ISIL, INC. – THE FINANCE OF TERROR

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The current situation in the Middle East has been covered on most news channels, newspapers, online editorials, and is being discussed by scholars around the world. The world is constantly changing, particularly with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the global rise of Islamic extremism. This melting pot of terror, militarization, and struggling economies gave extremism a new shape – ISIL, or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. There are also conflicting dialogues on the goals of ISIL, whether they are religious or simply political in search for their own established caliphate. However, there is still a lot that is misunderstood about the terrorist group. How its ideological and political background relates to its financial power and sophisticated infrastructure has yet to be explored on a comprehensive level. The relationship between its ideology, organization, and financial infrastructure is crucial to understanding the organization as a whole.

ISIL has evolved from many ideological, political, and economical factions of the Middle East. They continue to display their power and manage their internal structure and external mobility effectively. The vast levels of skill that have been seen capturing strategic resource and military sites, perpetuating mass fundraising schemes, and amassing substantial wealth through territorial occupation cannot be attributed to simply another ideological terrorist uprising. The spreading of the ISIL network has been ahead of the international community, with several attacks happening in Paris and Brussels in recent months. These connections have not been completely vetted by intelligence agencies around the world, and are somewhat still unknown (Paasche & Gunter, 28). The nations of the western world have been losing, and they could figure out exactly why. Finally, the tide has begun to turn.

Looking at the current state of the region, it is safe to say that the complexity of conflict and those involved is at the highest level in recent history. By using the basic and fundamental history of Islamic terrorism and ideological differences, international communities should work to connect with local Sunni tribes within Iraq and Syria and fight ISIL from within the local lines. Approaching ISIL as an established caliphate is also necessary to succeed in the region. They are no longer a mere radical terrorist group, but a modern corporate-like entity that has the capability and financial power to exercise its actions throughout the Middle East and the rest of the world. However, this sophisticated power also needs to be understood at its ideological level, and not just a military target. As the world waits and fights over policy issues regarding ISIL and the threat it poses, they continue to grow more radical and dangerous within their network. It will take a collective effort, and a new approach to the Middle East that has not been seen before to address one of the most pressing issues of our time. If this effort is achieved and effective tactics are deployed to cripple ISIL’s financial system, the prophesized final battle of Dabiq may come a lot sooner than they have hoped.