
ANALYSIS OF CENTER OF GRAVITY - TERRORIST ORGANIZATION „ISLAMIC STATE“

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Abstract: In this paper an attempt was made through an analysis of the center of gravity of the Islamic State, to get a full picture of the terrorist organization. The analysis is based on the three postulates of the center of gravity according to US military research, which are: critical capabilities, critical needs and critical weaknesses. With the full implementation of these postulates, a comprehensive analysis of the state of the Islamic state has been made (advantages, disadvantages and vulnerabilities). The political and military strategy for violating the stability of the Islamic State depends on the assessment of their critical capabilities, critical needs and critical weaknesses.

The strategy of defeating the Islamic State depends on the assessment of their center of gravity and the grand strategy of military policy. Hence a conclusion could be drawn from the Islamic State's military strategy for the necessary components that would allow enemies to form a counter-strategy.

Keywords: critical capabilities, critical needs, critical weaknesses, strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The critical elements of strategic power possessed by IS are identifiable through analysis of its military strategy. The elements of strategic power are doctrinally expressed through a study of an enemy's center of gravity. Center of gravity is a strategic construct introduced by Carl von Clausewitz to describe the primary source of an enemy's strength. The identification of enemy centers of gravity emerged into the military craft through the following passage of his master work, *On War*: "Out of these characteristics a certain center of gravity develops, the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends. That is the point against which all our energies should be directed."³¹¹

Center of gravity studies have been expanded in the context of US military planning doctrine to include critical capabilities, critical requirements, and critical vulnerabilities as additional expressions of strategic Power with which to evaluate a military enemy. (table 1).³¹²

Table 1: Elements of Strategic Power

CENTER OF GRAVITY	The source of power that provides [an enemy with] moral or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act.
CRITICAL CAPABILITIES	A means that is considered a crucial enabler for a center of gravity to function and is essential to the accomplishment of the specified or assumed objective(s).
CRITICAL REQUIREMENTS	An essential condition, resource, or means for a critical capability to be fully operational.
CRITICAL VULNERABILITIES	An aspect of a critical requirement which is deficient or vulnerable to direct or indirect attack that will create decisive or significant effects.

Critical capabilities are essentially the enemy's means; critical requirements are his constraints; and critical vulnerabilities are his deficiencies. These concrete planning factors translate directly into an enemy's strategy, and they can be targeted directly to achieve linear battlefield effects. A Center of Gravity, on the other hand, requires a broader understanding of the behavior of the enemy system, and thus it requires a comprehensive assessment of the

³¹¹ Фон Клаузевиц Карл, За војната, Магор, Скопје, 2009.

³¹² Army Doctrine reference Publication (aDrP) 1-02, military and symbols, 2013.

other elements of the enemy’s strategic power. Targeting a Center of Gravity achieves nonlinear destructive effects against an enemy. This study will therefore identify the critical capabilities, critical requirements, and critical vulnerabilities of IS before providing an assessment of its centers of gravity, which may be targeted in order to achieve exponential effects upon ISIS. This study will also identify critical opportunities that IS may seek to exploit in order to identify the full range of opportunities available to the US to design a strategy for IS’s defeat.

Conducting a center of gravity analysis of IS provides the theoretical basis to design a counter-strategy. a political-military strategy to destroy IS depends upon an accurate estimate of its critical capabilities (table 2). A political-military strategy to disrupt IS depends upon an estimate of its critical requirements, critical vulnerabilities, and critical opportunities. a strategy to defeat IS depends upon an estimate for its centers of gravity and grand strategy. This study is therefore a practical one, to extrapolate from the IS military strategy the necessary components that will allow the enemies of IS to form a counter-strategy.

Table 2: Tactical Mission Tasks³¹³

DEFEAT	A tactical mission task that occurs when an enemy force has temporarily or permanently lost the physical means or the will to fight.
DESTROY	A tactical mission task that physically renders an enemy force combat-ineffective until it is reconstituted.
DISRUPT	A tactical mission task in which a commander integrates direct and indirect fires, terrain, and obstacles to upset an enemy’s formation or tempo, to interrupt his timetable, or cause his forces to commit prematurely or attack in a piecemeal fashion.

2. CRITICAL CAPABILITIES

A critical capability is an essential means to accomplishing strategic objectives that is considered a crucial enabler for a center of gravity to function.³¹⁴ While the IS centers of Gravity will be validated later in this study, it is important first to take inventory of the essential means displayed within the IS strategy thus far. IS demonstrates critical capabilities in the arenas of military campaign design, military force generation, political campaign design, and local governance. The denial of one or more of these critical capabilities will destroy the synergy of IS military-political power.

IS is able to design and execute military campaigns at the strategic and operational levels. IS is able to plan, adjust, consolidate, and initiate phased campaigns. IS is able to designate main efforts and distribute manpower and materiel across fronts.⁷⁵ This critical capability is built upon a number of collective competencies, including command and control, hybridized warfare, and maneuver. IS has been able to leverage this capability to seize military and urban terrain in Iraq and Syria, and to conduct offensives across multiple fronts sequentially, setting the terms of battle across several fronts at once. IS has also overcome tactical failures with this operational and strategic resilience, most prominently the loss of urban terrain in Syria’s Idlib and Aleppo provinces in January 2014.³¹⁵ The organization has also designed and leveraged its military successes to achieve grand strategic objectives, including the announcement of the caliphate.

IS is able to grow its fighting force. IS is able to increase manpower through prison breaks, foreign fighter flows, and increasingly through local recruitment, based upon recent reports from Mosul. Local youth are reportedly joining IS, and IS has reportedly constituted a police force in Mosul that may hold increased appeal

³¹³FM 3-90, “Tactics,” Appendix B, “Tactical Mission Tasks,” Department of the Army, Washington D.C., January 4, 2001 available on [://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/fm/3-90/toc.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/fm/3-90/toc.htm).

³¹⁴ Army Doctrine reference Publication (aDrP) 1-02, military Terms and symbols, 2013.

³¹⁵ Valerie Szybala, “Syrian rebels attack IsIs,” IsW, January 5, 2014, available on <http://iswsyria.blogspot.com/2014/01/syrian-rebels-attack-isis.html?q=aleppo+IsIs>.

because IS is able to pay salaries, whereas the government of Iraq can no longer.³¹⁶ By broadcasting a message of military victory, IS is able to sustain and grow its notoriety and treasury, both of which translate to an increased tangible basis of recruitment. IS are not only recruits on the basis of religious justification, but also through a promise of real and imminent success. This is an important distinction between IS and other global jihadist groups, such as al-Qaeda, and it suggests a path by which IS may gain influence at al-Qaeda's expense. IS are recruits not only on the basis of religious justification, but also on the basis of its military might. The message of military victory and the promise of real control have been the primary drivers of support to IS, preserving the fundamental sequence of the IS grand strategy to establish physical control first.

IS is also able to translate military victories into political success through an aggressive and pro-active information campaign. The IS social media strategy has been widely recognized as superior among professional organizations, with Twitter hashtag campaigns to capture the entire World cup audience, for example, and an extensive English-language magazine series to describe post-war life within the Islamic caliphate. Through the combined activities of local media offices that distribute leaflets in Iraq and Syria as well as a worldwide digital information strategy including print, video, and social media, IS has been able to broadcast a political campaign that maximizes their argumentation, appeal, and reach. Inside Syria, the messaging campaign is also delivered through "Dawa" religious outreach gatherings, and IS has represented itself as the champion of Iraq's Sunnis throughout the anti-government protest movement that preceded the current uprising.

IS has demonstrated over time the ability to sustain control of urban centers in Raqqa and Aleppo provinces in Syria. The methods employed by IS to establish and sustain this control include the establishment of a local religious police force, Shari'a law, religious schools, reconstruction projects, and food distribution. IS has also begun to administer some of these functions in Iraq, most recently establishing a police force within Mosul. Their methods are largely coercive, but recently IS has also implemented a phased urban control strategy that involves displacing the urban population in order to establish control by effectively selecting a population. The Islamic caliphate most recently demonstrated this in Deir ez-Zour, Syria, but reports after the initial fall of Mosul also indicate that civilians were allowed to evacuate the city. IS social control within urban centers that now comprise the Islamic caliphate is enhanced by the emigration of fighters, professionals, and families to settle, whom IS is actively recruiting.³¹⁷

3. CRITICAL REQUIREMENTS

Critical requirements describe the enemy's necessary conditions, resources, and means. In order to succeed in its military campaign in Iraq, IS requires continued military success, alliances, combat service support, and religious authority. The denial of one of these critical requirements will disrupt the ability of IS to proceed with its present political-military strategy.

By declaring the Islamic caliphate as a physical presence, IS has to develop statecraft and defend this terrain. This makes IS more brittle from a strategic perspective. In the meantime, it also reinforces social control, as civilians living within cities that IS now controls are discouraged from mounting a resistance movement. IS requires the bandwagoning effect of victory as well as its deterrent effect to sustain its military campaign and defend the Islamic Caliphate. A senior Ba'athist official in attendance at a meeting of Sunni tribal and Salafist leaders in Jordan on July 16, 2014 highlighted the passive alliance with IS that stems from its military victory: "now the Islamic state is fighting and has scored victories and helped revolutionaries in achieving their goals ... we are almost in harmony with them in achieving our goals."³¹⁸

In Iraq, IS is fighting alongside local allies that include Sunni insurgents and Ba'athists. IS has leveraged these alliances to overcome the ISF in Iraq and to establish a zone devoid of state security. IS will require the

³¹⁶ Jenna Lefer, "Life under ISIS in Mosul," Institute for the study of War, July 28, 2014, available on <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2014/07/life-under-isis-in-mosul.html>.

³¹⁷ "Canadian fighter urges Muslims to travel to Syria in posthumous Is video," translated and posted by sITe Intelligence group, July 11, 2014, available on [://ent.siteintelgroup.com/multimedia/canadian-fighter-urges-muslims-to-travel-to-syria-in-posthumous-is-video.html](http://ent.siteintelgroup.com/multimedia/canadian-fighter-urges-muslims-to-travel-to-syria-in-posthumous-is-video.html).

³¹⁸ Culeiman al-Khalidi, "Iraq sunni Insurgency seeks end to shi'ite Political Domination," reuters, July 16, 2014, available on <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/16/us-iraq-insurgency-sunni-idusKBn0fl2ve20140716>.

continued cooperation of these groups in order to consolidate control. It is unclear whether Sunni nationalists and tribal militias in Iraq will tolerate IS long term; or seek to wrest control from IS in the wake of its military advance.

But the role that former Baathist leadership might play in the unfolding war in Iraq is still in question. on July 13, 2014, Izzat al-Douri, former vice president to Saddam Hussein, congratulated IS on wresting control of Iraq's Sunni areas from the Maliki government and condoned the campaign to liberate Baghdad. With similar language, Iraqi Salafist clerics and prominent tribal leaders who met in Jordan on July 16, 2014 describe their cause not as one to resist IS, but one to overthrow the Shi'a government of Iraq permanently.

IS is transitioning from military to political control within a bounded physical space. Throughout this transition, IS is dependent upon the military institutions to sustain its offensive and defensive military effort. These institutions require combat support, such as intelligence, engineering, and signal; as well as combat service support, including logistics, supply, human resources, and finance. It is possible to examine what tactical and operational tasks IS is able to perform in terms of its military, government, development, and outreach functions, and understand what support functions IS requires in order to sustain its various efforts. These events diminish the likelihood that Iraq's mobilized Sunni opposition will form a counter-IS resistance force. In Syria, IS does not have an ally in the Sunni opposition.

The operational and strategic depth of IS belies the depth of its supporting institutions. These critical requirements are not particularly vulnerable to disruption because of their depth. However, the operational presence of IS in Iraq and Syria requires interior and exterior lines of communication to facilitate the distribution of resources, manpower, information, and finance across the full expanse of its operational and support zones. These physical connections are vulnerable to disruption at several key points, particularly where IS has yet to complete its outer ring of Sunni heartland control. The most essential artery for internal communication within the IS area of operations in Iraq is a road that US forces named route Phoenix, which stretches across the Jazeera desert from Baiji to Haditha. Baiji is key terrain for IS not only because of the oil refinery, but also because it is the crossroads by which IS is able to transit across Iraq.³¹⁹

IS requires religious authority in order to preserve the core nature of the Islamic caliphate. Ideology is not a center of gravity of IS, or a critical capability, because IS can proceed with the practical elements of its grand strategy even when its religious argumentation or acceptance is deficient. IS has the means to establish physical control of terrain and infect coercive social control regardless of whether its actions are perceived to be justified through religion. However, the manner in which IS has chosen to achieve social control is through religious indoctrination. IS cultivates its religious outreach through "Dawa" outreach, religious instruction, and a proactive strategic messaging campaign.

Without religion, IS is just another regime. IS requires religious authority also to enforce the conditions of the religious state that it means to construct and maintain.

4. CRITICAL VULNERABILITIES

Critical vulnerabilities describe the critical requirements of the enemy that are deficient or exposed, or the externalities that inherently weaken an enemy.³²⁰ The critical vulnerabilities of IS derive from its established strength. The scope of its operations, the heterogeneity of its leadership, and the depth of its institutions also generate vulnerabilities. IS additionally contends with vulnerabilities that will befall its future goals if it is not able to rise to the level of global resonance that it seeks to establish.

IS is vulnerable to over-extension, deriving from the critical requirement to support an extended military campaign across multiple fronts. IS is less vulnerable than its domestic adversaries, such as the Iraqi security forces, and this relative overmatch has allowed IS to launch simultaneous offensives multiple fronts to divide opposing forces and limit their ability to concentrate a counter-offensive. However, IS is also vulnerable in its own arrayed position. IS has ground forces positioned from the Iranian border in northern Diyala to Rutba and eastern Homs province in Syria. The physical footprint of IS is extensive, and IS is vulnerable where it is not able to maintain robust internal lines of communication. Furthermore, as counter-offensives are launched against them, IS will incur

³¹⁹ Lewis D. Jessica, *The Islamic State: A Counter-Strategy for a Counter-State*, Institute for the Study of War, Washington, 2014, pg.19

³²⁰ Joe Strange and Richard Iron, "Understanding centers of gravity and critical vulnerabilities," available on <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/cog2.pdf>.

geographic vulnerabilities to some military positions if it redistributes forces to reinforce troops in contact. Early reports as of July 19, 2014 indicate that IS has reinforced the fight against the ISF in Tikrit by drawing forces from Mosul. Other groups such as JRTN (Jaysh Rijalal-Tariqah al-Naqshabandia) may exploit this vulnerability by seizing control of urban terrain left minimally guarded by IS. IS may in turn take steps to co-opt other groups and accelerate its force generation in order to minimize this vulnerability.

IS has been able to reconstitute several generations of leadership that had been building strength and numbers in prisons. The re-gathering of leaders and fighters from former eras creates another force multiplier for IS that also generates a critical vulnerability. IS has robust military institutions and can deliver sophisticated military campaigns to synchronize effects across multiple fronts; but ISIS is also heterogeneous, with extreme disparities among the layer shared experiences of its membership; over such a large campaign, IS is vulnerable to leadership cleavages as a result. Nevertheless, IS has already demonstrated the successful combination of disparate styles of warfare, ranging from terrorism to guerilla warfare, combined arms attacks, and conventional maneuver. The ability to prosecute hybridized warfare is a demonstrated capability of IS that functionally overcomes its vulnerability to leadership cleavages. This ability to implement multiple styles provides IS with a range of tools and solutions that may defeat monolithic counter-strategies, especially to reestablish control over Mosul and Raqqa.³²¹

The tribes in Deir ez-Zour province in Syria are surrendering under IS's terms because they see that IS has military overmatch. If local populations cannot mount an effective resistance to IS, then they likely will not attempt to do so.³²² Their lack of capability to win in battle against IS may cause this deficiency in ISIS's ideological appeal never to actualize as a critical vulnerability, though there have been several reports in eastern Iraq of Sunni insurgents, likely JRTN, clashing with IS.

The transition from a terrorist network to a military institution has likely imposed constraints upon IS. Developing institutions also means developing bureaucracy, including procedural normalization, process establishment, and repeatable workflows. These business practices are difficult to advance, and they increase the signature of the IS military and governance institutions and make them more visible to enemy forces. Bureaucracy also accelerates leadership cleavages. These vulnerabilities expand further as the IS military apparatus develops norms to relate to the political and religious institutions that exercise governance and social control within the Islamic caliphate. The same practices and instruments that must bring IS together at a grand strategic level also increasing its physical vulnerability to enemy targeting. IS is likely practiced in the preservation of operational security from the al-Qaeda fighting experience against coalition forces; however, once an organization becomes as large as IS today, it also becomes more visible, more fixed, and more rigid in its repeatable processes. Bureaucracy and convention lock IS into positional warfare, making IS vulnerable in a way that al-Qaeda never was.

IS must also compete within the Salafist constellation of vocal actors in order to legitimize the Islamic caliphate on a religious plane. The recent rejection of the IS caliphate by Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, former religious guide to al-Qaeda emir Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, is one such source of religious vulnerability for IS.³²³ Other al-Qaeda affiliates such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb have also spoken out against the IS caliphate, referencing Maqdisi and calling on Islamic scholars to deliver a cohesive message. The longstanding conflict between Jabhat al-Nusra and IS in Syria generated a rift and thereby a vulnerability for the entire global jihadist community. although IS may gain ground relative to other groups because of its tangible victories, IS's a member of this community, and the ability to influence the broader movement is compromised by a lack of consensus among Islamic scholars and al-Qaeda leaders in IS favor may work to overcome this vulnerability by encouraging other al-Qaeda leaders to adopt its system, which IS can claim to produce tangible results. Without their approval however, IS is vulnerable to internal competition.

The performance of state security forces in Iraq and Syria against IS has called into question whether other state armies in the middle east are capable to defend their sovereign territory. Jordan and Lebanon will likely face

³²¹ Lewis D. Jessica, *The Islamic State: A Counter-Strategy for a Counter-State*, Institute for the Study of War, Washington, 2014, pg.21

³²² Lewis D. Jessica, *The Islamic State: A Counter-Strategy for a Counter-State*, Institute for the Study of War, Washington, 2014, pg.21

³²³ "Jihadi Ideologue Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi rallies against Is' Caliphate," site Intelligence group, July 14, 2014, available on <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-news/jihadi-ideologue-abu-muhammad-al-maqdisi-rallies-against-is-caliphate.html>.

attacks by IS that will test their defense capabilities. The IS expressed endgame is to hold sacred sites inside Saudi Arabia additionally. It is important to estimate where IS may face military overmatch by other forces in order to estimate the ways in which its meticulously sequenced military strategy is vulnerable to preemption. The presence of formidable regional militaries, such as Iran, Turkey, and the GCC, is strategic vulnerability of IS in the pursuit of a grand strategy that begins with military conquest. IS will need to defend its acquired territory from these states, should they choose to intervene against IS in Iraq and Syria. IS will also need to formulate a strategy for further expansion that compromises the military capabilities of these states.

5. CENTERS OF GRAVITY

“Out of these characteristics a certain center of gravity develops, the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends. That is the point against which all our energies should be directed.”

Clausewitz implied a strategy for targeting an enemy’s center of gravity with maximum force as a means to achieve decisive victory. Many scholars have since argued that centers of gravity need not be concrete, which complicates the formulation of asymmetric military counter-strategies to concentrate fire and destroy them. In the case of IS, there are multiple centers of gravity, a situation which creates both a challenge and an opportunity for the strategic counter-planner. The challenge is that political and military efforts cannot be maximally applied upon two centers of gravity at once and still abide by the principle to concentrate one’s own force to target an enemy center of gravity.

The opportunity emerges from the fundamental need for an enemy with two centers of gravity to maintain a synergy between these poles. If two gravitational poles stabilize the enemy macro-system within, and those poles fall out of perfect alignment, then a grand strategic vulnerability emerges. The vulnerability does not destroy the organization, but it causes cascading vulnerabilities to erupt. Accelerating this effect is a potential strategic objective of a counter-strategy driven by the centers of gravity of IS. IS has two capabilities-based centers of gravity; a military capacity to destroy modern states; and a Political capacity to control an Islamic caliphate. The IS political vision rests upon their combination.³²⁴

5.1. MILITARY FORCES

The IS military is a classical center of gravity. It is an institution comprised of many layers of tactical, operational, and strategic capability, and it is expertly led. The IS military campaign belies the brilliance of its military leadership. The IS military strategy in Iraq and campaign cohesion have been more sophisticated and more successful than that of any other force with which they have come into violent contact. This strategic capability now also extends into Syria, evidenced most powerfully in the offensive to seize control of urban terrain and oil fields in Deir ez-Zour province.

5.2. POLITICAL CONTROL

IS derives strength from a second center of gravity, one that comprises the statecraft of the Islamic caliphate. The Islamic caliphate announced by IS is not only an idea; it is a religious polity that sits atop major cities and operates a framework to govern a religious urban society. The Islamic Caliphate is personified by Caliph Ibrahim, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. But the Islamic state created by IS is a political entity comprised of much more. The Islamic state is operational, with functional institutions, governance, laws, executors, and citizens. It generates rather than draws strength from ISIS. The state produces a different kind of energy than does the IS military. The state promises life after war and right governance. The estimate of IS’s capability to govern draws primarily from IS messaging about life in Aleppo and Raqqa, which is likely divorced from reality and thereby vulnerable to counter-messaging. Nevertheless, IS controls major cities, some of them now for several months. Its territory is contiguous. Populations that remain within are attending mosques. This state is not only a place for martyrs to come and die. IS is fashioning a new form of religious statecraft. The IS system for political control is a second center of gravity.³²⁵

5.3. SECTARIAN CIVIL WAR

IS has adapted its political and military strategy to shifting events in Iraq and Syria. Where conditions are not primed for its advance, IS has demonstrated the ability to adjust its strategy to accelerate or induce optimal conditions. This has proven true in Iraq, where IS targeted Shi’a civilians in Baghdad viciously for over a year¹⁰⁶

³²⁴ Lewis D. Jessica, *The Islamic State: A Counter-Strategy for a Counter-State*, Institute for the Study of War, Washington, 2014, pg.22

³²⁵ Charles Caris and Sam Reynolds, “IsIs governance in syria,” *IsW* available on <http://www.understandingwar.org>

in order to accelerate a sectarian response by the Iraqi security forces, especially against the anti-government protest movement ignited against Pm Maliki in December 2012. The protest movement provided IS with more opportunities to exacerbate the sectarian divide in Iraq, which it exploited. Sectarian civil wars provide IS with unrivaled opportunity to pursue governance and control where neither a regime nor an opposition is willing to mass forces. The condition of sectarian or civil war in Syria and now Iraq is an exogenous advantage for IS, but one IS also targeted strategically.

5.4. KURDISH INDEPENDENCE

An additional opportunity that IS may exploit is the prospect of an imminently independent Iraqi Kurdistan. An independent Kurdistan that pursues autonomy while the IS caliphate remains is compromised in its opportunity to pursue a joint military strategy with the government of Iraq and external factors, such as the US that are determined to keep Iraq unified. An independent Kurdistan would contravene this intent and complicate hypothetical military support by disrupting close cooperation between the US, the Iraqi federal government, and allies. The Kurdish Peshmerga may fight, but would be more likely to do so alone instead of in concert with partners. Furthermore, an independent Kurdistan would reinforce a mutual border with the Islamic caliphate. IS may attack Kurdish forces or engage Kurdish interests in a way that accelerates the KRG's pursuit of dependence in order to secure this condition.

5.5. A SYRIAN SITUATION

Similarly, it is possible that IS could buttress its western flank against the Assad regime by attacking in a way that causes Assad to form a de facto border with IS. On July 17, 2014, ISIS attacked a gas field in eastern Homs province, seizing a facility that had been under regime control.³²⁶ IS may have done this in order to shore up a buffer zone against the Syrian regime. Syrian regime investment of military resources along the IS front would stretch the regime's ability to apply force elsewhere, and may thereby expose more opportunities for IS to pursue strategic military campaign goals in Syria. Alternately, if the Assad regime were to negotiate an end to the Syrian war in order to confront IS, the battle plan would inherently involve the defense of the central corridor and Latakia rather than the whole of Syria. Political measures by the Assad regime will therefore have the same affect upon IS as an autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan. IS may attack the Assad regime in a way that causes them to shore up a core central defense.

5.6. THE FIGHT AGAINST USA

IS is likely looking for ways to exploit the opportunity to galvanize support within the global jihadist community. IS may posture to capitalize upon US. Military involvement in Iraq or Syria with a strategic message for other fighters to come fight the Americans in Iraq. IS has the ability to design political campaigns that convert military disadvantages into political strengths. IS may increase its international terrorism posture or cultivate relationships with future leaders of external jihadist cells by bringing them into Iraq and Syria for a time. With these most dangerous scenarios in mind, it is likely that IS would respond to US active military involvement in Iraq in a way that would maximize its leadership of a movement that is fundamentally anti-US absent this opportunity, IS may seek to accomplish this goal in other ways, namely through direct attacks against the west. IS will likely make this argument ultimately, whether or not the US engages in Iraq or Syria at this time.³²⁷

6. CONCLUSION

According to Clausewitz's definition of Centers of Gravity, essential elements to achieving the goals of the IS are: the concept of a military campaign, generating military force, and the concept of a political campaign in the local government. But essential conditions for resources and resources are the necessity of: continuous military successes, alliances, combat service support and religious authority.

The transformation of IS from a terrorist organization into a state actor shows the need to create administration and military forces that need military service support, human resources and finance. It has been proven that the IS has been successfully meeting these needs in the past, but the operational and strategic capabilities of the IS contradict the capabilities of the institutions that support them. Because of these capabilities, these critical

³²⁶ "Hundreds Killed in Syrian gas field capture," al Jazeera, July 19, 2014, available on <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/islamic-state-fighters-seize-syria-gas-feld-2014717134148345789.html>;

³²⁷ Lewis D. Jessica, *The Islamic State: A Counter-Strategy for a Counter-State*, Institute for the Study of War, Washington, 2014, pg.24

needs are vulnerable, but not too vulnerable. It is vulnerable to too much expansion that comes from critical needs to support a huge military campaign on several fronts. The administration puts the IS in positional warfare and makes it vulnerable in a way that Al Qaeda in Iraq has never been. Certain terrorist groups struggling under the umbrella of the IS are opposed to the caliphate as being irregular, and therefore urge other organizations and Islamic experts to reconsider the IS's decision on caliphate. This move creates internal disagreement and the possibility of creating factions and internal rivalry.

According to Clausewitz, he analyzed the centre of gravity and he found a solution or strategy for finding the weaknesses of the enemy. The weakness would not ruin the organization, but would cause an eruption of a series of weaknesses that the enemy's center of gravity would have to target, attacking with maximum force to achieve a decisive victory.

The Islamic State has two centers of gravity based on its capacity: military capacity to destroy modern states and political capacity to control the Islamic caliphate. It is enough to shake one of these two centers to make the organization unstable as it would be destroyed by a decisive attack.

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