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Understanding How The ISIL Ideology Directs Terrorism And The Necessity To Counter Its Narrative

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Executive Summary

- Behind the violence that the Islamic State for Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) perpetrates is an ideological message that directs recruitment, strategy and tactics. In order to fully understand the implications of the ISIL threat to the United Kingdom, and assess the challenges arising from the growth of ISIL and its franchises, it is imperative to analyse the doctrine and propaganda that is used to fuel their movement.
- Along with any international military campaign against ISIL, there has to be an accompanying policy for confronting the ISIL ideology. The message has to be countered and dismantled, otherwise ISIL's global assembly line will continue to recruit and radicalise not just young men, but women and entire families.
- ISIL's ideology and plan of action is based on the treatise *The Management of Savagery* which is a conceptual doctrine that enables operations to be conducted with unity of purpose

without constant direction. Through harnessing the power of new media platforms, ISIL has conducted a campaign where its leaders issue messages that have been designed to elicit psychological reactions and communicate direct political messages to a global audience.

- Through this strategy ISIL has conducted operations against four types of targets: the armed forces and police; tourists at resorts; Shiite Muslims; and engage in high profile hostage-taking. The end goal is to inflict significant political, economic and social consequences.
- The leader of ISIL, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has attempted to portray himself as a leader, ideologue and statesman for ISIL. The group's brand has become a rival to al-Qaeda and its leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. ISIL's expansion and rejection of al-Qaeda's central leadership represents a new evolution of trans-national terrorism.
- While al-Qaeda and its affiliates have sought to establish either a regional or global caliphate, ISIL is the first trans-national terrorist group to acquire large swaths of territory in tandem with its professed goal to establish a worldwide caliphate.
- Based on the ideological narrative of *The Management of Savagery*, which ISIL has converted from theory to practice, the next step will be to export the ISIL doctrine to Jordan, the Maghreb, Nigeria, Afghanistan and Pakistan through their franchises.
- ISIL doctrine also involves subjugation and humiliation of women and endorses the female slave trade. Medieval methods are being utilised with modern communication technology. It is also an often overlooked fact that the primary victims of ISIL's onslaught have been ordinary Iraqi and Syrian civilians.
- If ISIL continues to follow *The Management of Savagery's* doctrine and programme, then we should expect to see targeted attacks in the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe as well as the United States. Worryingly, it's not a question of 'if' there will be an ISIL attack in the United Kingdom but 'when'.
- Terminology is very important in the strategy to counter ISIL's ideology. The group should be rebranded in the United Kingdom as Daesh (Al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham). The term 'Daesh' still accurately spells out the abbreviation of the group's full Arabic name but it can also be understood in Arabic slang as 'To trample down and crush' or 'a bigot who imposes his view on others.' These definitions accurately reflects the way the group's adherents conduct themselves. Critically 'Daesh' does not spell out the Islamic component and this harms al-Baghdadi's brand recognition.

Setting The Scene

1. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, whose real name is Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al-Badri, has attempted to portray himself as a leader, ideologue and statesman for ISIL. His adherents refer to him as 'Commander of the Believers,' a privileged designation for caliphs, the supreme political and religious rulers of Islamic states during the Middle Ages.¹ This is part of a carefully scripted propaganda campaign that took over a decade to shape and craft.

¹ William Dalrymple, "The Isis demand for a caliphate is about power, not religion", *The Guardian*, 13 July, 2014 <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jul/13/isis-caliphate-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-jihadi-islam>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

2. In 2003, al-Baghdadi helped found *Jaysh Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Jamaah* (Army of the People of the Sunna and Communal Solidarity), a violent insurgent group that fought U.S. troops in Iraq. In February 2004, al-Baghdadi was arrested in Fallujah and detained at Camp Bucca in southern Iraq for 10 months. Many of the internees at Camp Bucca served in Saddam Hussein's military. Some would later help al-Baghdadi develop ISIL. Baghdadi also met some of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's inner circle.² Al-Zarqawi, was the Jordanian terrorist who introduced the graphic beheading video of hostages in Iraq as well as fuelling sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. These were tactics that ISIL would also later adopt.
3. Two months before Baghdadi's release, al-Qaeda established a branch in Iraq by amalgamating Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's network. In 2006, al-Qaeda in Iraq formed an umbrella network and al-Baghdadi's joined up. Al-Zarqawi also declared his intent to establish ISIL, directly challenging al-Qaeda.³
4. When al-Zarqawi was killed in a U.S. airstrike in 2006, his successor, Abu Ayyub al-Masri, an Egyptian, proclaimed the founding of ISIL. Al-Masri named al-Baghdadi to the 11-member *Majlis-ash-Shura* (Consultative Council) and put him in charge of ISIL's religious and propaganda affairs.⁴
5. In April 2010 al-Masri blew himself up before being captured by U.S forces. ISIL then faced its first leadership succession challenge. The head of ISIL's military council, Hajji Bakr, a former colonel in Saddam Hussein's army, manipulated the succession in favour of al-Baghdadi.⁵ Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi then assumed his now-infamous alias, which was very deliberately chosen for propaganda purposes. Abu Bakr was the Prophet Muhammad's father-in-law and the first caliph.⁶ Baghdad was the capital of the Abbasid caliphate that came to power in the 8th Century using religious propaganda and underground networks to plot against the ruling Umayyad Caliphate.⁷

The Management of Savagery

6. In order to confront ISIL's ideology, an important starting point is to understand the treatise by the anonymous ideologue known as Abu Bakr Naji. Naji's most notorious text, *Idarat al-Tawahush* or *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, is striking in its resemblance to a comprehensive military plan as opposed to the presentation of a specified ideology.⁸ More significantly, *The Management of Savagery* is also an inspiration for the ideology and modus operandi of ISIL, and thus offers a valuable insight into the inner workings of the group.

² William McCants, "The Believer: How an Introvert with a Passion for Religion and Soccer Became Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Leader of the Islamic State", *The Brookings Essay*, The Brookings Institution, <<http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2015/thebeliever>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

³ Ibid.,

⁴ Ibid.,

⁵ Ibid.,

⁶ Solomon A. Nigosian, *Islam: Its History, Teaching, and Practices*, (Indian University Press: Bloomington, 2004), pp.18-26

⁷ Guy Le Strange, *Baghdad: During the Abbasid Caliphate*, (Cosimo Classics: New York, 2011)

⁸ Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, trans. Will McCants (John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, 2006)

7. The text is also a holistic guide to a putative campaign to establish a caliphate that covers a broad spectrum of topics and justifies the use of violence for political means. The term ‘management of savagery’ refers to the hiatus which occurs between the waning of one power and the consolidation of another.⁹ It insinuates that chaos will pertain and a disputed region will be ravaged by violence.
8. *The Management of Savagery* uses religion as a tool for legitimisation and control. Rather than presenting an ideology that is based on theology, *The Management of Savagery* makes use of a populist ideology which relies upon both reinterpreting Islam and the illusion of power as its greatest bargaining chips.
9. Published on the Internet in 2004, *The Management of Savagery* was originally written for al-Qaeda and was once classified as its ‘playbook’.¹⁰ Yet, its prescribed strategy spilled over to guide their rival, ISIL. Not only have ISIL’s tactics for territorial consolidation resonated closely with Naji’s military plan, but the text has been claimed by several ISIL commanders as part of the organisation’s curriculum.¹¹
10. Since the proclamation of the caliphate on 29 June 2014, ISIL has been putting a strong focus on the marketing investiture and obedience to its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.¹² ISIL stands in direct opposition to al-Qaeda and its leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. ISIL’s expansion and rejection of al-Qaeda’s central leadership represents a new evolution of trans-national terrorism. The distinction between the two groups is indisputable and can be identified through a number of parameters:
11. Targets - Al-Qaeda focused on targeting Westerners and non-Muslims. ISIL freely executes Shiite and Sunni Muslims including women and children; Criminality - Al-Qaeda avoided conventional criminal activities. ISIL actively engages in criminal enterprise; Ideology - Al-Qaeda’s influence comes from Egyptian ideologues such as Sayyid Qutb, Muhammed Abdel Salam Faraj and Ayman al-Zawahiri. ISIL’s development hails from the Jordanian-Palestinians Abdullah Azzam and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi as well as freelance ideologues like Naji; Recruitment: Al-Qaeda’s enrolment is rigid and based on vetting and recommendation known as *Tazkiyah*.¹³ ISIL’s conscription is substantially less restrictive and encourages lone-wolf plots by those adherents who can’t join them in Syria and Iraq; Role of Women – Al-Qaeda has always opposed women playing an active role in its training, propaganda and operations. ISIL has actively recruited women and encourages them to proliferate its ideology and agenda.
12. ISIL’s doctrine calls for the ‘administration of savagery’, a merciless paradoxical campaign to polarize the population, attract adherents and form a caliphate. One of the first steps is the call to plunder violent resources that would lead to the purification of the Muslim world.

⁹ Alastair Cooke, “The ISIS’ ‘Management of Savagery’ in Iraq”, The Huffington Post, 30 June, 2014, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alastair-crooke/iraq-isis-alqaeda_b_5542575.html> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

¹⁰ Laura Sullivan, “Al Qaeda’s Playbook”, *National Public Radio*, 26 June 2006, <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5516640>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

¹¹ Hassan Hassan and Michael Weiss, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror* (Regan Arts: New York, 2015).

¹² Phillip Holtmann, “The Different Functions of IS Online and Offline Pledges (ba’yat): Creating a Multifaced Nexus of Authority”, *Jihadology*, 15 November, 2014, <<http://jihadology.net/2014/11/15/guest-post-the-different-functions-of-is-online-and-offline-pledges-bayat-creating-a-multifaceted-nexus-of-authority/>> [accessed: 31 October, 2015]

¹³ Mary Anne Weaver, “Her Majesty’s Jihadists”, *New York Times Magazine*, 14 April, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/magazine/her-majestys-jihadists.html?_r=0> [accessed: 31 October, 2015]

‘We must make this battle very violent; such that death is a heartbeat away.’¹⁴ It is immediately apparent, that ISIL views the world through an eschatological lens.

13. *The Management of Savagery* is a conceptual doctrine which enables operations to be conducted with unity of purpose without constant communication. Similar to the German doctrine of *Auftragstaktik*, the development of mission-type tactics has enabled ISIL commanders to give cadres general directions of what needs to be achieved, allowing them the freedom to determine how to carry out these directions.¹⁵ Effectively ISIL is encouraging terrorist attacks by self-starters, or lone-wolves. These would be individuals that are not directly trained or in communication with ISIL’s leaders but are motivated by its ideology and doctrine. Their attacks are not sophisticated but are designed to visualise the violence and perpetuate the fear factor.

From Theory To Practice

14. *The Management of Savagery* advocates infiltrating and targeting police forces and armed forces around the world.¹⁶ This was reiterated by Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, the ISIL ideologue. On 22 September, 2014, al-Adnani requested supporters worldwide and especially in the West ‘to kill a disbelieving American or European – especially the spiteful and filthy French – or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever’.¹⁷ Al-Adnani made no distinction between military and civilian targets and advocated using any weapon available.
15. On 20 October, 2014, Martin Couture-Rouleau rammed a car into a pair of Canadian Armed Forces soldiers killing one of them. On 22 October, 2014, Michael Zehaf-Bibeau killed one Canadian soldier at Parliament Hill, Ottawa, Canada. On 23 October, Zale Thompson lunged at several policeman with an axe in Queens, New York City, United States. On 8 January, 2015, Amedy Coulibaly shot dead a French police woman at Montrouge, Paris, France. All these individuals accessed ISIL’s propaganda online and heeded the group’s call to carry out independent attacks in the name of ISIL and target military and law enforcement personnel.¹⁸
16. *The Management of Savagery* also suggests terrorist operations on tourist resorts like the Indonesian island of Bali and Djerba in Tunisia will make the West vulnerable and unable to prevent small intensive operations.¹⁹ It is important to recall both these incidents. On April 11, 2002, a gas truck detonated at the front of the ancient El Ghriba synagogue, killing 14 German tourists, three Tunisians, and two French nationals. This was al-Qaeda’s first

¹⁴ Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, trans. Will McCants (John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, 2006), p.108

¹⁵ David M. Keithly And Stephen P. Ferris, “Auftragstaktik, or Directive Control, in Joint and Combined Operations”, *Parameters*, Autumn 1999, pp. 118-33

¹⁶ Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, trans. Will McCants (John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, 2006), p.121

¹⁷ Helen Davidson, ‘Isis instructs followers to kill Australians and other disbelievers’, *The Guardian*, 23 September, <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/23/islamic-state-followers-urged-to-launch-attacks-against-australians>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

¹⁸ Thomas Hegghammer and Petter Nesser, “Assessing the Islamic State’s Commitment to Attacking the West”, *Perspectives On Terrorism*, Vol 9, No 4 (2015), <<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/440/html>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

¹⁹ Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, trans. Will McCants (John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, 2006), p.40

operation after the 11 September, 2001 attacks in New York and Washington D.C.²⁰ The 2002 Bali bombings occurred on 12 October 2002. The attack was conducted by the Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist group which killed 202 people including 88 Australians and 38 Indonesians.²¹ *The Management of Savagery* advocates smaller scale attacks but regular operations against tourists.

17. On 23 June, 2015, al-Adnani, called on ISIL's followers to 'turn the holy month of Ramadan into a time of "calamity for the infidels ... Shiites and apostate Muslims.' Al-Adnani added 'Be keen to conquer in this holy month and to become exposed to martyrdom'. Three days later, on 26 June, 2015, an ISIL terrorist attack took place in Kuwait, when a suicide bomber blew himself up in Shiite mosque during Friday prayers killing 27 people.²²
18. On the same day as the Kuwait bombing, Seifeddine Rezgui, a former aviation student, orchestrated a marauding terrorist attack in Tunisia at a tourist resort in Port el-Kantaoui, near the city of Sousse. Rezgui shot dead 38 people including 30 Britons.²³ Both the terrorist attacks in Tunisia and Kuwait occurred three days before the one-year anniversary of their leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaiming a caliphate on 29 June, 2014.
19. On 30 September, 2015, Russia launched air strikes in Syria bringing the four-year-old civil war into an unpredictable new phase. Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that the mission was against ISIL and helping Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Moscow's closest ally in the region.²⁴ The Kremlin's direct entry into the Syria conflict will result in ISIL showing greater interest in Russia. *The Management of Savagery* had already dedicated a lot of focus on how the Soviet Union were defeated in Afghanistan in the 1980s and still described Russia as a 'superpower' and stated 'the viciousness of the Russian soldier is double that of the American [soldier]'.²⁵
20. Inevitably, on 13 October, 2015, al-Adnani broke ISIL's weeks of silence on the Russian air strikes in Syria with an audio message calling on 'Islamic youth everywhere to ignite jihad against the Russians and the Americans.' Al-Adnani added 'Russia will be defeated.'²⁶
21. Prior to the Russian bombing campaign in Syria, there had not been an attack in Moscow since the 24 January, 2011, when a Chechen suicide bomber killed 37 people in the

²⁰ "18 Years for Al-Qaida Member: Paris Court Finds German Guilty of Tunisian Attack", *Der Spiegel*, 6 February, 2009, <<http://www.spiegel.de/international/18-years-for-al-qaida-member-paris-court-finds-german-guilty-of-tunisian-attack-a-605911.html>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

²¹ Tom Allard and Ben Doherty, "Bali Bombers Executed", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 November, 2008, <<http://www.smh.com.au/news/news/general/bali-bombers-executed/2008/11/09/1226165340305.html>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

²² Mark Hosenball And Mark Trevelyan, "Coordinated or not, attacks show Islamic State's growing reach", *Reuters*, 26 June, 2015, <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/26/us-security-attacks-idUSKBN0P62F420150626>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

²³ Mark Piggott, "Tunisia beach attack: Isis killer Seifeddine Rezgui showed 'no emotion' says wounded British hero", *International Business Times*, 5 July, 2015, <<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/tunisia-beach-attack-isis-killer-seifeddine-rezgui-showed-no-emotion-says-wounded-british-hero-1509389>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

²⁴ Andrew Osborn And Phil Stewart "Russia begins Syria air strikes in its biggest Mideast intervention in decades", *Reuters*, 1 October, 2015, <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/01/us-mideast-crisis-russia-idUSKCN0RU0MG20151001>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

²⁵ Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, trans. Will McCants (John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, 2006), p.23

²⁶ Joanna Paraszczuk "Islamic State, Al-Nusra Front Call For 'Jihad' Against Russia", *Radio Free Europe*, 14 October, 2015, <<http://www.rferl.org/content/islamic-state-nusra-jihad-russia/27306477.html>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

Domodedovo International Airport's international arrivals terminal.²⁷ It remains to be seen what operations ISIL may launch but the fact that Russia is now actively involved in Syria, it is inevitable that attempts will be made to target Russian interests at home and abroad.²⁸

A Two-Tiered Battlefield Strategy

22. *The Management of Savagery* designate specific nations as part of a 'priority group'²⁹, classifying the lands of Jordan, Egypt, the Maghreb, Nigeria, Afghanistan and Pakistan as the forefront of the *jihadi* battlefield. It also stresses the importance of having the movement, in this case ISIL, spread out through franchises.
23. With these 'choice regions' as the target, *The Management of Savagery* outlines a two-step mission with the overarching goal of 'dislodging the regions from the control of the regimes of the apostasy': first, in the 'stage of the power of vexation and exhaustion', the *jihadists*, in this case ISIL, must exhaust the 'choice' state and overthrow the governing authorities, creating 'savagery and chaos' in order to force the society to 'suffer from the absence of security'.³⁰ Second, the 'stage of the administration of savagery' prescribes 'management' of the regions of savagery, which, if successful, will enable them to fill the power vacuum and ultimately facilitate their consolidation of control throughout the conquered territories.
24. Extended military campaigns have not left ISIL's brand vulnerable to over-extension despite attacking other jihadist groups in the region, as advocated in *The Management of Savagery*. This is because ISIL has enabled its franchises considerable autonomy. This includes Najd Province (Saudi Arabia), Wilayat Sinai (Egypt), Jund al-Khilafah (Algeria), Khorasan (Afghanistan) and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in Libya. Coupled with this have been defections to ISIL from al-Qaeda with the most notable being the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Boko Haram in Nigeria.³¹ Even al-Shabaab in Somalia has become neutral and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has not offered unconditional support to al-Qaeda's leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.³² All of this has further eroded al-Qaeda's global brand for transnational terrorism dominance.
25. ISIL's two-tiered militant programme not only showcases the comprehensive and strategic nature of *The Management of Savagery*, but its successful adoption by ISIL, in parts of Syria and Iraq, elevates the concept of transnational terrorism to a new level. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates have long had the global goal of creating a caliphate but were only ever able to

²⁷ "Russia jails four over 2011 Domodedovo airport bombing", *BBC News*, 11 November, 2013, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-24896447>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

²⁸ As of 6 November, 2015, there were suspicions that the Russian Metrojet Flight 9268 which crashed in the northern Sinai, Egypt, on 31 October, 2015, was a result of terrorism by ISIL but it had not been definitely proved.

²⁹ Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, trans. Will McCants (John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, 2006), p.37

³⁰ *ibid.* p.41, 48

³¹ Damon A. Mehl 'The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan Opens a Door to the Islamic State', *CTC Sentinel*, June 2015. Vol 8. Issue 6; Sarah Almkhtar "How Boko Haram Courted and Joined the Islamic State", *New York Times*, 10 June, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/11/world/africa/boko-haram-isis-propaganda-video-nigeria.html?_r=0> [accessed 31 October, 2015] ; Ian Lee and Sarah Sirgany, "Egyptian terror group Ansar Beit al-Maqdis pledges alliance to ISIS", *CNN*, 20 November, 2014 <<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/11/20/world/meast/isis-egypt-franchise>> [accessed 31 October, 2015] ; Jared Malsin, "ISIS Re-Establish Their Hold On Qaddafi's Home Town After Crushing a Rebellion", *Time Magazine*, 19 August, 2015, <<http://time.com/4003049/isis-sirte-rebellion/>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

³² Robyn Kriel and Briana Duggan, "Al-Shabaab faction pledges allegiance to ISIS", *CNN*, 23 October, 2015, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/10/22/africa/al-shabaab-faction-isis/>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

operate clandestinely. ISIL, on the other hand, operate openly and have been able to seize large swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq in their quest for a caliphate. ISIL's perpetuation of 'savagery and chaos' in 'choice' Muslim states is their prerequisite for transitioning the battlefield to the West. Thus, inherent to ISIL's populist ideology is the creation and perpetuation of 'savagery' in order to both deter and control.

26. ISIL's success in expanding its territorial stronghold across Iraq and Syria coupled with its acquisition of thousands of recruits from around the globe parallels elements of the strategy used by al-Qaeda's leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. In his text, *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, al-Zawahiri divides the world into two irreconcilable halves, outlining the 'titanic mega-struggle' between the 'forces of the disbelievers' (the U.S. and its Western allies) and al-Qaeda's followers seeking to restore the Islamic caliphate.³³ There is immense irony with the fact that ISIL has effectively plagiarized al-Qaeda's strategy and proved to be more successful in this goal.
27. ISIL is not principally driven by an adherence to theology. Rather, it is motivated by its hunger for total political power, by which it flexes religion as both a tool of attraction for recruits and as a factor of legitimisation to divinely sanction its abhorrent acts of mass murder and mutilation.
28. Considering ISIL's adherence to Naji's prescription to 'vex and exhaust' the apostate regions and create 'administrations of savagery' in order for its movement to both centralise and consolidate its grip on the Muslim world, it appears that ISIL is plotting the cultural and civilizational annihilation of both Western and Arab countries.

The Oxygen Of Publicity

29. Media is an especially important tool for ISIL to proliferate its brand and ideology. Naji's media campaign states the 'specific target is to [motivate] crowds drawn from the masses to fly to the regions which we manage.'³⁴ People are understandably offended by the carnage but ISIL has been remarkably successful with their chilling media propaganda.³⁵ Their core message is about raw power and revenge. Its brutality is deliberately designed to intimidate and suppress the enemy by marketing savagery and sell carnage to worldwide audience of volunteers who disturbingly find the violence appealing. ISIL is using the public display of savagery into our lives as a form of advertising, manipulation and recruitment.'³⁶ The group's brutal violence demonstrates dominance, attracts attention and draws people to the action.
30. Currently, through ISIL's own defined 'media halo', the potency of *The Management of Savagery* is supplemented with the compounding effect of glossy Facebook pages, catchy tweets, glorified snapshots, and polished propaganda videos are all feeding into an already pervasive narrative of disenfranchisement in Western society. This carefully crafted narrative – which is constantly being 'shared', 'liked', and 'retweeted' by intrigued potential supporters – is currently projected in a vacuum in which it is the only voice being heard.

³³ Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner* (London: Al-Sharq Al-Awsat 2001), p.5

³⁴ Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, trans. Will McCants (John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, 2006), p.51

³⁵ Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Want", *The Atlantic*, March 2015, <<http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2015/02/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

³⁶ Jessica Stern & J.M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror* (Ecco Press: London, 2015) p.4.

This is hugely problematic. With no compelling counter-narrative on the social media front, susceptible recruits have little reason to resist the temptations of ISIL's glorified calls for battle.

31. To replicate their propaganda machine for the modern age, al-Baghdadi authorised the proliferation of new media platforms to serve as ISIL's oxygen of publicity. One of the key tools for ISIL has been its online magazine, *Dabiq*, which is designed to spread ISIL doctrine. *Dabiq*, is named after a town in Syria, near the border with Turkey, as one of two places specifically identified in the Qur'an to watch for signs that Armageddon was approaching.³⁷
32. Each *Dabiq* edition has a specific theme which combined illustrates a plan of action for ISIL and an illustration of its future objectives. This includes: Establishing the Caliphate; Eliminate non-believers; Recruit European volunteers; Reverse trend of Western dominance; Spread into Afghanistan/Pakistan, North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and Mecca; Recruit al-Qaeda and Taliban defections; Excommunicate Muslim apostates in the West; Arab rulers aligned with the West are enemies of God and Fight other Islamist militants and Secular Militias.³⁸
33. Through harnessing the power of new media platforms, ISIL has conducted a campaign where its messages have been designed to elicit psychological reactions and communicate direct political messages to a global audience. New media has become ISIL's new frontier, enabling it to offer information, guidance, instruction and remains its principal tool for communication and ideologically encouraging individuals to act independently in carrying out attacks if they cannot join the group in Iraq or Syria.
34. *The Management of Savagery* also proposes widespread economic attacks as a means of targeting the enemy. His proposed tactics include seizing oil and petroleum, raiding arms warehouses and selling infrastructure. The text discusses targeting the weaker sections which will maximise the financial impact.³⁹ The main purpose of attacks will trigger spending and overextend the military leading to economic downfall and through this ISIL hopes it will eventually become fully financially self-sufficient.
35. *The Management of Savagery* clearly asserts that targeting oil and petroleum will present real challenges to local governments. This served as ISIL's blueprint for its oil strategy. The group's Shura Council identified 'black gold' as essential for its survival, expansion and, more importantly, to use the illicit oil proceeds to finance its ambition to create a caliphate and sustain its petro-terrorist industry.⁴⁰

³⁷ Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Want", *The Atlantic*, March 2015, <<http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2015/02/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

³⁸ *Dabiq* #1 – 10

³⁹ Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, trans. Will McCants (John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, 2006), p.19

⁴⁰ Erika Solomon, Guy Chazan and Sam Jones, "Isis Inc: how oil fuels the jihadi terrorists", *The Financial Times*, 14 October, 2015, <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/b8234932-719b-11e5-ad6d-f4ed76f0900a.html#axzz3qCDJLEKU>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]; "Financing of the terrorist organisation Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)", *Financial Action Task-Force (FATF)*, February 2015, <www.fatf-gafi.org/topics/methodsandtrends/documents/financing-of-terrorist-organisation-isis.html> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

36. ISIL doctrine also involves subjugation and humiliation. The Research and Fatwa Department of ISIL issued a pamphlet with ‘Questions and Answers on Taking Captives and Slaves.’ The ISIL authorised and sanctioned price list for slaves ranks the cost of a woman by age, so while a middle-aged woman would sell for less than a teenager, most disturbingly, a child under nine would sell for the most amount.⁴¹ The bartering of women, most of whom are Muslim, as slaves in this modern age is both horrific and reprehensible. Many are exposed to physical and sexual violence and whilst living in territory controlled by ISIL, there is no effective action or recourse by the international community to protect them.
37. Medieval methods are being utilised with modern communication technology. By reaching out to a global audience, ISIL have been able to amplify many times the horror generated by a single incident of terrorism.
38. If ISIL continues to follow *The Management of Savagery’s* doctrine and programme, then we should expect to see targeted attacks in the United Kingdom. On 28 October, 2015, speaking at the Lord Mayor of London’s annual defence and security lecture, the head of MI5, Andrew Parker, warned that ISIL is planning mass casualty attacks in Britain. He added that the security services along with the police have thwarted several terrorist plots in the UK and abroad.⁴² Worryingly, it’s not a question of ‘if’ there will be an ISIL attack in the United Kingdom but ‘when’.
39. ISIL, along with its affiliates and those influenced by its ideological brand, have implemented a sustained series of terrorist attacks, all ranging in size, scale and scope. ISIL is a terrorist enterprise and its ability to grow and expand remains undiminished.

Recommendations: Demystify The ‘Illusion of Power’

40. As a concurrent rung to the US-led coalition’s air strikes campaign against ISIL, there is a need to formulate a plan to puncture and deflate ISIL’s ‘media halo’ by identifying the ample holes within its populist appeal. Understanding the agenda of ISIL’s propaganda for recruitment and radicalisation is essential in order to develop a successful counter-narrative.
41. However, clever spin is not needed to portray ISIL as un-Islamic and expose its half-truths. Articulating the truth is powerful enough. Yet the problem is that there are no sustained efforts to show the truth of how the ISIL death cult is un-Islamic. It is an often overlooked fact the primary victims of ISIL’s onslaught have been ordinary Iraqi and Syrian civilians.⁴³ Many potential ISIL followers are naïve that the group’s ‘savagery and chaos’ doesn’t make them martyrs but instead murderers of innocent Muslims.

⁴¹ Adam Withnall, “Isis releases ‘abhorrent’ sex slaves pamphlet with 27 tips for militants on taking, punishing and raping female captives”, *The Independent*, 10 December 2014, <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-releases-abhorrent-sex-slaves-pamphlet-with-27-tips-for-militants-on-taking-punishing-and-9915913.html>>; Greg Botelho, “ISIS: Enslaving, having sex with ‘unbelieving’ women, girls is OK”, *CNN*, 13 December, 2014, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/12/12/world/meast/isis-justification-female-slaves/>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

⁴² Andrew Parker, “Lord Mayor’s Defence And Security Lecture - A Modern MI5”, <<https://www.mi5.gov.uk/home/about-us/who-we-are/staff-and-management/director-general/speeches-by-the-director-general/a-modern-mi5.html>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

⁴³ Dean Obeidallah, “ISIS’s Gruesome Muslim Death Toll”, *The Daily Beast*, 7 October, 2014, <<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/10/07/isis-s-gruesome-muslim-death-toll.html>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]

42. ISIL's greatest strength is its *illusion of power*, which, in being an illusion, also serves as its most vulnerable weakness. Various names have been used to describe the group: The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL); Islamic State of Iraq and Syria/al-Sham (ISIS); Islamic State (IS).
43. ISIL endorses the use of all of them because despite nuanced differences the important 'Islamic State' part is always attached. Every time a politician or journalist uses these names, it inadvertently gives the group free publicity for its brand and de-facto recognition that it is an 'Islamic State'. Therein lies the problem.
44. A far better way to describe the group is 'Al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham (Daesh).' The term 'Daesh' still accurately spells out the abbreviation of the group's entire Arabic name. Phonetically it is similar to the Arabic word 'Daesh' or 'one who sows discord' and Daesh can also be understood as a play on words and an insult in Arabic slang. Depending on the context of its meaning in Arabic, Daesh can mean 'To trample down and crush' or 'a bigot who imposes his view on others.'⁴⁴
45. The group doesn't endorse the name as it does not spell out the crucial Islamic component. The definition not only describes its methods with some accuracy, the slang interpretations also accurately reflects the way Daesh's adherents conduct themselves.
46. There is also an urgent need for consistency. Most trans-national terrorist groups have always been referred to by their indigenous names and not by the anglicized equivalent. Al-Qaeda was not called 'The Base'. Boko Haram hasn't been known as 'Western Education is Forbidden'. Al-Shabaab isn't referred to as 'The Youth.' The Taliban are not identified as 'The Students' and the Lashkar-e-Tayyba are not acknowledged as the Army of the Righteous. Yet, for some reason, an exception has been made with calling Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's death cult, ISIL. This must change. Brand recognition is very important to al-Baghdadi and his cohorts. By calling ISIL 'Daesh' it illustrates the inferior product that the group is and is a starting point for exposing their illusion of power.

⁴⁴ Adam Taylor, "'Daesh': John Kerry starts calling the Islamic State a name they hate", *The Washington Post*, 5 December, 2014, <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/12/05/ISIL-john-kerry-starts-calling-the-islamic-state-a-name-they-hate/>> [accessed 31 October, 2015] ; Colin Randall, "Why does a simple word like Daesh disturb extremists so much?", *The National*, 18 October, 2014, <<http://www.thenational.ae/opinion/comment/why-does-a-simple-word-like-ISIL-disturb-extremists-so-much>> [accessed 31 October, 2015] ; Caroline Alexander and Jeremy Hodges, "What's in a Name? U.K. Joins Debate on Labeling of Islamic State", *The Washington Post with Bloomberg*, 6 July, 2015, <<http://washpost.bloomberg.com/Story?docId=1376-NQX4FO6S972901-2LMP0RE50OU7GG5331OIFEC1TQ>> [accessed 31 October, 2015]