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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### RISE AND HISTORY OF THE ISLAMIC STATE.

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#### Abstract

The article offers a brief historical overview of the events in the Middle East and systematic analysis of international relations affecting the development of the crisis with the Islamic State (ISIL). An attempt to unravel the causes of the civil war and ISIL as an organization.

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#### Introduction:-

Islamic State, ISIL, ISIS or DAESH are the words most frequently used in the war against terrorism, heard every day on the television or in the social media. The acronym ISIL is derived from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, while DAESH is the Arabic name of the Islamic State: al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham; however that word may be perceived as an insult by some Arabs, in the sense of "to trample upon" or as "a zealot forcing his will on others". Besides these, there are a few less known names, for instance, the Islamic State in Iraq and Al-Sham. Al-Sham is the old name of the region of Syria and Lebanon (Nance, M. 2016).

In the final count no matter how we call them, the organization behind them is the same and it has grown as the biggest world threat with the tools of radical Islam. The Islamic State Caliphate is striving to win all of the nearly 2 billion Muslims the world over, not just in the Middle East. Currently its major parts consist of an approximately thirty thousand-strong army of ex-officers and intelligence agents of the Arab Socialist BA'ATH Party, various organizations of Al-Qaeda and fanatic foreign fighters from dozens of other countries (Ferran, L. and Momtaz R. 2015)

For ISIL to be stopped one has to understand the causes behind its birth, the goals it is fighting for and the methods used by it; this article consequently offers a brief chronology of its formation and historical development.

ISIL is said to be born by the war in Iraq, yet the genesis is to be sought as early as in the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement with which the former dominions of the Ottoman Empire were divided artificially by France and Great Britain. In the First World War they encouraged the Arabs to fight the Ottoman Empire and in exchange to have a national Arab state set up from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, which did not happen. A wave of anti-colonialism arose, used by such organizations as the Arab Socialist BA'ATH Party fighting for unity of all Arabs.

After France and Great Britain withdrew from the colonies due to the inability to rule, different authoritarian regimes and dictatorships began to come to power in most Middle East countries. By European standards Hosni Mubarak, Saddam Hussein and Hafez Assad were dictators, but in the local context they were reformers:

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modernists building economies that worked, educating the population and strengthening the secular institutions. While employing brutal methods to suppress dissenters, they cut religious extremism in embryo too.

After the end of the Cold War the liberated spheres of influences began to be seized and USA established their influence over the Crescent: North Africa, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Eastern Europe. The Arab regimes however continued to uphold their independence, leaning on their sustainable sovereign economies. The Persian Gulf wars followed next under the pretext of defence of democracy and human rights. The Coalition of the Willing led by USA opted for quick military victory, but when Saddam was finally overthrown, all regulatory structures that had restrained personal, tribal and religious tensions since 1917 suddenly disappeared.

**Saddam Hussein** knew himself that he wouldn't succeed in a direct military clash with the great technological force and even six months before the war he created an asymmetric military actions plan taking the weak spots of the regular American army into account. Together with the intelligence services the Iraqi High Command developed a preliminary war plan called Tiger's Mogadishu or Project 111 whereby the military formations of the Armed Forces were intended to disappear and to fight as a rebel army from their own towns and cities (Parry, T. 2005)

When the offensive started, the Iraqi army, once fourth in the world, simply vanished overnight, with the soldiers discarding their uniforms. During the major war phase of the conflict only a few large formations of the regular Iraqi troops were facing the allies. On the other hand through protraction tactics of the Fedayeen Saddam special forces large-scale operations transformed into partisan assaults and terrorist acts. After twenty one days of fighting President George Bush announced "mission accomplished", with only 139 troops lost for the Coalition. Bagdad was in chaos and days later all Iraqi ministries were in flames concealing the tracks of the former regime. All hope that the plans of the regime would be brought out into the open was lost.

The Coalition gradually restored order by force within the boundaries of Iraq, but in May 2003 Saddam Hussein who was hiding near his native town of Tikrit issued an order for the start of a movement of insurgence. Since that day till the withdrawal of the US army 4493 people perished and 32 thousand were wounded; while according to UN 155 thousand people were killed as a result of the war in Iraq.

Saddam was captured and put to death; however he was not the only one with plans concerning post-war Iraq. **Osama bin Laden**, leader of the terrorist Al-Qaeda organization intended insurgents to fight like Afghan talibans side by side with the BA'ATH Party members.

**Al-Qaeda** emerged in 1988 when Arabs gathered together in Peshawar, Pakistan to fight with the USSR forces in Afghanistan. At the time **Osama bin Laden** was in disagreement with his leader Abdullah Azzam as what to do after the war. Bin Laden launched the idea to establish an Islamic Caliphate encompassing the entire Muslim world. To that end professionally trained terrorists were to provoke USA and the West to assault Afghanistan so that USA, similarly to the Soviet Union, would suffer military and political defeat. Bin Laden murdered Azzam and established control over a huge number of fighters who intended to leave the country after the end of the war. He set up a new group - Tanzim Al-Qaeda Al Jihad (Organization Headquarters for Jihad) and spread his ideology with books, audio cassettes etc.

Al-Qaeda was to encourage the emigration of millions of Muslims to the land ideal for them. They were expected to be infected them with faith and to use technological means to draw new followers. Though that did not happen, Al-Qaeda turned out to be the biggest political and military mistake in the American history. Following the terrorist assault of September 11, President George Bush and his close associates took that opportunity to radically change the face of the Muslim world. What they regrettably failed to consider was that the invasion would only corroborate Osama bin Laden's rhetoric (Nance, M. 2016).

ISIL's religious system does not originate in Iraq, it has always been deeply engrained in the plan started by Bin Laden and consequently implemented by the Jordan leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. In the 80's Zarqawi was a petty criminal who departed for Afghanistan to fight the Soviet troops, but he arrived only too late. There he gained more knowledge of the Neo-Salaphite movement and met Bin Laden, who encouraged him to go back to his native land and head his own Jihad movement. On his way through Iraqi Kurdistan he also met with the leaders of Ansar al-Islam, a Kurdish Jihadist group. In Jordan the charismatic leader set up the group Monotheism and Jihad, or Jama'at al-Tawhid-wal-Jihad.

In the first half of the nineties Bin Laden's follower and the Egyptian Islam Jihadist Ayman al-Zawahiri settled in Khartoum, Sudan. Somewhat later he carried out his first attacks against Western targets in Yemen. After the victory over the local military leaders the talibans invited Bin Laden to set up his operating base in Kabul. There he trained chosen professional terrorists to carry out attacks against the West, including implementation of plans to blow up a dozen jets over the Pacific Ocean, to assassinate the Pope and to crash a plane loaded with bombs into the C.I.A's headquarters.

In the second half of the 90's Al-Qaeda attacked the US Embassies in Kenya and Tansania, after which Bin Laden came out with an official declaration of war on the United States and the West. USA retaliated with cruise missiles nearly killing Bin Laden in Zauar Kili, a terrorist base camp. A bomb boat successfully hit the USS Navy destroyer Cole in Yemen. These attempts reached a peak on September 11 2001 with the takedown of the World Trade Centre complex in New York and the attacks on the Pentagon, in which over 3000 people perished. USA invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, setting up a new failed state open to the attacks of Al-Qaeda, which was growing fast.

Zarqawi and Tawhid-wal-Jihad moved to Iraq in March 2003 following Saddam Hussein's call for defence of the country from the American invasion. Zarqawi established his command in Fallujah, patiently waiting for his hosts to be eliminated. Meanwhile jihadists from all over the Muslim world were heading for Iraq through Syria with the support of Al-Qaeda's global coordinators. They were followed by dozens of small Salafite groups and around 2006 they all began to consolidate under Al-Qaeda's control. Bin Laden wanted all Islamist cells to be brought together under one general command and ultimately to have the Islamist nation take shape in the heart of Iraq. Initially it even bore the name of Islamic Emirate in Iraq (IEI).

After Zarqawi's death on 7 June 2006 Al-Qaeda branched out under a two-branch command headed by the Egyptian Abu Ayyub Al-Masri and the Iraqi Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, with the terrorist coordination committee called Mujjahideen Shura Council.

After the US intelligence located and eliminated most of commanders in a single air strike, **the Iraqi Abu Omar al-Baghdadi took command in 2006 and officially changed the name to Islamic State in Iraq (ISI)**. He was chosen to be the first emir of the Islam State. He began his activities by issuing a formal statement announcing the establishment of a Sunni Caliphate in Iraq.

An alliance of Islamic insurgent formations was set up in 2007 to oppose an increasingly popular group aimed against Al Qaeda and called Suns of Iraq. Al-Baghdadi's alliance was given the name Coalition of Nobility.

When the Aby Ghraib scandal exploded with the appearance of pictures showing how American soldiers tortured and sexually abused Iraqi prisoners in the same prison where Saddam Hussein had committed similar crimes, more and more foreigners joined to fight "The American colonizers". That prison turned out to be a target for the insurgents.

ISI's leader Abu Omar al-Baghdadi was killed in April 2010. The organization was taken by Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. ISI's command acquired a new appearance as it filled up its ranks with ex-Ba'athist Iraqi officers and members of the Iraqi secret services.

That very same year Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi won enormous popularity with the capture of the mythical Aby Ghraib prison. Thousands of liberated Sunni Muslims joined the jihadist ranks.

Due to the fighting the border between Syria and Iraq was practically non-existent and consequently they found it easy to join in on the side of Jabhat al-Nusra (Front for the Defense of the Syrian People). That is an Islamist group and a branch of Al-Qaeda fighting against the government of the Syrian President Bashar Assad (Dimov, P. 2016 a).

In the USA the calls in for the US troops to withdraw intensified as early as in 2007. The American people was exhausted by the political speculations on the back of its perished children and the Bush Administration began to give in. In 2008 President Bush failed to sign an agreement with Iraq regarding the status of the troops. In actual fact Iraqi's Prime Minister **Nouri al-Maliki** did not agree with the American troops staying after 2011. He insisted that the war had given rise to a new sovereign nation that was ready to take its destiny in its own hands. That included driving out the Sunni Muslim minority having the same faith as Saddam Hussein.

In December 2011 the American armed units withdrew to Kuwait and from there to USA. ISI's terrorists could take their pick among a multitude of targets, but they did not raise a finger. America was gone and Iraq was essentially theirs as a platform for action.

Almost at once the Shi'ite Al-Maliki's rule took such a turn that all guarantees and assurances given by the Americans vanished overnight. Al-Maliki began rapid lustration of the ex-Ba'ath members and attempted to cut all aspirations of the Sunni (Saddam's fellows) and the Kurds. That made the gulf between the Muslim communities even more profound and further radicalized Sunni Muslims. They had no other choice but take to arms and join the only group to have attracted the attention of the Iraqi people. Thus the Sunni Muslims joined the insurgency movement and shared the fate of Al Qaeda in Iraq, now renamed Islamic State in Iraq.

With subtle political concessions the ex-Ba'ath Sunni distanced themselves from AQI and the insurgents began to lose positions. With the departure of the American military units in 2011 Al-Qaeda in Iraq and its sister group was on the way to decline, their leaders were eliminated and their membership all but disappeared.

„**The Arab Spring**“ in 2011 seeking to cover the tracks and remove the last dictators in the region led to the collapse of Syria. That enabled Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), already called Islamic State in Iraq, to add the word Levant to its name and the **Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant** (ISIL) made its appearance.

It moved their operations to Syria and sent fighters to join the rebel forces against Bashar Assad, which helped them acquire military skills and unite with the Syrian Sunni Muslims. In April 2013 Al-Baghdadi recorded an audio communication proclaiming that from that moment on ISI and the Al-Nusra Front (NF) were one and the same organization. In his message Al-Baghdadi stated that Al-Nusra Front in Syria was their branch fully funded by them. The leader of al-Nusra Front Abu Mohammad al-Golani refused to accept that. As a result Al-Qaeda's emir Ayman al-Zawahiri came out with a statement that ISI should limit its sphere of operations to the territory of Iraq. ISIL refused to leave Syria. Al-Qaeda broke its ties with its own offspring, ISIL (Dimov, P. 2016 b).

The political bloodthirstiness of the Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki went beyond the limit of the acceptable for the Sunni ex-Saddam followers and they began to return to terror, rushing to join ISIL with open arms. Together they started seizing their own Sunni territory. Eventually as they grew in force they went on to seize Shi'ite territories and from that moment on the rebel movement never halted its offensive and the so-called threat to the modern world was born from its fragments.

As a terrorist organization ISIL does not consist of foreign fighters alone. At its creation Bin Laden even intended its leadership to be taken by young Iraqis. In actual fact ISIL “liberated” the Iraqi Sunni regions and the organization survived thanks to skilful manipulation of the local tribes, calls for Sunni nationalism and fanatic religious piety. In fact ISIL is a brilliant use of Islam by the secret Ba'ath counter intelligence structures. They are able to easily hold the population in submission with the help of interpretations of Islam combined with summary executions.

ISIL relies on Saddam Hussein's intelligence units for its means of control over the population as in turn they have considerable training and a structure similar to that of Stasi. That organizational structure of intelligence and espionage officers is now dominant in the heart of the Middle East and is trying to conquer the Muslim world.

In May 2014 the State Department added the following ISIL pseudonyms: Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISISH), Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), al Dawlah al-Islameyah fi Iraq wal-Sham (DAESH). .

With three quick offensives ISIL troops seized vast areas of Eastern Syria. The two assaults in Syria happened in 2012 and 2013, establishing control over a very important vast strip of territory linking Northern Syria and Iraq.

In the beginning of 2014 they carried out a blitz campaign in Western Iraq too, established their control over the city of Mosul, the third biggest city in Iraq and proceeded to advance to Baghdad. The Iraqi army was in collapse and ISIL seized billions of dollars in the form of US-supplied arms and equipment. The world watched in shock as the group claimed cities, seizing numerous oil fields and dozens of millions of American currency in the banks. The conquests of the cities of Tikrit, Kaym, Fallujah and Ramadi were followed by outrages in revenge: mass beheadings, crucifixions and summary executions. All this was recorded on high resolution video and broadcast in

the rest of the world. The lands under ISIL control spread on a vast territory from Aleppo to Fallujah and Mosul (Nance, M. 2016):

**On 29 June 2014 they proclaimed that the new Islamic Caliphate would bear the name of Islamic State and their leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi would be named Caliph Ibrahim.** Groups in Egypt, Nigeria, Yemen, Afghanistan and Libya, formerly loyal to Al-Qaeda, pledged allegiance to the self-proclaimed Caliph Ibrahim. The onslaughts against Russia, Tunisia and Paris led to the establishment of a world coalition for the destruction of ISIL. In March 2015 ISIL declared that the Nigerian terrorist group Boko Haram had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State. By May 2015 a total of 35 terrorist groups proclaimed themselves supporters of ISIL.

In August 2014 they seized the biggest oil fields in Syria. A video showing the beheading of the American journalist James Foley was disseminated in the social media. USA launched air strikes against ISIL targets in the Kurdish regions in Iraq.

On 30 September 2015 the Russian armed forces started an operation in Syria in which ISIL targets were bombed. In October 2015 ISIL's Egyptian branch Ansar Bait al-Maqdis took responsibility for downing a Russian plane over the Sinai Peninsula and the death of 255 passengers.

Around noon on 7 November 2015 two masked heavily armed men forced their way into the office of the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo and shot 12 employees, the reason for the attacks thought to be cartoons mocking the Prophet Mohammad. 130 people perished in the suicidal attacks in Paris.

In March 2016 terrorist attacks were also carried out at Brussels airport and metro station with 34 victims and over 200 injured.

ISIL successfully gives the illusion that it is a greater group, different than Al-Qaeda because, in contrast to it, it is conquering the Middle East as territory. Their caliph affirms that it is the only legitimate Muslim nation. The truth is that it is one and the same phenomenon under many names, - Al-Qaedaism and Islamic Jihad. ISIL consists of such organizations as Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda in Islamic Magreb, Al-Murabitun, ISIL in Lybia, Ansar al-Suna, Al-Qaeda on the Indian Ocean, Al-Qaeda on the Arab Peninsula in Yemen, Al-Shabab – the list seems endless. In brief, each small group of adherents and supporters of the idea of jihad, photographed with a poster of ISIL, can be considered a serious threat to global security.

Meanwhile countless journalists – experts in the issues of terrorism, scholars and politicians still argue that ISIL is not Al-Qaeda, that the Nigerian group Boko Haram is not similar, nor is it related to Al-Shabab in Somalia and that the British girls joining to marry ISIL fighters have nothing to do with Osama Bin Laden.

Nonetheless it is a fact that in 2003 ISIL became known in the world as Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) under the command of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. After that day the mass slaughters of Iraqi, Americans and civilians were started whenever convenient in conjunctions with the former Ba'ath terrorist army of Saddam and in alliance with dozens of micro-jihadist groups.

„The Liberation” of Iraq opened up a Pandora's box full of local, regional and international hatred, so thousand of jihadists of suicidal mind began to converge in Iraq in the desire to die as martyrs. The errors of the Iraqi government permitted their rebirth and the invasion of Syria. Had the existing social, political and tribal structures in Mesopotamia not been destroyed by the war, there would have been no ISIL to fight now. Al-Qaeda would have probably faded away in Pakistan. However, today's global jihadist movement under the aegis of the freshly renamed ISIL is turning into a global threat that the rest of the world is beginning to be used to.

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