempting to retake the city of Mosul from Daesh after it had occupied the city for more than two years. Bryan Denton and Michael R. Gordon, "At the Mosul Front: Traps, Smoke Screens and Suicide Bombers," *New York Times*, October 17, 2016, accessed November 24, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/18/world/middleeast/mosul-iraq-isis-kurds.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/18/world/middleeast/mosul-iraq-isis-kurds.html?_r=0).

<sup>121</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Counter-Daesh Fact Sheet," Global Coalition to Counter Daesh, July 21, 2016, accessed October 23, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/s/seci/261626.htm>; Justin Fishel, "ISIS Second in Command Killed by US Airstrike, White House Says," *ABC News.com*, August 21, 2015, accessed October 23, 2016, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/isis-command-killed-us-airstrike-white-house/story?id=33235175>; Barbara Starr, "US Working to Confirm it Killed Top ISIS Leader, Again," *CNN*, July 14, 2016, accessed October 23, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/07/13/politics/isis-omar-al-shishani/index.html>; Feras Hanoush, "Who was the ISIS Propaganda Chief Killed by a US Airstrike," *Newsweek*, August 31, 2016, accessed October 23, 2016, <http://www.newsweek.com/who-was-isis-propaganda-chief-killed-us-airstrike-494785>; "US: Gains Against DAESH Insufficient to Destroy Group," *Daily Sabah: Mideast*, June 22, 2016, accessed October 23, 2016, <http://www.dailysabah.com/mideast/2016/06/23/us-gains-against-daesh-insufficient-to-destroy-group>; Mark Thompson, "Former U.S. Commanders take Increasingly Dim View of War on ISIS," *Time*, August 31, 2016, accessed October 23, 2016, <http://time.com/4474910/isis-retired-generals/>; Robert W. Merry, "Obama's ISIS Strategy: Doomed for Failure," *National Interest.org*, November 1, 2014, accessed October 23, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/obamas-isis-strategy-doomed-failure-11585>; Robinson, *Politico-Military Campaign to Counter ISIL*, 20-24. Sagar Enjeti, "Obamas measure of success against ISIS doesn't make sense," *Daily Caller News Foundation*, July 9, 2016, accessed October 23, 2016, <http://dailycaller.com/2016/07/09/experts-obamas-measure-of-success-against-isis-doesnt-make-sense/>.

that provides its supporters, the movement's appeal, and the conditions that allow it to thrive. This context would enable more effective identification, coordination, and application of ways and means. This understanding would also drive the construction of an operational approach that employs the elements of the current strategy with appropriate emphasis, while preventing actions that would feed Daesh's rhetoric, drawing more fighters to its cause.<sup>122</sup>

A recent assessment of the political-military campaign to counter Daesh, conducted by the RAND National Defense Research Institute, noted that "the overall strategy to defeat [Daesh] would benefit from a comprehensive review based on a deep understanding of drivers of [Daesh's] growth and expansion in Iraq and Syria and globally," and that "the implementation of a revised strategy based on this understanding should be more robustly synchronized, particularly the political and military elements."<sup>123</sup> The employment of SMT in general, and the PPM in particular, offers the ability to obtain this deeper understanding of Daesh—one that could facilitate the development of a more effective operational approach which synchronizes the political-military efforts of the DOS and DOD.

Such an approach requires long-term commitment and adherence to a structured plan, because, with Daesh America is not simply fighting a state, nor a terrorist group—it is fighting an

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<sup>122</sup> There is an argument that defeating Daesh at Dabiq with overwhelming military force would help "defeat them not only in actuality, but [also] in appearance," however, bringing US forces of any significant number into the region could also be a reason for otherwise uncommitted Sunni Muslims to support Daesh. If the United States felt compelled to commit combat forces against Daesh, perhaps a better option would be to send larger numbers of SOF, supported by logistical, intelligence, security, and air contingents. Pietros Maneos, "The Great Battle of Dabiq," *World Post*, April 20, 2015, accessed November 24, 2015, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/pietros-maneos/the-great-battle-of-dabiq\\_b\\_6696936.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/pietros-maneos/the-great-battle-of-dabiq_b_6696936.html); Max Boot and Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, "Defeating ISIS: Policy Innovation Memorandum No. 51," *Council on Foreign Relations Press*, November 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/defeating-isis/p33773>; Karl Vick, "Don't Take the Bait: The U.S. Should Not Send Troops to Fight ISIS," *Time*, February 26, 2015, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://time.com/3723617/dont-take-the-bait-the-u-s-should-not-send-troops-to-fight-isis/>; Ryan Mauro, "The Islamic State Seeks the Battle of the Apocalypse," The Clarion Project, November 18, 2014, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.clarionproject.org/analysis/dabiq-islamic-state-wants-battle-end-days>.

<sup>123</sup> Robinson, "*Politico-Military Campaign to Counter ISIL*," 68.

idea. Achieving long-term victory over an idea needs not just a different strategy, but a different mindset than a conventional decisive action scenario. While any counter-Daesh strategy will include as essential components killing Daesh’s leadership and reclaiming its territory, other aims will prove more important. One cannot reduce long-term countermovement strategies to short-term security gains; rather, they must include sustained amelioration of social grievances combined with state building efforts. Only simultaneous and effective action against all the variables of the PPM will lead to the lasting defeat of an SMO. This will demand particular emphasis on mitigation of the variable of cognitive liberation. Figure 4, seen below, illustrates a combined DOD and DOS operational approach that incorporates the nine core elements of the current counter-Daesh strategy according to the PPM. Adopting an operational approach such as this would better match ends with means, helping to synchronize both DOD and DOS efforts to deconstruct Daesh while allowing the US government to move, as Cronin has argued, “past outmoded forms of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency while also resisting pressure to cross the threshold into full-fledged war.”<sup>124</sup>

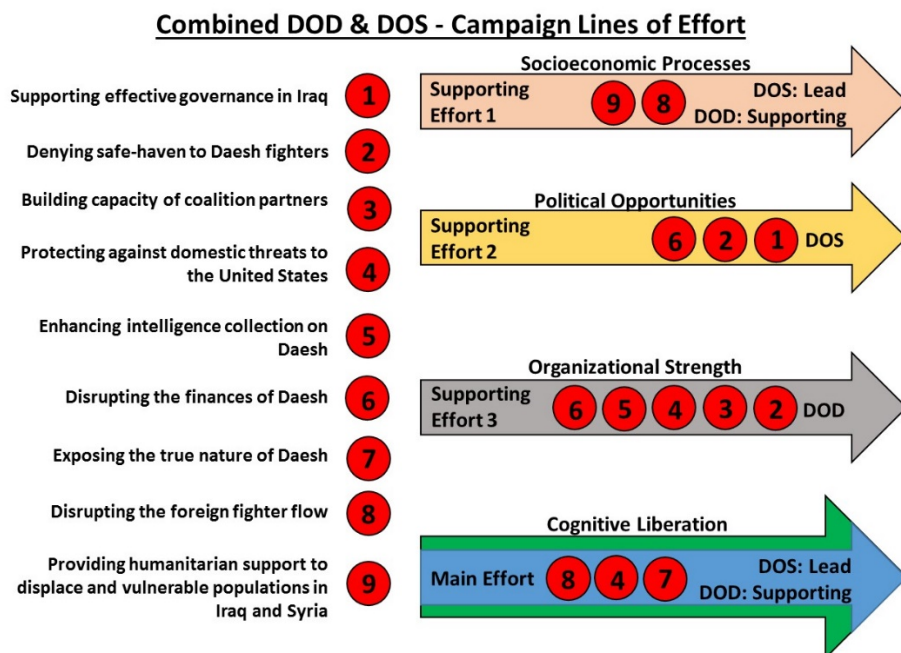


Figure 4. Suggested campaign LOE appropriate to the PPM, incorporating the elements of the Obama administration’s counter-Daesh strategy, for mutual adoption by DOS and DOD.

<sup>124</sup> Cronin, “ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group.”



## Conclusion and Implications

The Daesh problem-set has frustrated attempts to both comprehend and categorize it appropriately. When commenting on US military efforts to combat Daesh, Major General Michael K. Nagata, former commander of US Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT), said that “We do not understand the movement, and until we do, we are not going to defeat it,” and “We have not defeated the idea. We do not even understand the idea.”<sup>125</sup> Failing to comprehend Daesh has led to its categorization as both a state and terrorist organization. Resulting from this confused and erroneous categorization, the US military, and US government writ large, has employed insufficient and ineffective ways and means to combat Daesh.

Despite its common categorization as a state or terrorist organization, one could instead regard Daesh as a transnational SMO. By viewing Daesh through the lens of SMT, with human dynamics being the compelling force behind the development of a counter-Daesh strategy, the US government could develop a more effective operational approach to counteract Daesh. This would involve pursuing LOE mirroring the variables of the PPM (political opportunities, socioeconomic processes, organizational strength, and cognitive liberation). While incorporating the elements of the Obama administration’s strategy to degrade and ultimately destroy Daesh, such a framework would align the efforts of the DOS and DOD under a common operational approach, providing greater clarity and structure.

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<sup>125</sup> Eric Schmitt, “In Battle to Defang ISIS, US targets its psychology,” *New York Times*, December 28, 2014, accessed October 23, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/29/us/politics/in-battle-to-defang-isis-us-targets-its-psychology-.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/29/us/politics/in-battle-to-defang-isis-us-targets-its-psychology-.html?_r=1).

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