ISIS AND THE STAFFING DOCTRINE

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Rojava Center for Strategic Studies

NRLS

Introduction

The so-called ISIS has caused horrific moral violations unprecedented in the region since the decline of Ottoman occupation. It resurrected overwhelming evil by reviving the culture of terrorism to enforce submission through rituals of beheadings, burning people alive, raping women, and enslaving children. It imprisoned tolerance, virtue, and mercy in dark cells within the ziggurat of fear, falsely labeling it the Islamic Caliphate. Muslims were subjected to a new form of tyranny, bringing upon them further calamities by using them as human shields to protect against falling shells and bullets fired by those they wronged. This led to the suffering of millions, and the group's priests failed to prove the illusions they propagated. Their leader was killed in a tunnel resembling a rat's den after an American "dog" exposed him. Those they deceived now languish in miserable camps like al-Hol, shocked by the truth they had ignored. Thousands of their surrendered and captured priests are imprisoned, while others have become mercenaries for the intelligence services of regional states they once denounced as infidels. It seems that illusion holds tremendous power, capable of turning people into automatons, inciting them to extreme levels of sadism towards others who are different and masochism towards their masters. This delusion drove hundreds of gullible individuals to travel thousands of miles from their countries to live in this fantasy, as witnessed on the ground in Syria and Iraq.

The doctrine of ISIS staffing is based on promoting illusions that numb some of the psychological wounds of people who have suffered oppression and misery due to the actions of rogue governments and leaders, disconnected from their rich local cultures. It plays on the fears of the gullible, who are submerged in a sea of religious supremacy myths. The result is a horrific catastrophe that has ravaged people, nature, and heritage—one that the Tigris and Euphrates rivers may struggle to erase, especially after one of their peers dammed the rivers behind barriers of hatred and tyranny. This tragedy will become part of the cultural folklore of the future, with stories of horror, where those who fought against them will be remembered as heroes, inspiring future generations to resist the evildoers of their time.

Some researchers, politicians, and media figures exaggerate ISIS's skill in staffing, possibly leaning towards self-promotion to draw attention to their own opinions. There are hundreds of studies and reports that have addressed this topic. Others follow conspiracy theories, viewing ISIS as a creation of forces attempting to control the world. They base this on applying the concepts of "creative chaos (*[1])" and the "strategy of distraction (*[2])" to the current political reality. This perspective might relate to the skill of some states in using the group as a pretext to serve their strategies; ISIS might be the product of a state's policy, or it might influence the policies of states that shape their relations based on their stance towards the organization. However, ISIS itself is entirely convinced of a divine power that ensures it recruits members, weaving myths around this belief and claiming to be the "saved sect (*[3])."

There are other views that seem relatively more realistic, such as ISIS benefiting from the decline of al-Qaeda from the pinnacle of jihadist ideology after many of its leaders were assassinated, and al-Qaeda's inability to adapt to the new security environment and the radical (*[4]) paradigm shift among the masses in countries that witnessed popular uprisings against the oppression of their rulers, who had framed themselves with nationalist or religious ideologies. The violent jihadists, who had become isolated from the masses, found a refuge in the relatively new ISIS group.

These perspectives cannot be entirely dismissed; certainly, there is relative credibility in most of them. However, to truly understand ISIS's staffing doctrine, one must comprehend the mindset of those who joined the group and the circumstances that led them to respond to its propaganda. This propaganda

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*[1] Creative Chaos: A popular political term that gained widespread recognition in the West after the events of September 11, 2001. It refers to the deliberate creation of a relatively new political situation by causing chaos and disorder in the existing political order through an organized group, with the aim of altering the current situation in favor of the party implementing this strategy.

*[2] The Strategy of Distraction: American researcher Noam Chomsky is one of the most prominent figures who focused on this term in the realm of politics. The concept has existed for hundreds of years and is defined as the process of diverting public opinion or the attention and thoughts of individuals away from significant and critical issues to secondary or less important matters. This can be done by fabricating a new, urgent problem or issue, such as creating an internal or external crisis or redirecting public attention, which is already grappling with a crisis, to peripheral issues like sports, entertainment, ideological debates, and so on.

*[3] This term is derived from a Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): "The Jews split into seventy-one sects, the Christians split into seventy-two sects, and this Ummah will split into seventy-three sects, all of which will be in Hell except one." It was asked, "Who are they, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Those who are upon what I and my companions are upon."

*[4] Radicalism: In its general sense, radicalism is a political ideology that seeks to bring about fundamental change and comprehensive reform in the existing reality across various fields, including intellectual, political, economic, and social spheres.
— Encyclopedia of Knowledge: Radicalism.

capitalized on inciting the aggressive tendencies of the downtrodden, demagoguery, and the utopian vision of an Islamic Caliphate, leveraging a combination of subjective and objective factors affecting local environments.

This research will focus on analyzing the concept of ISIS's staffing doctrine by employing a descriptive-analytical approach, occasionally utilizing inductive and comparative methods. The study will concentrate on the concept and characteristics of ISIS's staffing doctrine, the means and tools used, and the influencing factors. It will also discuss possible solutions to counter this propaganda at the local level, drawing on interviews conducted by NRLS with several ISIS members at earlier times, analyzing incidents orchestrated by the group's sleeper cells, and reviewing various studies that have focused on this issue. Additionally, the research will include a reading and analysis of a selection of books published by entities advocating violent jihad based on the ideology of takfir (excommunication).

ISIS Staffing Doctrine: Principles and Characteristics

The staffing doctrine is an integral part of the combat doctrine, as fighting is impossible without recruits. ISIS's staffing doctrine revolves around addressing three key questions: What is the stance on staffing? Why recruit? And how to recruit? The answers provided by the recruiter often differ somewhat from those of the recruited. ISIS's staffing doctrine is structured around this framework, projecting its members as the "defenders of the nation and guardians of its creed, bearing its burdens and defending it" within the context of an eternal war based on the belief that "their battle continues until the end of time (*[5])."

The doctrine is centered on promoting "killing" as a means to earn divine favor, similar to the historical rituals of offering "human sacrifices to appease the deity." In ISIS's view, staffing revolves around making the killing of those who differ ideologically and religiously a ritualistic act of worship. They emphasize, as their

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*[5] محمد بن زيد المهاجر؛ حرب الإعلام على أهل الإسلام؛ الناشر حركة الإصلاح/ لجنة العسكرية؛ بلا رقم طبعة وتاريخ نشر وعنوان.

predecessors in al-Qaeda (*[6]) did, "We will fight until all the peoples of the earth embrace Islam and are subjected to Islamic law, but gradually."

Between 2014 and the moment of its defeat in 2019 in Syria and Iraq, ISIS created a new security environment and a political and cultural reality that captured global attention, propelling the Syrian crisis into a new phase on multiple levels. This period saw a surge in research and studies on ISIS, with varying analyses of its ideology, behavior, rapid rise, and swift downfall. Yet, the question of why some individuals joined the group despite the atrocities it committed continues to provoke many questions.

In this context, three perspectives stand out:

1. Mohammed Suleiman Abu Rumman, an Arab researcher at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, remarks: "Since its rapid expansion in 2014, the Islamic State remains one of the most unparalleled phenomena of our time. The group reached unprecedented levels of staffing, unmatched by any other group in modern history in terms of attracting such a large number of fighters. It possesses professional and tactical capabilities in using media, propaganda, and communication tools that far surpass the strategies of other jihadist movements... (*[7])"

2. Sarah, a Moroccan woman who traveled thousands of kilometers to join ISIS and later claimed to have renounced its ideology, stated: "In the West, those who fail in life often resort to suicide, which is a common practice. But in the Arab world, those who fail turn to the mosque, grow their beards, and shorten their clothes—the reason being their religious background..."

3. The third opinion comes from a (Muslim) fighter who joined the People's Protection Units (YPG) and participated in the liberation of Shingal/Sinjar from ISIS's grip: "ISIS is a group of mercenaries who came to our lands to kill us and drive us out of our homes in exchange for satisfying their lust for money, sex, and power. They joined the alliance of nationalist regimes within the deep state of Turkey, the Arab world, and Persia to exterminate the Kurdish people and

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*[6] حسن محمد قائد (أبي يحيى الليبي) ؛ مجموع الرسائل والتوجيهات المفرغة؛ الطبعة الأولى 2010م؛ الناشر نخبة الإعلام الجهادي/حركة الإصلاح- لجنة الشرعية.

*[7] محمد سليمان أبو رمان؛ سر الجاذبية: داعش، الدعاية والتجنيد؛ الناشر: مؤسسة فريدريش ايبرت- عمان/2016م؛ ص7.

subjugate the Arab people. They are cowardly criminals who kill prisoners, enslave children, and rape women...".

These three perspectives highlight attraction, desperation, and mercenary motives as the primary drivers for joining ISIS. Most of those who joined its ranks did so either for material gain, as a reaction against the environments they lived in, or due to the ideological appeal created by the group, which capitalized on the failure of other fundamentalist groups to provide solutions to the problems faced by Muslims. The propaganda of ISIS did not play a decisive role in this matter nor did it create anything new in this context; rather, it served as an auxiliary factor, reinforcing the illusion that the group was the "saved sect."

For ISIS, as the recruiting entity, its dynamics are rooted in its claims of being the "saved sect" mentioned by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in some of his hadiths (*[8]). The group justifies its existence by pointing to the failures of other jihadist groups in establishing an Islamic Caliphate, and it works to stir the emotions of individual Muslims in such a way that their logical thinking is weakened. This shift in focus makes the group's cause the primary concern, while their personal and humanitarian issues become secondary.

The staffing doctrine of ISIS, as it is promoted and claimed in its staffing efforts, can be outlined as follows: "Muslims are living under severe sectarian oppression, which has caused their backwardness and misery. The tyrants (*[9]) have led the masses away from their religion and into following infidel parties and sects, making them strangers to themselves and distant from their true identity. The revival of this nation and its ability to stand on its feet after reclaiming its lost character can only be achieved through adopting the correct method of action according to the ideology of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Therefore,

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*[8] "My Ummah will be fragmented into seventy-three sects, and all of them will be in Hell fire except one sect." The companions asked Allah's messenger which group that would be. Where upon he replied, "It is the one to which I and my companions belong."

*[9] عرف الإمام ابن قيم الجوزية الطاغوت في كتابه (أعلام الموقعين عن رب العالمين): "الطاغوت: كل ما تجاوز به العبد حده من معبود أو متبوع أو مطاع، فطاغوت كل قوم من يتحاكمون إليه غير الله ورسوله أو يعبدونه من دون الله أو يتبعونه على غير بصيرة من الله أو يطيعونه فيما لا يعلمون أنه طاعة لله" وابن قيّم هو تلميذ الشيخ (ابن تيمية) اللذان يعدّان من الفقهاء المسلمين السنة الذين تستند التنظيمات المتطرفة على أفكارهم في تفسير أيديولوجياتهم.

Muslims must pledge allegiance to the leaders of the group, and woe to those who fall behind."

ISIS leaders use powerful language in their staffing propaganda, employing two types of descriptive terms: one set to praise the group and another to condemn its enemies. This dual approach supports their staffing efforts and bolsters their claims that they are the group chosen to save Muslims from their misery, destined to conquer lands of disbelief and spread Islam as they describe. They assert that they will raise the name of Allah on earth, and anyone outside the group is considered an infidel whose blood, wealth, and honor are permissible to take. To establish the Islamic Caliphate, they call for global jihad with one's life, wealth, and family under the group's banner, urging "mujahideen" from all over the world to migrate to the lands of Sham (the Levant) and Iraq to support this cause. One of their ideological speeches in their magazine ("Dabiq" states, "The life of jihad is impossible unless you pack your bags and move to live in the Caliphate."

For the recruits, most come from Sunni communities living in relatively poor, marginalized, and oppressed environments. These recruits view the group's religious interpretations as a way to address their grievances or achieve personal significance by transforming into heroes who, in their belief, will be rewarded with the company of around seventy beautiful nymphs in paradise. This belief intensifies when the religiously inclined individual observes ISIS's utopia and contrasts it with their own bleak reality, leading to heightened sensitivity to perceived oppression by the authorities and their associates. This comparison often results in the individual becoming more open to the group, particularly when they feel threatened by processes such as Shiitization, Christianization, or secularization. They adopt a defensive stance when these processes seem to threaten their beliefs, conservative lifestyle, or cause harm, a fear that ISIS propaganda exaggerates significantly. This propaganda, in some cases, can provoke a backlash in the audience, further entrenching an extreme position against these perceived threats.

Additionally, ISIS sought to recruit individuals from outside Syria and Iraq by exploiting social media to spread its propaganda. This strategy successfully

attracted dozens of religious zealots and socially isolated individuals who struggled to adapt to the cultures of the countries they resided in.

Based on the previous discussion, a prominent set of characteristics that define ISIS's staffing doctrine can be identified as follows:

1. Rooted in a hybrid ideology combining Ba'athism and al-Qaeda's doctrine:

Many events leading up to ISIS's emergence indicate that its ideology resulted from a fusion between the ideological frameworks of al-Qaeda and the Ba'ath Party. The group first emerged in Iraq and gained strength in Syria, areas where both Ba'athist and jihadist thought had been deeply entrenched for decades. These two ideologies were historically antagonistic, competing for power in the region. However, a significant shift occurred after the collapse of the Ba'athist regime in Iraq in 2003 by Western forces, leading some members of these opposing factions to form an alliance based on the principle of uniting against a common enemy.

Many estimates suggest that the initial rapprochement between these groups took place in Camp Bucca, a detention facility in southern Basra where Coalition forces held dozens of Ba'athists and al-Qaeda leaders. Many of ISIS's senior leaders were Iraqi hardliners and former officers in Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard, which is evident in the group's combat expertise and its intense hostility towards the Kurdish people.

2. Religious guardianship:

Most researches agree that the use of religion for political purposes is an ancient practice experienced by numerous European, Asian, and African societies for thousands of years, and it continues today. This practice involves imposing intellectual guardianship (*[10]) over an individual's mind and emotions to extreme levels, which can be described as "intellectual servitude." This servitude enables

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[10]* تعرف الوصاية الفكرية بشكل عام بأنها " تحديد أفكاراً وآراء وعقائد وإيديولوجيات معينة، تفرض من قبل جهة ما على شريحة أو فئة معينة من الأشخاص للتعامل معها وبها حصراً..." نزار يوسف؛ الوصاية الفكرية؛ الطبعة الأولى/2008م؛ بلا ناشر.

the manipulation of individuals to carry out the desires of the authority or leader who holds this guardianship.

The group seeks to legitimize itself by presenting itself as the embodiment of concepts such as the "saved sect," the "manifest group," "Hezbollah," and "the community," which are mentioned in the Quran or the Hadith and the sayings of the Prophet's companions. To achieve this, they cite numerous Quranic verses and prophetic traditions, offering interpretations that align with contemporary contexts through analogical reasoning (qiyas) (*[11]) in fatwas. They attempt to apply historical religious texts to current events, disregarding the differing circumstances and reasons that led to those incidents, which may not be analogous to contemporary situations (*[12]).

The group claims in its propaganda that it is the "saved sect" chosen to establish the Islamic Caliphate (*[13]), thereby asserting that only obedience to its leaders is acceptable. Everyone must comply with its fatwas and laws, enforced through its so-called "Diwan al-Hisbah" (The Office of Religious Police). ISIS's staffing doctrine is framed around its combat ideology, which has redefined terms such as jihad, the utopia of the Islamic Caliphate, and the necessity of migration from lands of disbelief (Dar al-Kufr) (*[14]) to lands of Islam (Dar al-Islam). This is surrounded by a revolutionary aura.

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*[11] لاجتهاد والقياس "...هو محاولة عقلية فكرية لتنزيل النص على واقع الناس، وهو جهد بشري قد يخطئ وقد يصيب... الاجتهاد بالرأي، هو بذل الفقيه جهده العقلي للتوصل إلى الحكم في واقعة لا نص فيها، وذلك بالتفكر السليم واستخدام الوسائل التي هدى الشرع إليها للاستنباط فيما لا نص فيه... القياس اصطلاحا فنقول: هو إلحاق واقعة لا نص على حكمها بواقعة ورد نص بحكمها في الحكم الذي ورد به النص، لتساوي الواقعتين في علة الحكم..." كريم بن محمد بن لحسن؛ مذكرة في مبحث الاجتهاد: (تعريفه، الفرق بينه وبين القياس، أقسامه وأنواعه، مجاله، شروطه)؛ الناشر: موقع الملتقى الفقهي؛ تاريخ النشر: 17 أغسطس 2016؛ تاريخ الزيارة: 2023.02.26م. الرابط:
https://feqhweb.com/vb/threads/22777/

*[12] يمكن الاطلاع على بعض هذه الادعاءات في كتاب: عبد الله خالد العدم (أبو عبيدة) ؛ التذاكِرْ الجيّاد لأهل الجهاد؛ راجعها وعلق عليها عطية الله الليبي؛ الناشر: حركة الإصلاح لجنة الشرعية/Şer'i Komite Islah Hareketi - مركز الفجر للإعلام؛ بلا رقم طبعة وتاريخ.
من التفسيرات غير الدقيقة الآية "...وَلَا يَطَئُونَ مَوْطِئًا يَغِيظُ الْكُفَّارَ وَلَا يَنَالُونَ مِنْ عَدُوٍّ نَيْلًا إِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُم بِهِ عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ" سورة التوبة (120) ولدى مراجعة كامل الآية يمكن ملاحظة أن الشطر الأول من الآية يشير إلى أهل المدينة من حولهم من الأعراب الذين تخلفوا عن الرسول في غزوة تبوك ويفسرها المتشددون العنفيون على أنه دليلا على وجوب جهاد النكاية أي إحداث تفجيرات وعمليات دهس وقتل أبرياء بمجرد أن الفعل يغيظ أعداء الله، علماً أنّ عنفهم أضرّ بالمسلمين كثيراً....

*[13] There is no evidence in the Quran or Sunnah to support these claims and interpretations that they present. These interpretations have been crafted to align with the ideology of the organization, which seeks to reshape Islam according to its own concept.

*[14] The group defines these territories as areas that do not fall under its material or moral authority. However, the common definition among Islamic scholars refers to lands where the application of Islamic law is not prevented, and where the Islamic faith is denied and suppressed. The group has declared all inhabitants of these lands, whether Muslims or others, as disbelievers.

The group monopolizes the concept of takfir, categorizing countries into Dar al-Kufr, Dar al-Harb (land of war), and Dar al-Islam (*[15]), mandating migration from Dar al-Kufr and Dar al-Harb to Dar al-Islam, and fighting until both lands are eliminated. The leaders dictate what followers must do, leaving no room for discussion, critique, or independent thought. They have attacked various other Islamic sciences, such as "Fiqh al-Taysir" (facilitative jurisprudence) (*[16]), accusing it of diluting the religion and enabling sins and heresy, while supporting non-Muslims against Muslims.

The group also excommunicates those who support moderation and tolerance, claiming that such views make Muslims lax in their religion and open to accepting changes imposed by the so-called "crusade" against Islam, including democracy and multi-party systems (*[17]). This is outlined in works close to the group, which overlook the fact that most Muslims have preserved their faith for approximately 1,400 years.

The spread of this doctrine has been facilitated by widespread illiteracy and a lack of general knowledge (*[18]) among those targeted by the group's propaganda, or the loss of trust in other fundamentalist leaders. As a result, the group imposes its ideological and doctrinal dominance over its followers and anyone under its control.

The group has created fatwas to justify every violation of the rights, honor, and property of those it attacks. Anyone who defies this guardianship faces spiritual punishment, being labeled as an unbeliever destined for Hell, and, if that fails, worldly punishment through execution or torture. This reinforces intellectual and

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*[15] The group has marginalized the concepts of *Dar al-Ahd* (House of Covenant), also known as *Dar al-Muwada'a* (House of Reconciliation) and *Dar al-Sulh* (House of Truce). These terms refer to situations where the Imam makes a treaty with non-Muslims, agreeing to a truce and suspending hostilities for a specified period, with or without compensation. Such a territory is considered *Dar al-Ahd*. The Prophet Muhammad applied this principle in Medina through a treaty with its inhabitants, including various tribes and beliefs, known as the *Constitution of Medina*.

*[16] محمد بن زيد المهاجر؛ حرب الإعلام على أهل الإسلام؛ الناشر حركة الإصلاح/ لجنة العسكرية؛ بلا رقم طبعة وتاريخ نشر وعنوان

*[17] محمد بن زيد المهاجر؛ حرب الإعلام على أهل الإسلام؛ الناشر حركة الإصلاح/ لجنة العسكرية؛ بلا رقم طبعة وتاريخ نشر وعنوان. ص34

*[18] تعددت تعريفات الوعي المعرفي، ومن هذه التعريفات "الوعي المعرفي ليس كينونة Antity ولكنه نشاط عقلي ذو توجه هادف وإدراك ذهني يتميز بذكاءٍ عالٍ وتفكير منطقي، ولا يتضمن أي نمط من أنماط الانحراف عن معايير العقل، أو عنصرا يحتمل الازدواج في السلوك العقلي. فهو وحدة ذهنية وخبرة واعية من تذكر وتفكير وإدراك..." د. كامل جاسم المراياتي؛ الوعي المعرفي والتنمية المستقبلية، الناشر مجلة آداب البصرة/ العدد 46 لسنة 2008م.

physical enslavement, fostering social oppression and a culture of fear in the communities under its control. ISIS has distorted the concept of jihad, once a source of morale and self-defense for many peoples and followers of various spiritual beliefs resisting colonizers and tyrants, turning it into a plague for societies through ideologically motivated criminal behavior.

3.   Mythologizing

The group has created numerous myths around itself, such as promoting the idea that its state is "lasting and expanding" and that it is the "saved sect." They claim that their victory is divinely ordained and that all their actions are inspired by God. For instance, they sometimes invoke the verse "And you did not throw when you threw, but it was Allah who threw" (Quran 8:17) to justify their attacks on predominantly Muslim populations in the region. They consider themselves tasked with converting the world to Islam and fighting against the false messiah (al-Masih ad-Dajjal). They portray the Islamic Caliphate as a state that adheres to justice, Islamic law, and the welfare of all Muslims.

However, some former members who migrated from Saudi Arabia to areas under the group's control have been shocked by the reality and claimed they were deceived. For example, a legislator within the group recounted hearing about a group of members who committed a collective rape of a homeless woman they had kidnapped and enslaved. According to this legislator, they committed adultery but were not punished because they were ignorant of the details of Sharia law.

There are numerous examples of beheadings based on mere suspicion or ethnic identity, with the massacres in Kobani and the Shaitat tribe highlighting the hypocrisy of the group. The purpose of this mythologizing is to cement its religious authority over its followers. The group's ideology has faced severe opposition from its counterparts in jihadist thought, who have accused it of "bringing discord and evil into jihadist groups (*[19])."

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[19]* صدر هذا الأمر على شكل بيان موحد من قبل كل من:هيئة الشام الإسلامية- رابطة العلماء السوريين- رابطة علماء الشام- الملتقى الإسلامي السوري- الهيئة الشرعية في محافظة حلب- رابطة خطباء الشام وغيرهم ويمكن قرائتها على الرابط:
https://islamicsham.org/letters/1431

4. Demagoguery

Demagoguery forms the backbone of directed political and religious propaganda, as it relies on making claims that incite public fears and then presenting the demagogue as the savior who offers promises to alleviate these fears if the public follows their lead. This approach often intertwines with conspiracy theories and black propaganda. As researcher Farag Fouda notes, "Terrorism thrives and grows only under demagoguery. (*[20])"

The group has honed its demagogic skills in its media and propaganda systems by focusing on issues that repel Muslims, such as sexual matters, colonialism, poverty, and loss of cultural identity. It deceives them into believing that various global political forces, which it labels as "infidels," are imposing these issues on Muslim lands through concepts like democracy, moderation, and peace. The group uses "red herring" or "straw man" (*[21]) fallacies to generate fear of these concepts, which helps to solidify its theocratic rule and recruit new followers.

The group has been relatively strong in countries with regimes lacking both democracy and nationalistic sentiment, as well as in impoverished areas surrounded by military bases of powerful nations, particularly those close to energy resources and vital transportation routes. By leveraging demagoguery, the group established a close alliance with Turkey based on mutual opposition to the Kurdish people's right to self-determination. Despite being internationally ostracized, Turkey maintained economic relations with the group during its control of the border city of Tel Abyad in northern Syria. The group's military assaults on the populations of northern and eastern Syria, including Kurds, Yazidis, secularists, and Christians, were coordinated with Turkish aggression. The group used its hostility towards the Kurdish people to neutralize Turkish, Iranian, and Ba'athist intelligence operations against its staffing efforts. This is supported by

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*[20] د. فرج فوده؛ الإرهاب؛ بلا رقم طبعة؛ الناشر: الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب 1992م.

*[21] تأتي التسمية من تلك الممارسة التي كانت شائعةً في العصور الوسطى، والتي تُستخدم فيها دميةٌ على هيئة رجل محشوةٌ بالقش لكي تمثل «الخصم» في ممارسة المقارعة بالسيف... هي تلك المغالطة العتيدة التي يعمد فيها المرء إلى مهاجمة نظريةٍ أخرى غير حصينة بدلًا من نظرية الخصم الحقيقية، وذلك تحت تعميةٍ من تشابه الأسماء أو عن طريق إفقار دم النظرية الأصلية وتغيير خصائصها ببترها عن سياقها الحقيقي أو بإزاحتها إلى ركن قصيٍّ متطرف، ويشبه هذا الجهد العقلي العقيم، سواء حسنت النية أو ساءت، أن يكون رميًا لخصمٍ من القش بدلًا من الخصم الحقيقي..." للمزيد راجع: عادل مصطفى؛ المغالطات المنطقية/ فصول في المنطق غير الصوري؛ الناشر: مؤسسة هنداوي-وندسور/المملكة المتحدة 2019م؛ بلا رقم طبعة.

statements such as those made by Abu Ubaida al-Turk, who revealed in a meeting with al-Baghdadi that they discussed attacking Kurdish populations and carrying out bombings in Kurdish centers in northern Kurdistan. Despite some objections from attendees who believed the timing was inappropriate, Abu Zainab al-Raqqawi, the security officer in Turkey, insisted on the attacks, which later targeted gatherings of the People's Democratic Party with the knowledge of Turkish intelligence.

5. Seduction and terror

Based on the saying "If you're not with me, you're against me," the group simultaneously employs two methods in its staffing operations targeting the disenfranchised from poor environments. The group promotes these methods both morally and materially. Those who submit are told by the group's clerics that they will enjoy eternal paradise and its pleasures, as well as worldly gains such as material and human spoils. Conversely, those who resist staffing are led to believe that their fate is Hell, where they will face various terrifying forms of torture. In the worldly realm, they may be subjected to beheading, severe torture, their honor violated, their children enslaved, and their property looted. Therefore, individuals face three choices: joining the group, resisting it, or fleeing from it, and they will choose based on their circumstances and convictions.

For foreign recruits, they are greatly influenced by the group's allure and see it as a means to fulfill their desires and address their difficulties integrating into their own societies. The group consistently portrays itself as an Islamic utopia and a place to fulfill sexual and aggressive desires within the framework of its Sharia, which they cannot practice in their own regions. This includes indirectly promoting what is known as "sexual jihad."

6. Totalitarianism

The group's staffing efforts were not limited to male Muslims but extended to women and children as well. They established specialized groups such as the Khatibat al-Khansa (Al-Khansa Brigade) and Ashbal al-Khilafa (Cubs of the

Caliphate), which were involved in violent activities, including the execution of refugees in camps like al-Hol.

The group also targeted followers of the Yazidi and Christian faiths through a combination of enticement and terrorism. They forced thousands of women and children to adopt the group's ideology after killing their men and abducting them. The group even managed to recruit members from leftist parties, such as Abu Jihad al-Turki (Savash Yildiz), who was responsible for the security section of the ISIS branch in Turkey and was accused of orchestrating bombings targeting gatherings of the Peoples' Democratic Party in Adana and Mersin in 2015. He was also a member of the Turkish People's Liberation Party.

Furthermore, the group did not confine its activities to a single geography but spread its followers across many countries worldwide. The announcement of allegiance by numerous fundamentalist groups in Asia and Africa further facilitated this expansion. Additionally, the group's approach to takfir (excommunication) was all-encompassing, sparing no Muslim who did not follow it or others. It even excommunicated some fundamentalist groups that rejected its authority, such as the schism with Jabhat al-Nusra (now Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham).

7. Hatred

Hatred, especially when unjustified and morally reprehensible, serves as a powerful driving force behind extremism. It is an exclusionary culture rooted in Ad hominem (*[22]) and has historically fueled ideologies seeking power through nationalistic, religious, and sectarian means. These ideologies often rely on accusations of heresy, betrayal, and cultural disdain.

In turn, ISIS directly relied on this culture in its staffing operations and took advantage of the hatred instilled by nationalist, religious, and sectarian ideologies in the region. The Ba'athist ideology in Syria and Iraq, for instance, fostered intense nationalist sentiments and animosity towards other ethnicities, which, when

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*[22] "against the man", type of argument or attack that appeals to prejudice or feelings or irrelevantly impugns another person's character instead of addressing the facts or claims made by the latter.

mirrored by other ideologies like Shia clericalism, al-Qaeda, and the Muslim Brotherhood, further entrenched sectarian and religious animosities. The events leading up to the Qamishli uprising on March 12, 2004, serve as an indicator of this issue. The acts of violence and political persecution exchanged between followers of those ideologies entrenched these feelings in the political memory of most local communities. Therefore, a person steeped in hatred will inevitably be drawn to the group that shares this hatred, which is what happened in reality.

This explains the horrific treatment and brutal killings that the Kurds faced from the Yazidis, Muslims, and secularists, as well as what happened to Christians, Shiites, Arabs, and some journalists and humanitarian workers. The group uses the concept of pretext to cover up its crimes and prevent its followers from feeling remorse by stirring feelings of revenge and retaliation. It claims to have killed thousands of children, women, and elderly people as a result of the "crusades" (*[23]) against Afghanistan, Iraq, Chechnya, Palestine, and Somalia. However, the 250 people, including children, women, and the elderly, killed in the Kobani massacre on June 25, 2015, and the victims of the Qamishli bombing in July 2016, as well as the Shaitat massacre, were mostly Muslims with no connection to the so-called crusades. Their extreme hatred even led them to violate the Quranic verse: "Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes, from being righteous and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly." (Surah Al-Mumtahina, 60:8).

On the other hand, the group exploited criticism from some Western artists towards Islamic symbols to incite hatred against European societies, despite these critics often addressing their own societies' beliefs more critically. For instance, some satirical cartoons criticizing Islam in Europe were used to fuel extreme hatred against Europeans. One of the leaders of al-Qaeda, from which ISIS emerged, used this situation in a remarkable sermon (*[24]), stating: "O Muslims, ignite it as an unquenchable fire and a war that cannot be stopped. Speak less and act more. Reduce the condemnation, protest, and denunciation, and tighten the campaign with the sharp sword. We do not want apologies from them but we

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[23]* محمد بن زيد المهاجر؛ حرب الإعلام على أهل الإسلام؛ الناشر حركة الإصلاح/ لجنة العسكرية؛ بلا رقم طبعة وتاريخ نشر وعنوان.

[24]* حسن محمد قائد (أبي يحيى الليبي) ؛ مجموع الرسائل والتوجيهات المفرغة؛ الطبعة الأولى 2010م؛ الناشر نخبة الإعلام الجهادي/حركة الإصلاح- لجنة الشرعية. ص 84.

want them to experience humiliation, disgrace, and subjugation that forces their noses to the ground, humiliates their pride, and curbs their evil. Let them be humiliated, for they will not exceed their measure, and does such a measure exist for them? So, draw your swords and prepare your campaigns, and let them drink from the cups of doom, so that you might attain the badge of honor, the medals of approval, and the crowns of success."

8. The monopoly on morality

Reflecting on the early history of human societies, ethics appears to be the first policy adopted by communities to manage their internal relations and regulate their relationships with other societies. Ethics is considered a unique means of achieving peace, security, and coexistence among humans. Occasionally, deviations from ethical norms can lead to internal wars, resulting in the collapse of civilizations and the emergence of new ones through revolutions. Despite pragmatism being a prominent feature in contemporary political relations and liberalism being a significant trait in the domestic policies of many democratic countries, many societies around the world continue to revere the ethics of their cultural heritage. Historically, it has been shown that the first step in genocide begins with stripping those who refuse to submit of their humanity and denying their ethics, a practice that has long been used in war propaganda for conquest. However, it is important to remember that denying the virtuous ethics of others is itself an unethical behavior.

Extremism finds a significant opportunity for growth and expansion in conservative social environments where individuals suffer from moral decay and a lack of ethical values among certain groups. Additionally, unregulated sexual relationships have a highly provocative negative impact on feelings and behaviors in spiritual beliefs. Most debates on intellectual superiority between followers of different ideologies involve attacking and distorting the moral framework of the opposing side, a conflict that has extended into the digital realm with the massive development in news and idea dissemination through social media. The fallacy of personalization becomes prevalent in the ethical evaluation of a society upon witnessing scenes that contradict the viewer's own ethics, leading to the

generalization of the perceived wrongs to that society and even to countries connected to those scenes.

Based on this, ISIS's staffing ideology uses the issue of ethics as a means to demonize others and portray societies that do not adopt its ideology as dystopian cases. Demagoguery and extreme hatred, as features of ISIS's staffing ideology, play a role in the group's monopoly on morality. The leaders of ISIS seem to understand the crucial role of ethics in preserving the ethno-cultural identity of individuals and recognize the sensitivity of communities towards ethical violations. Therefore, the group exerts its utmost effort, and continues to, in pretending to uphold ethics, using it demagogically in its propaganda to impose its religious authority and manipulate hatred to serve its activities and convince its followers of its myths. For example, one of the proponents of violent jihadist thought accuses Western societies of immorality and ethical decay, saying: (*[25]) "They want us to open up to their beastly societies that only know eating, drinking, and forbidden pleasure. They want us to embrace the moral decay that has become a unique feature of their collapsing societies, where a father no longer recognizes his son and a son no longer knows his mother or father, after vice has spread among them and declared a war on anything related to values and ethics…" Despite the fact that these Europeans have granted refugees the full right to practice their religious laws, provided them with healthcare and social services, and protected them after they fled their countries, and despite the fact that a large percentage of Western societies are conservative, unlike what this man claims, local communities in Syria and Iraq had a high moral system before the rise of nationalist and Islamist organizations in the region.

The factors influencing the staffing doctrine

ISIS attempts to maintain its ideological, economic, and military strengths to be able to carry out its plans, and the staffing doctrine serves as the backbone of these factors. Despite its significant losses, ISIS's ideology resists its defeat, and the group continues to attract recruits. According to operations published by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in 2022 (*[26]), 387 ISIS mercenaries were killed, and

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25*محمد بن زيد المهاجر؛ حرب الإعلام على أهل الإسلام؛ الناشر حركة الإصلاح/ لجنة العسكرية؛ بلا رقم طبعة وتاريخ نشر وعنوان*

26 *التقرير السنوي لحصيلة انتهاكات العدوان التركي ومرتزقة داعش ضد مناطق شمال وشرق سوريا؛ تاريخ النشر: SDF PRESS CENTER؛
2022.12.28م؛ الرابط: https://sdf-press.com/?p=39275

267 individuals, including leaders, members, and collaborators, were arrested. Members of local communities involved in the military and security forces and the institutions of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) were subjected to 176 terrorist operations, including suicide attacks, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and the extortion of civilians. In general, after its defeat, ISIS's staffing doctrine aims to create a fragile security environment in the region by carrying out limited-scale terrorist and sabotage operations, spreading its ideology, and conducting black propaganda against the AANES and the SDF. This requires recruiting individuals to secure financial and logistical support, individuals for surveillance and intelligence gathering, individuals to carry out assassinations and sabotage, individuals to secure communications and shelter and protect the group's hideouts, and individuals to promote the group's ideology. The activities of these individuals are organized within a complex network that can metaphorically be called the "ISIS conspiratorial operations network."

The factors influencing ISIS's staffing doctrine generally rely on the characteristics of this doctrine, whether these factors are internal or external. Regarding internal factors, they revolve around the issue of the tendency toward aggression among the oppressed and the arrogant in subjugated local communities. Poverty, lack of justice, and political oppression make the oppressed more receptive to revolutionary rhetoric, regardless of its nature, as they see it as an opportunity to unleash pent-up anger in the form of horrific acts of violence against everything, they consider the cause of their suffering. Moreover, submission to the authority of the group makes the oppressed easier to lead, based on Ibn Khaldun's opinion, who says in his "Muqaddimah": "...the defeated always strive to imitate the victorious in their insignia, dress, creed, and all their conditions and customs. The reason for this is that the soul always believes in the perfection of the one who has overcome it and submits to him. Either due to the perception of perfection established by the glorification within it, or due to the self-delusion that its submission is not due to natural domination, but rather to the perfection of the victorious. If this delusion becomes entrenched, the soul adopts the victor's entire doctrine and emulates him; this is imitation..." (Muqaddimah of Ibn Khaldun, p. 283). Kurdish thinker Abdullah Ocalan presents a similar position, considering that submission to authority is akin to smelting, which produces slaves at minimal cost,

devoid of conscience, ethics, and mentality. He says in this context, "...the smelted group whose self-identity has been fragmented and whose resistance has been broken, becomes a crowd of the most suitable slaves to serve the ruling elite. (*[27]) The fundamental function of the smelted slave here is absolute imitation of his master and emulation of him... The only option available to him for survival is to gradually abandon his old social identity and best adapt himself to the culture of his masters..." Thus, the oppressed who are fanatic about the group's ideas also play a role in promoting its staffing doctrine.

As for the arrogant, the policies of marginalization, exclusion, and the monopoly of material and moral privileges by the oligarchy loyal to the authority play a role in pushing some individuals from this group to respond to the group's anti-authority propaganda. The arrogant might say, as they have throughout history, "If I am denied spoils and my pride is not respected, I will shift my loyalty to another leader." For the arrogant who have submitted to the group's authority, they are given free rein to satisfy their repressed instincts, and justifications are provided to them with fatwas framed by the group's ideology. The fatwa of "tatarus" (using non-combatants as shields) and "hutba" (raiding infidels' wealth and enslaving their women and children) was reinterpreted after redefining the concepts of disbelief and jihad, with the promise of generous rewards in the "life after death." Therefore, ISIS offers a new experience for those seeking self-assertion and the release of suppressed personal ambitions, based on the idea that the worst thing that could happen is death, which the group portrays as merely a transition to a paradise of bliss. One of the lecturers of the jihadist staffing doctrine, who limited the concept of jihad to killing others who are different (*[28]), says, "...Do not restrict yourself to a land, or a house, or a job, or a sky. The earth belongs to God, and the people belong to God, and the command is God's. You will die whether in your homeland or in your migration, there is no difference, so why restrict yourself and why follow the call of Satan... The emigrant in the cause of God, who seeks the face of God and follows the Sunnah of His Prophet, will not be harmed whether he dies or is killed, for he will undoubtedly go to paradise.... God Almighty says: "Those who emigrated in the Cause of Allah

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[27]* عبد الله أوجالان؛ مانيفستو الحضارة الديمقراطية/ المجلد الخامس/ القضية الكردية وحل الأمة الديمقراطية؛ ترجمة: زاخو شيار؛ الطبعة الثانية2014م؛ بلا ناشر؛ ص37م .

[28]* حسن محمد قائد (أبي يحيى الليبي) ؛ مجموع الرسائل والتوجيهات المفرغة؛ الطبعة الأولى 2010 م؛ الناشر نخبة الإعلام الجهادي/حركة الإصلاح- لجنة الشرعية. ص103 .

and after that were killed or died, surely, Allah will provide a good provision for them'... These are the commands of God Almighty repeated to you day and night, so set out for the cause of God and migrate for the cause of God, and sever the ties to this world that you cling to, which have led you to humiliation and disgrace until the scum of creation have been empowered over us..."

Thus, this doctrine imposes on its adherents to live metaphorically in a cave, diligently performing the worship it has outlined without the consensus of all Muslims, and they only emerge from this cave to kill those whose blood, property, and dignity this doctrine has deemed permissible, regardless of their gender, age, or culture, as they are described by this doctrine as the "scum of creation." One might wonder, since these individuals are described in such a manner, why do they possess the things made by those they describe as "the scum of creation" and seek treatment through their secular sciences? What if these individuals, so labeled, were to do to the doctrine's followers what the doctrine itself does to them?

Based on this, poverty, weak intellectual awareness, the absence of democratic principles, and the lack of tolerance and virtue play active internal roles in ISIS's staffing doctrine. It seems that the group is aware of this fact, especially since its ideological theorists have categorized the soul that receives and internalizes jihadist thought into three types: the "tranquil soul," which is immediately attracted to the group's propaganda, and is mostly found in those with submissive mentalities; the "self-reproaching soul," which is attracted after being subdued and convinced, and is mostly found in those with selfish and hesitant mentalities; and the "soul commanding evil," which is drawn to temptations, meaning the Muslim who has bad tendencies but controls them through religiosity, and is mostly found in those with personal ambitions.

Regarding external factors, the conspiratorial operations (*[29]) of the conflicting states in the region, some counter-propaganda against the group, the political

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[29]* تعرف العمليات التآمرية بصورة عامة على أنها " محاولة إحدى الدول التأثير على الأحداث في الدول الأخرى من دون أن تكشف عن تورطها"... وتعرف أيضاً على أنها:" برنامج يضم عدة عمليات استخباراتية يتم التنسيق بينها، غالباً ما تدار على فترة زمنية طويلة نسبياً، وذلك للتأثير على الجمهور أو الفئة المستهدفة للقيام بشيء ما أو الامتناع عن تنفيذ شيء ما، أو للتأثير على الرأي العام (الجمهور العام، النخب الاقتصادية، أو

history of the region, the absence of intellectual power to counter or hinder the group's ideology, and the persecution of fellow believers in other countries serve as foundational elements for ISIS's staffing doctrine. The Russian-Western, Turkish-Iranian, and Arab competition over the region and their efforts to establish dominance have attracted the attention of extremists who engage in battles with them. The situation is further complicated by the policies of deal-making between certain states and the group to harm their rivals. For instance, the support Turkey provided to ISIS in its attacks on the Kurds in Sinjar (Shingal) and Rojava is a significant part of Turkey's conspiratorial operations against the Kurdish people. Similarly, the mutual accusations between the U.S. and Russia about inciting ISIS cells against each other also fall under the category of conspiratorial operations.

In recent years, the Syrian regime, with Russian and Iranian support, launched security reconciliation operations for ISIS members in its areas. In the "Al-Jazeera Thunderbolt" operation (*[30]), it became clear that local groups close to Syrian and Turkish intelligence were involved in stirring tribal sentiments against the mercenaries arrested in this operation, portraying it as persecution of the tribes. However, most of the tribal members interviewed showed an understanding of the truth and expressed support for the SDF. Many security experts confirm that the SDF relied on a large number of reports from local residents to carry out this operation, which caught the group's cells by surprise.

These conspiratorial policies have provided the group with a margin of freedom to impose its staffing doctrine in the areas where it operates. The group also benefited from the propaganda directed by each side against its rival. For example, dozens of Caucasians migrated to Syria to fight the Russians, and dozens of Afghans and Arab Salafis migrated to fight the West. The focus of these conflicting parties on black propaganda against their opponents, while neglecting

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القيادات السياسية والعسكرية)"...للمزيد راجع: شادي عبد الوهاب؛ الخيار الصامت: توظيف "العمليات التآمرية" في إدارة التفاعلات الدولية؛
الناشر: المستقبل للأبحاث والدراسات المتقدمة؛ تاريخ النشر: 9 تموز 2017م؛ الرابط:
https://futureuae.com//media/covertaction_09f53217-6a67-459e-bb59-3b96ef6a90e2.pdf

*[30] The "Al-Jazeera Thunderbolt Operation" was carried out by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in coordination with the Global Coalition to Combat Terrorism on December 29, 2022, and concluded at the beginning of 2023. The operation covered the areas of al-Hol, Tal Hamis, and Tal Brak in the southeastern countryside of Hasakah. Around 55 villages and farms were involved, resulting in the capture of over one hundred members of the organization, 154 suspects, and a large quantity of weapons, including many scopes and military uniforms.

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to counter the group's propaganda, has contributed to some sympathizing with the group's message and joining its ranks.

In general, the goals of Turkey, the Syrian regime, Iran, Russia, and ISIS intersect in their opposition to the AANES and the SDF. These states do not oppose ISIS's staffing doctrine as long as it is directed against these entities. In fact, they sometimes provide media support to ISIS by portraying the fight against the ISIS conspiratorial network as operations that oppress the region's tribes. They even withhold intelligence information they possess about this network, indicating some level of intelligence coordination.

On the other hand, counter-propaganda against ISIS sometimes inadvertently supports the group's propaganda. For example, when ISIS publishes videos of beheadings on its website, it has a specific goal in mind. When various media outlets, aiming to expose ISIS's brutality, share these videos, they unintentionally provide the group with free publicity, especially if these outlets are associated with authoritarian political or religious entities. For instance, Shia and commercial channels that broadcast these videos target the Shia audience and public opinion, but there are oppressed Sunnis—or those who believe they are oppressed—who watch these videos and develop sympathy for the perpetrator rather than the victim. The perpetrator is transformed into a hero because the one condemning his actions is perceived as the source of the Sunni viewer's oppression. Meanwhile, those around who are horrified by the scene may end up oppressing that Sunni viewer, seeing the perpetrators as his co-religionists. This could lead to a potential retaliatory reaction from the viewer. In other words, persecuting sympathizers or socially isolating former followers serves to bolster ISIS's staffing propaganda.

Additionally, the political history of the region has played a role in ISIS's staffing doctrine. For instance, an Arab with a nationalist or Sunni political ideology perceives a threat to his beliefs from both the neo-Ottoman project and the Shia crescent, framed by the ideology of the Guardianship of the Jurist (Wilayat al-Faqih), and thus is more likely to respond to ISIS's propaganda claiming to establish a Sunni Arab caliphate. Furthermore, the massacres and violations experienced by local communities, both Arab and Kurdish Sunnis, during the

Ottoman and Safavid eras, and later under Turkish, Pahlavi, and Khomeini rule, have influenced the ideological orientation of those targeted by ISIS's propaganda. Their political memory prevents them from trusting the propaganda of these regimes. In contrast, ISIS is relatively new, especially in the early stages of its expansion in the region, and the absence of an intellectual force to counter or check it provided no refuge for the oppressed communities. Nonetheless, the group has carved out a place in the terrifying political memory of local communities due to the horrific massacres and violations it has committed in turn.

The issue of persecuting fellow believers in other countries remains a fundamental pillar of ISIS's staffing doctrine since its rise and subsequent decline. Hate speech, discrimination, and mockery of Islam in Western countries; the persecution of Muslims in Southeast Asia and Afghanistan; human rights violations in Iran and some Arab countries; the loss of civilian lives due to the extremism of Israeli authorities and the airstrikes by the Global Coalition, Russia, Iran, and the Syrian regime—these factors push individuals who are susceptible to extremist thinking directly towards radical fundamentalist organizations, motivated by a desire for revenge on behalf of their fellow believers and to prevent potential aggression against their families and fellow believers in the future. Thus, the concepts of revenge and self-defense, according to the ideological religious perspective, play a role in some people's response to ISIS's staffing doctrine.

In this context, Ibn Khaldun says, "...And since falsehood is naturally introduced into news, and there are reasons that necessitate it: one of these is the biases towards opinions and sects. For when the soul is in a state of balance in accepting news, it gives it its due in scrutiny and examination until it discerns its truth from its falsehood; but when it is influenced by a bias towards an opinion or a sect, it accepts the news that agrees with it at first glance, and this inclination and bias act as a veil over the insight of the soul, preventing critique and scrutiny, leading to the acceptance and transmission of falsehood..." (Muqaddimah of Ibn Khaldun).

Overall, subjective factors play a greater role than objective ones and can sometimes be the reason for the strength of the objective factors. Based on an analysis of the attitudes of some individuals who sympathize with radical groups,

the key factors that drive a person to respond to ISIS's staffing propaganda can be identified as weak positive feelings towards national identity, dissatisfaction with the current political situation, hate speech, poverty, and a lack of intellectual awareness.

- ▪ **Regarding the weakness of positive feelings toward national identity and discontent with the current political reality:**

The Middle East is home to hundreds of political organizations with various nationalist, sectarian, religious, right-wing, and left-wing orientations, most of which have authoritarian agendas. Some of these organizations have reached the pinnacle of power, such as the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party and Turkey's Justice and Development Party, as well as the Wilayat al-Faqih (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist). Others engage in armed and political activities to seize power, like the Muslim Brotherhood, Al-Qaeda affiliates, and ISIS. These organizations have supporters in most countries of the region, and the extremism of their ideologies, along with the authoritarianism of those at the helm of power and the alliances formed between some against others, has become a major cause for the weakening of positive feelings toward national identity and, at times, their complete absence, as observed in the crises in Syria and Iraq. This weakness is shared by both the individual and the authorities alike.

The political reality in the region proves that the dominance of a particular belief (sect, religion, or ideology) over the power of a country encourages a culture of hatred among the communities outside the boundaries of that belief. For instance, Shiite and Alawite dominance in Syria and Iraq angers some Sunni Arab communities there, according to a RAND study (*[31]). Consequently, many countries in the region suffer from a lack of both national and human security, leading to the fragmentation of political loyalties between the nations invented by these organizations. Examples include: the global Islamic government until the appearance of the "Mahdi" or the so-called Shiite Crescent or Shiite homeland; the Islamic Caliphate; the Arab homeland; the Ottoman homeland; Greater Syria, and others. Each group portrays its own homeland as a utopia and the homelands

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*[31]A Strategy to Counter ISIL as a Transregional Threat. https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE228.html

of its rivals as dystopias, embedding fear in the emotions of individuals and, at times, spreading to entire communities, such as the Kurdish Yazidi community.

Generally, the success of an extremist group in establishing its own entity and its propaganda encourages many who share similar feelings and thoughts to adopt the methodology of that group and gradually become radicalized. This has been observed in the allegiance of several extremist organizations in Africa and Asia to ISIS. Moreover, the characteristic of extreme violence and terrorism toward supposed enemies by these extremist organizations drives many to remain neutral or join them to avoid harm or gain material benefits. The desire for self-protection, securing safety for loved ones, and confronting sudden threats have led everyone to succumb to feelings of fear, making them susceptible to voluntary submission to any extremist authority. As the saying goes, in the face of the threat of death, all actions become permissible. However, "Faced with the danger of death, all maneuvers are allowed. But fear is a bad counsellor, and we need to fear those who live in fear." (*[32])

The weakening of national identity leads to difficulties in combating extreme radicalism among marginalized populations or those living in harsh, miserable, and underdeveloped environments due to being under authoritarian rule. As is well known, the deeper a person's suffering and misery, the more attractive the allure of what they lack becomes, in proportion to the diminishing capacity for logical thinking. This, in general, creates an oppressed and fearful individual, or instills in them the belief that they are oppressed. Social relationships weaken, leading to gradual isolation or self-withdrawal. Consequently, national and social bonds weaken, creating a favorable environment for the adoption of extremist ideas that offer a new social identity (brotherhood in belief) as a cohesive group opposed to the current reality, regardless of the validity of these ideas, as long as they provide spiritual and material happiness to their adherents. This weakens the sense of community, tolerance, and virtue towards others.

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*[32]Tzvetan Todorov, The fear of barbarians: beyond the clash of civilizations.

- **Regarding Hate Speech**

Extreme hatred is a fundamental characteristic of ISIS's staffing doctrine and one of the explanations for the brutal violence its members inflicted on thousands of people of all ages and genders. Most analysts suggest that extremism finds ample opportunity to grow and spread in environments where a culture of hate is prevalent, particularly where there is an intolerance towards others based on their beliefs or behaviors. This includes sectarian and religious antagonistic rhetoric, futile arguments of racial superiority, or behaviors that are deviant from human nature or in conflict with certain beliefs, such as same-sex marriage and abortions for non-medical reasons.

Moreover, actions and activities that convey extreme hatred toward a particular belief, or attempts to ban it with the intent of eradicating it, often create a latent energy for a dangerous counter-reaction to those attempts. In many cases, extremism becomes the only spiritual force defending religious identity and what an individual absolutely believes in. In this context, the French researcher Tzvetan Todorov states, "For this reason, to interfere with the place of religion in society comes down to questioning the image that everyone forms of their collective identity but also of their intimate identity – and this is an operation not to be undertaken lightly. Muslim believers live in a mental world structured differently from that of Christian believers, and they feel that this world is at present fragile and threatened." (*[33])

Psychoanalytic studies (*[34]) indicate that denying, mocking, or suppressing a belief causes genuine suffering for the devout and is a key factor in the shift towards fundamentalist Islam, for example. It has been observed that the primary personal motive behind suicide operations, which extremists describe as "martyrdom," is more religious than political.

In Syria, for example, there are numerous ideologically conflicting groups, such as political Islam currents including the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafists, Naqshbandis, Alawites, Shiites, and Ismailis. There are also rigid nationalist currents from various

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*[33] Tzvetan Todorov, The fear of barbarians: beyond the clash of civilizations.
*[34] James Jones, The Psychology of Religious Terrorism.

components of the country, along with leftist movements opposing those ideologies. Additionally, there is a widening gap between moral values and the prevailing negative and contradictory behaviors within the state. For instance, activities such as adultery, bribery, injustice, theft, and the consumption of alcoholic beverages are taught and promoted as forbidden; however, they are easily observable in reality.

Moreover, unchecked propaganda and media that fail to respect cultural and ethnic privacy, and that provoke emotions, such as displaying horrific and painful scenes of the killing or humiliation of followers of a particular belief, expressing subjective opinions that undermine or mock a belief, exaggerating and promoting a particular culture without objectivity or scientific accuracy, or presenting artistic works like films, songs, stories, exhibitions, or celebrations within such contexts, create a significant driving force for the growth and spread of extremism.

On the other hand, the autocratic policies of the ruling authority and its corruption generate a form of hatred towards citizens' sentiments. The failure to adhere to principles of good governance and the marginalization of democracy in politics contribute to a growing sense of grievance among some segments of society. This creates a conducive environment for the emergence of incitement factors necessary for turning to extremism and violence. Psychoanalytic studies indicate a strong link between feelings of humiliation, shame, and disgrace with the incidence of violence, especially under both autocratic regimes and poverty exacerbated by backwardness. The violence accompanying the Syrian crisis from various parties underscores this reality.

The danger of the extreme hatred underlying ISIS's staffing ideology lies in its ability to transform a person who pledges allegiance to the group into someone capable of inflicting significant harm—including murder—on their own family and neighbors simply for differing from the ideology the group glorifies. This is particularly evident among most foreign fighters, where extreme hatred has driven them to travel thousands of miles to Syria and commit horrific violations and crimes without hesitation.

On the other hand, in addition to the material losses and victims, the group's violations have inflicted a wound on the moral fabric of the community, affecting both the victims and their families as well as the perpetrators and their families. Trust and communication breakdown, and the culture of hatred intensifies, potentially leading to reciprocal violent reactions. This is indirectly evident in many tribal conflicts that periodically flare up in the rural areas of Deir Al-Zor, Raqqa, and Hasakah. Thus, conditions evolve that contribute to renewed extremism and the repetition of the cycle of violence.

- **Regarding the Poverty**

Many people view poverty as a source of evil, but the reality of the poor often refutes this view. Most revolutions against injustice have been driven by poverty. Examining the relationship between poverty and joining extremist groups, one can observe that frustration, oppression, and feelings of rebellion against those seen as responsible for poverty act as motivators for joining such groups. This situation is exacerbated by the impoverishing policies practiced by authoritarian regimes to keep societies under their control, a policy adopted by most governments in the Middle East, especially in Syria and Iraq.

The promises made by extremist groups to improve the living conditions of the poor, based on the utopia envisioned by their ideology, and their provision of material aid to recruits, as well as blaming governments and international powers for poverty, create a strong appeal for their staffing propaganda. ISIS's staffing ideology has focused on poverty and exploited it to attract a broad segment of people. It has issued fatwas permitting its followers to engage in looting, theft, enslavement, and even selling artifacts. The prospect of obtaining various spoils has become a significant lure for many of the group's fighters, particularly those from impoverished backgrounds. Thus, poverty, once a source of rebellion, is transformed into a source of evil due to ISIS's staffing ideology.

According to one of the female members of the group residing in the Roj camp (*[35]), ISIS sought to provide free services to its loyal members and to encourage

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*[35] Interview with Sarah, who abandoned ISIS ideology, from Roj Camp by the Media Department on 11/08/2022.

the staffing of the poor and those seeking luxury by imitating Western comforts. Through what is known as the Mujahideen Affairs Office, ISIS offered free healthcare to its members through a family card, as well as other free services such as water, electricity, landline phone, household furnishings, free housing, car ownership with free fuel and maintenance, free home repairs, and free marriage services. Additionally, it provided stipends ranging from $500 to $700. The group thus provided an enticing free lifestyle for its members compared to their lives outside its control, all in exchange for responding to the call to jihad and demonstrating loyalty. ISIS skillfully exploited the material and spiritual void experienced by its followers.

- **Regarding the weak cognitive awareness**

In general, religious societies in the Middle East tend to prioritize emotional thinking over objective scientific reasoning. Issues, phenomena, and events are often evaluated and interpreted from a spiritual and ideological perspective rather than through objective, critical thinking. Religion, which is essentially a social revolution, is frequently imposed on abstract scientific matters, and accusations of heresy and apostasy are readily made against those who deviate from this norm. The value of any belief system is measured by its behavioral and ethical rules that provide moral and material security in its environment. Historically, figures like Avicenna and Averroes suffered from this issue, and even in modern times, many studies and research in experimental and natural sciences published by some Muslim academics and researchers begin with religious verses and expressions before addressing the actual topic, which often has no direct connection to those religious propositions. This approach seems to attempt to validate the belief system more than to address a scientific issue. Such an environment allows skilled extremists, adept in theological debates, to infiltrate and establish their extremist ideas and persuade individuals to adopt them.

In examining the educational and pedagogical realities in the Middle East, particularly in Syria and Iraq, it is evident that theoretical and interpretative aspects dominate over practical and applied approaches. The content of curricula is often weak in terms of information and ideas, with a focus on indoctrinating nationalist or religious concepts that glorify the past and create a false sense of superiority.

This undermines morale and enthusiasm for objective scientific and intellectual development.

Weak cognitive awareness facilitates psychological warfare directed at societies and countries with the aim of dismantling moral and national value systems for the purpose of domination. This, in turn, serves as a free benefit to the staffing ideology of ISIS, where trust between governments and their citizens, as well as between followers of religious and secular beliefs, diminishes, and conspiracy theories are reinforced.

ISIS's staffing ideology capitalizes on weak cognitive awareness, especially in the areas of religious sciences and objective political analysis, to convert individuals into loyal followers. This strategy allows the group to impose its religious authority on recruits, neutralizing critical thinking towards its ideological myths and amplifying extreme hatred towards those outside its intellectual boundaries. This factor is particularly evident among individuals from local communities in Syria and Iraq.

The Means and Tools of ISIS Staffing Ideology.

Coercion, temptation, and persuasion are among the most prominent methods relied upon in staffing operations, with the success of each method depending on the prevailing circumstances and beliefs in the environment where staffing is taking place. The staffing doctrine of ISIS has utilized these methods, employing conspiracy propaganda, forced staffing, and terrorism as tools in its staffing processes, executed through a variety of means.

Regarding conspiracy propaganda, according to one researcher ([*36]), extremist propaganda generally comprises three components: "First, diagnosing what is

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[*36] Alexander Ritzman; Extremist Propaganda and Access to Individuals' Minds; Publisher: European Eye on Radicalization; Publication Date: 03/22/2018; Link
 https://eeradicalization.com/ar/%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%8B%D8%A7-%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%81-%D8%AA%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AA%D8%B7%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89/:

wrong; second, predicting what should be done; and third, providing a logical justification for who should do it and why." For instance, ISIS claims that Islam and Sunni Muslims are under attack (diagnosis of what is wrong), that there is a need to establish a caliphate (prediction of what should be done), and that you must assist in this in any way possible (logical justification for who should do it). The organization promotes a narrative that portrays the world as corrupt, with Muslims being oppressed, suggesting that its emergence is to save them. Those who follow the organization have true Islam, while those who oppose it deserve death and are destined to suffer further torment in hell. It has manufactured dozens of scenes, images, chants, melodies, and speeches to fit its ideological framework that supports these perceptions, leveraging the internet as a tool for indirect communication. This approach attracted hundreds of thousands of curious onlookers, naïve individuals, and sympathizers. It successfully recruited thousands and urged them to carry out the organization's orders, whether by conducting operations in their own countries or migrating to Syria. For many foreign recruits, both men and women, the first step in their staffing process occurred via social media. According to the RAND Corporation (*[37]), by 2017, between 1 million and 1.35 million supporters of ISIS had been identified on Twitter, Berger, and Morgan platforms.

As for direct communication, loyal followers have been used as tools through engaging in ideological debates, delivering religious sermons, teaching Islamic sciences, and distributing the organization's written, audio, and visual publications. The focus of these efforts has been in religious centers such as mosques, religious schools, discussion circles, and social gatherings, including homes and condolence councils, as well as event banquets. This approach was particularly effective in staffing operations in rural areas and impoverished settings lacking internet access.

Additionally, it attracted dozens of individuals with weak willpower towards the temptations of wealth and sex, satisfying new recruits by enticing them with both spoils and the opening of slave markets, supporting the acquisition of concubines

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*[37] William Marcellino, Megan L. Smith, Christopher Paul, Lauren Skrapala; Social Media Monitoring (Lessons for Future DoD Social Media Analytics in Support of Information Operations); RAND Research Center; California; 2017; p. 31. Link: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1700/RR1742/RAND_RR1742z1.arabic.pdf

and captives, and offering generous monthly salaries, while encouraging the looting and plundering of communities that suffered from its aggression.

Regarding terrorism, the organization exhibited brutal behaviors in dealing with captives, which included beheading, dismemberment, burning alive, shooting in humiliating positions, and desecrating corpses to instill terror and fear in local communities. This was aimed at compelling them to either succumb to its authority through submission or escape, leading to a lack of resistance. Those who submitted were coerced into participating in jihadist calls against their communities to demonstrate loyalty to the organization. It even imposed the marriage of its members to women from local communities and staged ceremonies to pledge allegiance from tribal leaders and dignitaries in Raqqa, Deir Al-Zor, and Mosul to solidify its presence as part of the social structure in the region, thus creating a new social reality in the areas it occupied. The organization required every opposing or Yazidi captive to adopt its ideology as a condition for escaping slavery. It also committed massacres against some tribes that attempted to evade fighting on its behalf, such as the Shaitat tribe in Syria and the Bounemer tribe in Iraq.

After its defeat in March 2019, the organization resorted to extorting citizens by threatening retaliatory attacks if they did not join its ranks or assist its cells. This was reported based on security sources close to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which relied on citizen complaints about financial exploitation under the guise of zakat (charitable giving) and coercion for not cooperating with the organization. Anyone who collaborated with the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria faced harassment from the organization's members. This was underscored by a statement from the media center of the Syrian Democratic Forces regarding Operation (*[38]) "Al-Jazeera Thunderbolt," describing it as a continuation of the military struggle against ISIS cells. It was implemented according to a critical plan focusing on areas like Hol, Tel Hamis, and Tel Brak due to attempts by some terrorist cells to exploit the population to impose their extremist ideology and recruit new members through religiously extreme messaging. Additionally, some individuals' hostile to the Autonomous

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*[38] This statement can be read on the official website of the Syrian Democratic Forces Media Center at the link: https://sdf-press.com/?p=39318

Administration were arrested, and networks for staffing, including those targeting children and teenagers, were dismantled.

Regarding conscription, benefiting from the imposition of its religious authority, the organization forced everyone under its control to participate in its military activities, whether combat, security, logistical, or staffing efforts, under the guise of "jihad" for its benefit and as a condition for demonstrating loyalty to it. This was organized through its military institutions and security detachments, such as the Diwan of Soldiers, as well as the Caliphate Army, the Dabiq Army, and the Ausra Army (*[39]), along with what are called immersion cells. After its defeat, it relied on terrorist extortion to compel individuals it targeted to enlist in its ranks.

Addressing Staffing Propaganda.

The staffing ideology of ISIS has caused a significant intellectual crisis in some communities in Syria and Iraq, particularly as the group dismantled moral systems and cultural norms among its followers in the areas where it entrenched itself, reshaping them according to its ideology by instilling aggressive tendencies through paranic concepts in its propaganda. This led to substantial physical and moral devastation over seven years. Following its defeat in Baghouz in March 2019, it entered a phase of regression in most of its activities related to combat and staffing, trying to replicate its experience prior to its infamous emergence in the summer of 2014. Therefore, addressing the staffing propaganda of the declining organization is a fundamental condition for achieving self-protection against its attacks and erecting moral, intellectual, and emotional barriers that prevent its re-immersion in local communities. This can be accomplished by relying on dialectical analysis of both the subjective and objective characteristics active in ISIS's staffing ideology, and presenting a proposal that addresses the essence of that analysis to arrive at a new doctrine that we can metaphorically refer to as "Intellectual Security Doctrine" as a fundamental pillar of self-defense.

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*[39] ديوان الجند: وهو الهيكل الإداري الذي يعنى بالشؤون العسكرية والإدارية للقوات القتالية في تنظيم داعش، وهو مرادف لوزارة الدفاع في انظمة الدولة الحديثة- جيش الخلافة: يعد الجيش الرسمي لتنظيم "داعش" وتشكل بعض انضمام عدداً من التنظيمات الجهادية إلى صفوفه كتنظيم جيش المهاجرين والأنصار بزعامة أبو عمر الشيشاني وتنظيم مجلس شورى المجاهدين- جيش دابق: وهو عبارة عن جيش متعدد الجنسيات يتولى مسؤولية شن الهجمات الإرهابية حول العالم، جيش العسرة: تشكل هذا الجيش في مدينة الموصل في اذار 2015، وهو عبارة عن مجموعة من كتائب القوات الخاصة او المغاوير، وتضم مقاتلي النخبة من عناصر التنظيم... للمزيد راجع: مازن خالد؛ البناء الهيكلي للمنظومة العسكرية لتنظيم داعش؛ الناشر: المركز الأوروبي لدراسات مكافحة الإرهاب والاستخبارات؛ تاريخ النشر: 2018.01.14م.

The process of addressing the staffing ideology of ISIS centers on neutralizing the mindsets receptive to its propaganda (*[40]). This can be achieved through both material and moral means. Before delving into this issue, it is essential to understand the mindsets that are susceptible to such influence. The most prominent of these mindsets is the submissive mindset, which is widespread and seems to characterize a segment of the population throughout the political history of the region, dating back to the hierarchical society of the Sumerians. The power holders managed to harness the energies of this group to bolster their authority by molding spiritual and cultural concepts to fit their moral frameworks and reshaping them within their authoritarian ideologies, simulating divine behavior in their systems of reward and punishment.

Based on observations from reality, individuals with a submissive mindset can generally be classified, regardless of whether they are oppressed or oppressors, into the following categories:

1. Individuals with weak willpower in the face of the extreme desires for money, power, and sex.

2. Those who conform (*[41]) to herd behavior (*[42]).

3. Religious or nationalist extremists.

4. Fear associated with the lack of individual human security—meaning a person does not feel materially or morally safe.

Regarding issues of poverty, ignorance, and political oppression, these appear to be secondary motivating factors rather than primary ones. This belief stems from the existence of academics, wealthy individuals, and figures who do not experience oppression, as highlighted by European fighters in the organization's ranks, who came from countries known for upholding democratic principles and

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*[40] Means mentality in the sense of "the state of mind and the way of thinking, the person's view of things".

*[41]" Identification: the blending or connection between two things, making them one... In sociology, it refers to imitation or emotional merging and closeness."...

*[42] One definition of herd mentality or herd behavior describes it as: "the behavioral tendency of individuals to follow the opinion of the group they belong to without reflection. Herd behavior is when an individual conforms to the actions of the group, they are part of, without considering sᴛʏe rationality of that behavior. It is the voluntary relinquishment by an individual of their independent consciousness to follow others, believing that the others have a better understanding and knowledge."

ensuring prosperity. Some of these individuals can have their submissive mindsets neutralized easily by addressing their pressing issues through both material and moral factors, while it is more challenging to change the opinions of dogmatics. However, measures can be taken to prevent the activation of their latent aggressiveness based on the principle of "closing off excuses. (*[43])"

To combat the staffing ideology of ISIS, it is imperative for both the targeted mindsets and those managing the counter-strategy to understand the reality of the organization's project, recognize the essence of human culture, and learn how to achieve self-realization independent of a culture of dependency.

Despite the various means that can be used to confront the staffing ideology of ISIS, there are generally two main ways to liberate the mindsets that fall under the ideological dominance of the organization and to counter its staffing doctrine, as well as that of other extremist groups and mercenaries in northern and eastern Syria—and perhaps the Middle East and even the world. These two methods are the Democratic Nation paradigm and assisting the oppressed and the powerful in achieving their identities away from the influence of extremist ideologies.

The Democratic Nation paradigm represents a relatively recent practical experience for local communities in northern and eastern Syria. It has been somewhat successful in neutralizing the aggressive tendencies incited by the extremist religious and nationalist ideologies that have poisoned many souls and minds, leading to numerous violations and atrocities against local communities for decades. This paradigm has managed, to some extent, to establish a charter for joint action among moderates with differing beliefs, while respecting the uniqueness of each belief based on civil peace diplomacy and collective security for local communities—Islamic, Christian, Yazidi—and moderate political trends, whether nationalist, religious, secular, right-wing, or left-wing.

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*[43] This term is frequently used in jurisprudential sciences, and its general meaning is "accessories: the plural of accessory, and an accessory is the means that leads to something, whether it be a benefit or harm… Blocking the means refers to preventing the pathways that lead to harmful outcomes, and prohibiting statements and actions that result in corruption."…

Visitations to the martyrs' shrines reveal evidence of fighters belonging to different components united by this paradigm through mutual trust with their comrades on the battlefield. Notably, the opposing forces to this paradigm are extremist religious and nationalist groups, such as the Velayat-e Faqih, the Ba'ath Party, the Muslim Brotherhood, Turkey's Justice and Development Party, and ISIS and Al-Qaeda, as well as the so-called "Putin Orthodoxy," who have found supporters among some in the region and elsewhere. Their significant role in perpetuating the Syrian crisis is observable, along with the capability of major powers to use them to amplify creative chaos.

Since these forces are currently unable to engage in direct warfare against the Autonomous Administration and the Syrian Democratic Forces for several reasons—most notably the sympathy of local communities toward them and the existing military partnership between the Syrian Democratic Forces and the International Coalition against terrorism—it appears to be in the interest of these forces for ISIS's activity to grow in northern and eastern Syria. They aim to make its dark propaganda serve, directly or indirectly, the staffing agenda of ISIS mercenaries to destabilize the region.

The staffing ideology of ISIS clashes with this paradigm, which is why the organization's cells practice terrorism against its supporters through assassination or direct threats, as seen in the assassination of Muayad Al-Riyash, a member of the Deir Al-Zor legislative council, and the killings of Hind Al-Khudeir and Sa'ada Al-Hirmas, who were administrative officials in the town of Tal al-Sha'ir in the countryside of Hasakah in 2021, among others. They also issue religious rulings that decontextualize verses and hadiths from their moral and historical context to excommunicate this paradigm. This is perhaps what most clearly illustrates the characteristics of ISIS's staffing ideology, particularly in contrast with the principles of the democratic nation paradigm. Thus, as the democratic nation paradigm moves from theory to transparent practice on the ground, the decline of ISIS's staffing ideology will increase.

Regarding self-actualization, some may question the effectiveness of this in countering staffing propaganda. However, the motivations behind the scores who

have joined the organization converge on a single point: the human quest for self-fulfillment and the need to ascribe meaning to one's existence and role in life, based on the principle that "every person has their philosophy of life." This is directly connected to character development in a particular ideological or professional direction. Some individuals turn to art, literature, sports, the natural sciences, politics, the military, or sectors of the economy, among others. Psychologists note that self-actualization provides a sense of euphoria, happiness, and elevation, almost like a fuel that nourishes one's spirit. Self-actualization somewhat aligns with individualism in society, which honors the moral value of the individual as a source of energy for societal contributions.

Of course, orientations differ depending on the surrounding environmental factors. For example, a person who believes in the Shia sect living in a predominantly Sunni environment, where everyone suffers from oppressive regimes and fears for their safety without active revolutionary democratic movements, will naturally be drawn to a Shia movement that embodies revolutionary concepts and advocates for equality within a framework of belief-based brotherhood. Their self will merge with that of the group they join, and the group's success will fulfill their own identity. The same logic applies to adherents of other beliefs in relatively similar circumstances.

Regarding the concept of self-actualization, most analyses refer to Abraham Maslow's "Hierarchy of Human Needs," which was introduced by the American psychologist as a framework for human striving to secure his or her essential needs, represented by a triangle of food, safety, and reproduction. This hierarchy is divided into five stages, listed in order of priority: biological and physiological needs; safety and security needs; love and social belonging needs; esteem and self-respect needs; and self-actualization needs, which can only be fulfilled after the preceding needs have been met.

This theory posits that every individual has a hierarchy of needs that must be satisfied, and unmet needs stimulate a person to work towards securing them. These needs are arranged by priority and significance, and it is necessary to fulfill the first to move on to the next, continuing until one reaches the pinnacle of the

hierarchy occupied by the "need for self-actualization." However, many cannot reach this peak due to their circumstances or limited capabilities. This is exploited by specialists in staffing operations, who mislead individuals into believing that the organization can meet their self-actualization needs.

It has been observed that the organization employs a dangerous strategy to satisfy basic needs by inciting the aggressive tendencies of those in despair to the point of savagery, framed within religious fatwas ideologically influenced by the organization. The focus is on the physical, material, and psychological torment of fabricated enemies in exchange for meeting those needs; for example, physiological and biological needs are framed through spoils, captivity, and enslavement; safety and security needs are framed with illusory promises of paradise and divine approval; and love and social belonging needs are framed in terms of solidarity and support with fellow believers, alongside the notion of belonging to a fictitious community in the form of an "Islamic Caliphate." This situation has reached absurd levels, as seen in phenomena like "sexual jihad" and targeting innocents in several countries under the pretext of their nations' involvement in combating the organization. This can be clearly observed in the extreme gatherings of the organization's members at the al-Hol camp.

For the esteem and self-actualization needs, they have been framed by the ability to fully execute the responsibilities placed upon them and to implement the organization's ideology to the letter. For some, this has escalated to the extent of "suicidal explosions," where individuals detonate explosives among crowds of people.

Based on this, achieving human security is a crucial means of undermining the organization's propaganda, placing a significant shared responsibility on the international community, self-governance authorities, and local elites to accomplish this, which cannot be achieved through unilateral initiatives. A fair political solution to the Syrian crisis and the reconstruction of the country, along with the adoption of democratic principles in governance and external openness away from international and regional conflict axes, will clearly highlight the ideology of ISIS staffing as a manifestation of dystopia.

On the other hand, the interrelated and integrated influence between the paradigm of democratic nationhood and the issue of self-actualization, separate from ISIS ideology, is evident. Implementing this directly may prove challenging practically and could take years to achieve effectively. Thus, to reach relatively immediate solutions, attention shifts once again to a set of preventive measures related to the characteristics of ISIS's staffing ideology and the subjective and objective factors influencing it that could contribute to this goal. The best preventive measure is for individuals and communities to adopt a self-protection strategy against extremist thought, aimed at preventing the provocation of susceptible mindsets and averting their subjugation to such ideology. This can be achieved by preventing the emergence of factors that drive individuals to respond to ISIS staffing propaganda through strengthening national identity, combating hate speech, addressing poverty, and enhancing cognitive awareness.

In general, there are a series of hypotheses that can be relied upon as possible emergency measures to counteract the ISIS staffing ideology, the most prominent of which are:

1. Achieving human security in all its dimensions can help prevent the spread of extremism among local communities, especially in the areas of healthcare and social welfare, by ensuring or assisting in securing treatment, housing, employment, aid, electricity, water, etc. On the other hand, combating unemployment and encouraging individual investments can foster a detachment from the organization's propaganda and contribute to achieving human security, based on the saying "capital is wise," a commonly used phrase in economic analysis. This means that although capital owners aim to increase their wealth through various activities, their primary concern remains the preservation of capital and avoiding bankruptcy. Therefore, the more securely one holds their capital in a relatively safe environment, the more peaceful they tend to be with their surroundings, and vice versa.

2. Undermining the policy of fear can be achieved through the constructive development of social relations among the communities in the region by promoting democratic principles and enacting laws that criminalize extreme

hatred arising from personal opinions or rigid ideologies—whether nationalist, religious, or secular—that cause moral or material harm to their followers, either immediately or in the future. This includes ridicule, distortion, severe criticism, insults, contempt, humiliation, harm, vandalism, harassment, deliberate misinterpretation, or prohibiting material transactions and social communication, or any other behavior interpreted as disrespecting the privacy of beliefs that fuels hatred and incites revenge. All of this can strip the ISIS staffing ideology of its ability to manipulate emotions and sway minds through ideological manipulation and reinterpretation of the reasons for oppression according to the organization's agenda.

3. Objectivity and transparency in government administration, combating corruption, continuous positive communication, and the exchange of opinions between the government and national social, political, legal, cultural, and economic elites, in coordination with various local media outlets, can provide reassurance to most individuals and lead to a responsible assessment of the situation. This, in turn, enhances community oversight of efforts aimed at distorting societal values and the ethical commitments towards other communities.

4. Raising awareness and providing means to avoid vice and drug abuse, assisting those wishing to marry, and isolating bars and nightclubs from society can protect the community from the infiltration of vice and preserve its ethical values to some extent. Consequently, extremist organizations that operate under the guise of upholding moral values will lose their appeal.

5. It is essential to address the issue of estrangement from those who previously sympathized with extremist organizations but have since distanced themselves. Moreover, considering that religious laws can be interpreted from different perspectives, it is unwise to hold peaceful believers accountable for the crimes of their peers and to criminalize their beliefs, as this can lead to a culture of hate. Instead, the correct approach is dialogue, positive interaction, and earning respect to neutralize feelings that may justify violence as a specific reaction. This does not negate the necessity of employing law-regulated violence against any aggressive

behaviors as stipulated by the law. Additionally, it is beneficial to rehabilitate those involved in extremist acts and to weaken the psychological and spiritual forces that incite them towards blind extremism by confronting them with legitimate matters that contradict their ideologies, promoted by moderate religious leaders.

6. Humans possess a unique composition that resists moral defeat, regardless of material setbacks. Thus, policies aimed at suppressing religion or eradicating it will not be effective; rather, they may bolster its strength and drive it toward extremism, especially since it has been deeply rooted in the region's cultural fabric for thousands of years. In this context, thinker Abdullah Ocalan (*[44]) suggests that "the idea or belief in the disappearance of imagination, dogmas, and religion from existence does not seem plausible, as it is embedded in human nature. Human nature is undoubtedly compelled to allocate a specific status based on necessity to imagination, dogmas, and religious matters, which are deemed sacred values, as well as to ethics and morals. It is important to emphasize here the aspect we refer to as morality; without it, human life would surely be fraught with difficulties and challenges, while with it, life is sound and healthy. It is likely that the failure to address religion and morality appropriately was a primary reason behind the collapse of established socialism. The adoption of extreme materialism or extreme spirituality leads to barren outcomes." Therefore, considering religion as a social revolution against tyranny and concurrent superstitions, and as a cultural heritage spanning hundreds of years, may foster the ethical and peaceful dimensions of spiritual beliefs, respecting the temporal boundaries of subjects and interpretations that encourage moderate religious ideas while disregarding the whispers and misgivings of extremists. Thus, maintaining freedom of belief within the framework of ethical values and rejecting a culture of hate is far better than imposing or coercively suppressing a particular belief or ideology to eliminate the causes that lead to extremism and safeguard the nation's security. Moreover, violence only breeds violence in a continuous and endless cycle of action and reaction.

7. There are dozens of conservative and religiously radical families, but they do not tend toward violence unless incited by a fatwa. Therefore, it is the

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*[44] عبد الله أوجلان؛ "الإصرار على الاشتراكية إصرار على بناء الإنسان"؛ الطبعة الأولى 2003م؛ منشورات اتحاد التنوير الديمقراطي؛ مطبعة آزادي؛ الكتاب رقم 20 من سلسلة الكتب العربية؛ ص55-56.

responsibility of community religious institutions to play an enlightening and educational role in preventing and combating terrorism by addressing the mindset of society and individuals to reveal the truth about terrorism and its dangers. They must expose and uncover its misleading rhetorical methods aimed at recruiting young people, through the use of a religious-political narrative that seeks to legitimize the terrorist practices they employ. This is often based on an incorrect or distorted interpretation of Islam; for instance, relying on a legal principle known as "Sadd al-Dhara'i" (blocking the means), which states that anything leading to a forbidden act is itself forbidden. For example, the Prophet prohibited taking mosques as shrines over graves, as it could lead to their veneration and worship (*[45]). Similarly, the killing of civilians under the pretext of "tatarus" (using human shields), as sanctioned by leaders and legislators of violent jihadist organizations for carrying out bombings or mass killings by driving over people, shooting, burning, poisoning, etc., is done despite the presence of innocents according to their perspective and interpretation. It's important to note that the fatwa on tatarus pertains to warring armies (*[46]). The reliance of extremists on the fatwa of tatarus (*[47]) threatens the lives of all community members, regardless of their ages, categories, beliefs, or ethnic identities, as they can be perceived as potential enemies at any moment. Therefore, ongoing awareness of the misleading religious interpretations adopted by extremists will hold various community members accountable for confronting them and cooperating with national security institutions to deter them. A significant part of this effort lies in providing an objective explanation of the fatwa on "repelling the aggressor" (*[48]) and others, interpreting them correctly to prevent their exploitation by extremists

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*[45] د. محمد خليل هراس؛ الحركة الوهابية (رد على مقال للدكتور محمد البهي في نقد الوهابية) ؛ دار الكاتب العربي بلا طبعة وتاريخ نشر؛ ص20.

*[46] يقول ابن تيمية "وقد اتفق العلماء على أن جيش الكفار إذا تترسوا بمن عندهم من أسرى المسلمين وخيف على المسلمين الضرر إذا لم يقاتلوا فإنهم يقاتلون وإن أفضى ذلك إلى قتل المسلمين الذين تترسوا بهم". للمزيد راجع: أبو يحيى (حسن قائد)؛ التترس في الجهاد المعاصر؛ تاريخ النشر 6 ذو الحجة 1426 هـ؛ بلا نشر ورقم طبعة؛ يمكن قراءة النسخة الإلكترونية على الرابط:

https://megafiles.in/%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%B1%D9%89/%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%88%20%D9%8A%D8%AD%D9%8%9%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A8%D9%8A/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%B3%20%D9%81%D9%8A%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AF%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%B5%D8%B1.pdf

*[47] رمي الكفار مع تترسهم بالمسلمين مما قد يؤدي إلى قتلهم؛ تبرر فيه سفك دماء المسلمين الذين قتلوا في التفجيرات تحت مسمى مسألة التترس والتي أجاز فيها علماء المسلمين قتل الأسير المسلم الذي يتترس به الأعداء حفاظا على جيش المسلمين وتحقيقا لمصلحة الإسلام... مشاري الذايدي؛ موقع جريدة الشرق الأوسط؛ مفهوم «التترس» من ابن تيمية والمغول إلى الدار البيضاء والرياض؛ تاريخ النشر 8آب 2003م العدد 9019؛ الرابط: https://archive.aawsat.com/details.asp?article=186051&issueno=9019#.XzeozejXLIU

*[48] رد الصائل، وتعني جواز ردّ كل من يحاول الاعتداء على الشخص أو ممتلكاته أو أحد مقربيه أو على أحد المظلومين أو المستضعفين؛ وتندرج وسائل الرد من السلوكيات الخفيفة إلى السلوكيات الشديدة بحسب حجم الموقف والقدرة على شلّ هدف المعتدي، من تحاشي المعتدي أو الهروب منه أو الرد باللسان أو اليد ويجوز في حالات الحرجة الاستماتة في الدفاع، لذا فهو مفهوم يندرج في الدفاع أكثر من كونه مفهوم هجومي وعدواني... مجموعة من المراجع المهتمة بفتوى (رد الصائل).

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who twist them according to their agendas to justify their violent jihad. There are also other related legal issues, such as the concept of takfir (declaring someone an infidel) and others.

8. The level of knowledge is an indicator and a global measure of the development of a society, alongside production density (*[49]). There is a truth that should be instilled in the minds of followers of spiritual beliefs: the revered holy books did not engineer pyramids, dams, or urban structures, nor will they develop rockets, computers, or vaccines. Instead, they served as constitutions for social revolutions in specific historical contexts. What has ensured their continuation for thousands of years is their adoption of certain moral values, their fulfillment of spiritual needs, and their role as a refuge to elevate morale during harsh conditions, combating the despair resulting from incapacity that can lead to self-destructive behaviors. These texts have thus become an influential part of societal culture and should not be exploited as a means to kill or humiliate others. Therefore, just as religion should be separated from politics, it must also be distinct from empirical sciences, since religion possesses its own areas of knowledge. The need for spirituality becomes more pronounced when conditions deteriorate to levels one cannot cope with. Thus, promoting scientific research and innovation, exploring cultures, establishing research institutions and centers, and focusing on building universities, institutes, schools, research centers, and laboratories, along with enacting legislation that encourages and supports invention, innovation, and excellence while safeguarding intellectual property rights, can guide thinking minds away from extremism. It can create an environment were competing for leadership, achieving accomplishments, addressing diverse problems, and delving into both microscopic and cosmic discoveries become sacred priorities, reinforcing the principle of "working for the common good."

9. Continuous monitoring and ongoing follow-up of all promotional activities related to the organization are essential. This includes tracking what are referred to as "industrial wombs of extremism," such as clubs, private schools, associations, places of worship, study circles, institutes, camps, and websites. It is crucial to trace misleading information entering the country through rumors and propaganda emanating from electronic, printed, or audio publications, or from expatriates or

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*49 للمزيد الاطلاع على دراسة: م.د. رائد صبار لفته؛ استراتيجيات الانتقال إلى مجتمع المعرفة؛ مجلة جامعة تكريت للعلوم القانونية والسياسية، المجلد/4/ السنة/4/ العدد/13/.

local agents. Subsequently, this information should be analyzed, and preventive measures, plans, and procedures should be implemented in the form of analytical bulletins, concise alert statements, official condemnation statements, explanatory announcements, or media interviews. Coordination should take place with media and publishing institutions, research centers, universities, spiritual (religious) councils, professional and trade unions, economic federations, popular councils, various regulatory bodies, and institutions tasked with security duties. This approach aims to achieve political and security awareness among the public, expose hostile agendas, and support practical efforts to counter attempts to foster animosity among the communities in the region.

Finally. ISIS did not understand the solutions needed by local communities, treating them like a shepherd deal with a flock, leading to immense suffering for the region's inhabitants and ruining the future of a generation of children. The group did not evolve into a force for peace, prosperity, or a safe haven for its followers. Rather, it has diminished in both Syria and Iraq due to its failure to crush the authentic local cultures of Kurds, Arabs, and Assyrians, and its inability to create popular support bases, which are crucial for the survival of any organization. Its authority collapsed as local communities united their combat ideology into a single military structure under the name of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which forged a military alliance with countries sharing similar combat ideologies against ISIS.

After its catastrophic defeat, the organization is attempting to reorganize and build a network of sleeper cells for retaliatory actions and to continue its staffing doctrine. However, the successful arrests by internal security forces and the SDF of dozens of its members, alongside the group's failure to execute significant operations that would allow it to regain field control, marked a significant setback. The killing of its leader, "Abu al-Hussain al-Qurashi," by the Turkish-backed forces in the occupied town of Jinderis, and the rise of its branches in Africa and Afghanistan, occur alongside the transformation of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (Jabhat Al-Nusra) into the dominant jihadist Salafi force in Syria, which is trying to replicate the Taliban-U.S. agreement in Afghanistan. This group rejects any ISIS activity in areas under its control, noting that many senior ISIS leaders have been killed there. Additionally, the surrender of its supporters to the security settlement processes

overseen by the Syrian regime in coordination with the Ba'ath Party and Russian and Iranian intelligence indicate strong signs of the group's loss of ability to muster forces and recruit new members in Syria and Iraq.

The organization has derived some relative benefit from its staffing ideology, which is based largely on illusions, nonsense, and terrorism, with only a small emphasis on persuasion. This strategy is flawed, as absolute loyalty cannot be guaranteed through seduction and coercion alone. The group's antagonism towards the world simply because it disagrees with its ideology resembles a fight against windmills.

In researching numerous books that address legal issues, including those close to ISIS ideology, we find a contradiction between the ideology of ISIS staffing and many verses and hadiths. For example, the organization's propaganda, which pretends to be Islamic and suggests that it is the "saved sect," falls within the framework of the term "riya," an Islamic term referring to performing acts of worship with the intent of being seen by others, so that people say, "This is a righteous person," or to please others rather than seeking the pleasure of God. Riya is considered a minor form of shirk (associating partners with God), and ISIS's propaganda is, in itself, a form of riya (as the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said: "*The thing I fear most for you is minor shirk.*" *They asked, "What is minor shirk, O Messenger of God?*" *He replied, "Riya*"). Enforcing its religious guardianship over Muslims serves to impose itself as an intermediary between the servant and his Lord, where it "calls upon them, seeks their intercession, and relies upon them." This practice is regarded as one of the nullifiers that expel a person from the Islamic faith (*[50]). They thus mimic the behavior of ancient priests, as noted by one researcher (*[51]) who stated, "The priest did not create religion; rather, he used it for his own purposes, just as the politician exploits human instinctual motives and customs..."

The guardianship over minds is akin to their occupation, which is practiced by most political-religious organizations, whether Islamic, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, and others. This may be the reason behind the proliferation of differing extremist

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[50]* سليمان ناصر بن عبد الله العلوان؛ التبيان شرح نواقض الإسلام للإمام المجدد شيخ الإسلام محمد بن عبد الوهاب؛ الطبعة السادسة؛ بلا تاريخ نشر، الناشر: حركة الإصلاح/لجنة الشرعية

[51]* نزار يوسف؛ الوصاية الفكرية؛ الطبعة الأولى/2008م؛ بلا ناشر. ص74.

Islamic organizations. In this context, it is useful to recall a viewpoint from the fourth Caliph of Muslims, Ali ibn Abi Talib, as cited in the book Nahj al-Balagha: (*[52]) "A case is presented to one of them regarding a ruling, and he judges it based on his opinion. Then the same case is presented to another, who rules contrary to him. The judges then gather before the Imam who appointed them and endorse all of their opinions, despite having one God, one Prophet, and one Book! Did God command them to differ and they obeyed? Or did He forbid them and they disobeyed? Or did He reveal an incomplete religion and relied on them to complete it? Or were they His partners, entitled to speak while He is to accept? Or did God Almighty reveal a complete religion and the Messenger, peace be upon him and his family, fell short in delivering it? God, the Exalted, says: '*We did not leave anything out of the Book*' and '*It is a clarification of all things,*' and it is mentioned that the Book confirms each other and has no discrepancies, as He states*: 'If it had been from other than God, they would have found in it much contradiction.*' The Quran appears beautiful on the surface but is profound underneath; its wonders do not perish, its curiosities do not unwind, and the darkness is only revealed through it..." The leaders of extremist organizations have distorted the concept of jihad, confining it within the framework of violence to serve their agendas. Most verses encourage adherence to the Sharia and practicing worship in community, rather than joining a group with a political authoritarian agenda. This has led to the fragmentation of Muslims into factions and groups, each interpreting according to their mindset and aspirations. The term "community," as found in the Quran and Sunnah, predominantly refers to encouraging good deeds and worship through advice and kind words, not through killing and terror. Local communities are weary of the propaganda from ISIS, Turkish interests, and Ba'athism, now seeking to ensure their dignity amid rising prices, blockades, and Turkish, ISIS, and Iranian threats against the region. They desire no more war or violence and regard autonomous administration and the Syrian Democratic Forces as part of themselves, as they comprise the most inclusive institutions for the region's sons and daughters. The harm inflicted upon them also affects these communities. Addressing the conditions that fostered extremism is the best way to overcome the ISIS epidemic.

52*/الطبعة الأولى؛ نهج البلاغة؛ الإمام محمد عبده- الشريف الرضي1990ص ؛بيروت /مؤسسة المعارف للطباعة والنشر :الناشر ؛م127.

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