

# Conundrums in the Syrian Civil Conflict: Between Financial and Logistics Support and the Rise of Islamic State Movement

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## ABSTRACT

Sovereign states especially those in the Middle East have over the last couple of years been enmeshed in high profile internal security challenges that attracted international actors. The actors' action is often viewed as fragrantly showing more or less usual vindictive display of power and resources. Willing intervenors do so in pursuit of some perceived objectives that may be overtly and covertly expressed. This study focuses on the conundrums in external financial and logistics involvement in the Syrian conflict and the rise of the Islamic State movement. Particularly, the study investigates the link between external financial and logistics support to opposition pro-democracy movement and the activities of the Islamic State in Syria. The study used exposit facto research design and the qualitative method to generate data while qualitative descriptive analysis was used to assign descriptive explanation and analysis to the data in order to show the relationship between the variables. Anchored on the Marxist Political Economy paradigm, the study found that external financial and logistics support to the opposition pro-democracy movement in Syria gave rise to the expansion of the Islamic State resulting in the capture and control of territories in Syria by the Islamic state. The study also found that the drive for regime change and the installation of democracy by the West is a matter of age-long foreign policy thrust and not a mere involvement rooted on humanitarian justifications. It therefore recommends the complete withdrawal of the corporate-financier and logistics support driven by foreign interests that fuel the conflict otherwise the Syrian civil conflict will persist and the Islamic State movement would remain a force that would not be easy to defeat.

**Keywords:** Conundrums, Civil Conflict, Islamic state, Pro-democracy movement, Finance and Logistics.

## INTRODUCTION

Series of scholarly arguments have risen among experts and policy makers regarding the justification of Western Financial and Logistics in the rise of terror movement across the globe. From the Al-Qaida to ISIS. The involvement of Western actors in the Syrian civil conflict since it began in 2011 is a case in point in examining this assertion. Syria as it were, was a state ruled by President Bashar al-Assad whose father had seized state power in the 1970 coup. From the poor Alawite family in Syria, Hafiz al-Assad ruled Syria unconstitutionally and was of course accused of being despotic with a bunch of human right abuses that ornamented his administration (Pipe, 2011, Ratney, 2019, Congress Research Service (CRS), 2022). Following the death of his father, Bashar Al-Assad presented himself for election under the Bath party and was incidentally voted unopposed into power in 2000. In his hey-days, he was thought to be a sharp opposite of his father—a messiah of a sort in his style and perhaps goal of administration. But like an old wine in a new wine skin, the style, contents and interest sought by his reign abruptly led to 'the evil days of his administration.

According to some scholars, the division, the protraction of the civil conflict in Syria as well as the rise of the Islamic state movement, arguably, is not unconnected with the external financial and logistics supports of western states. Thus, Chosseudovsky (2015) and Ratney (2019) observed that, dissident forces in and

around Syria openly received arms and material assistance from abroad, in order to wage insurrectionary warfare against the governing authority. According to him, several Western satellite organizations like the International Republican Institute, and the National Democratic Institute were seen recruiting, training, and supporting the unrest in Syria in order to subvert and topple the government on behalf of Western States with the United States and other Western states backing the Syrian opposition and Russia and China supporting the Assad regime with trade and protection in the UN Security Council. In the Russian-American relations, there are also signs of rivalry over zones of influence echoing the patterns of the Cold War (Asserburg & Wimmen (2012:2-3 and Ratney, 2019).

Aside the foregoing, there is evidence that Syria has remained a problem for the West and United States in particular especially in the aftermath of America's painful experiences in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. One wonders why the west led by USA, in spite of all odds, has continued to provide financial and logistics support in war torn Syria. This is more worrisome especially when it is viewed from the natural resources perspective. With the conviction that the USA usually intervenes in order to secure natural resources such as oil. Many will argue that the United States would have had no interests in Syria since Syria is not a major oil producer, it is not a major trading partner of the United States or the West for that matter; it has never been a U.S. ally and has never even been a friend to America's other allies in the region. Furthermore Syria has its own sort of democracy (Pollack, 2014 and Ratney, 2019). In his view, Pollack (2014) suggests that "the involvement of the West led by the United States and their financial and logistics support for the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), should be understood and perhaps justified in the light of four main reasons".

The first of involvement of the West in the Syrian conflict was in humanitarian phase in regards to casualty rate and refugee burden. According to (Pollack, 2014 and Ratney, 2019), over 200,000 Syrians had died in the first three years of the conflict. This number was twice as many as those killed in almost four years of fighting in Bosnia, where the death toll was cited as a key motive for intervention by the U.S. and European powers. Only a fraction of that number had died in Libya when the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) intervened there in 2011 to prevent a humanitarian calamity. The study argued that the absence of decisive foreign financial and logistics assistance will probably make the Syrian civil war roll on for years, perhaps even decades, and will kill hundreds of thousands more. Pollack (2014) and Congress Research Service (CRS), (2022) further reveals that over 3 million Syrians were overburdening Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan thus creating dangerous political problems for all three of those American allies. Millions more have been displaced internally as such, most Americans believe that the United States should intervene with finance and logistics to prevent the worst humanitarian disasters because Syria constitutes such a case.

The second argument according to Pollack (2014) revolves around the problem of terrorism. It argues that inter-communal civil wars often spawn horrific terrorist groups and horrific terrorist groups find comfortable bases and breeding grounds amid civil wars. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), Hizballah, the Tamil Tigers, al-Qa'ida, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and countless others were all born of civil wars. Al-Qa'ida in particular has joined civil wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Sudan and now Syria and used them as launching pads for operations elsewhere, including against the United States with the September 9 attack on the World Trade Centre in 2011 being the most outstanding. Now Syria has become just such a safe haven for such Islamic extremist movements and their affiliate like Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS), which the United States has designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) due to its links to Al Qaeda. This makes their financial and logistics intervention expedient.

The third argument according to Pollack (2014) is what he described as the constant of civil wars-'spillover effect'. There was ever constant fear that the civil conflict like the one in Syria was able to destabilize neighboring states. The refugees would be a big burden likely to lead to further terrorism and radicalization in neighboring populations. This would lead to the spread of secessionism, economic dislocation and

interventions by the neighbors themselves that prove to tame insecurity. At its worst, spillover from civil wars can cause civil wars or relative social disorder in neighboring states (as Lebanon did with Syria and as Rwanda did with Congo) or can lead to regional wars (as Lebanon provoked wars between Syria and Israel, and as Congo did for seven of its neighbors (Dwik, 2023)).

The last justification for the financial and logistic involvement of the West and other external actors in the civil conflict in Syria according to the study is the looming threat of a region-wide Sunni-Shi'a conflict. Across the Muslim world, the civil conflict in Syria is widely seen as a single (but peevish) Sunni insurgency fighting a pair of Shi'a dominated governments. In response, regional powers have taken it upon themselves to back their co-religionists in the conflict and that has added fuel to the flames. The problem threatens to spread the Sunni-Shi'a antagonism to other, unrelated fields and conjures the possibility of an even larger war (Pollack, 2014, CRS, 2022, Dwik, 2023). Thus, it was felt by Western states that if they were to somehow eventually ignore the civil conflict in Syria and left Syria to burn, the flames would probably return at some point.

While these arguments provide substantial insight into Western involvement in the Syrian civil conflict, they are too generic and leaves a vacuum in our understanding of the rise of Islamic state movement which is the main worry of this work. Thus, this paper addresses itself specifically to the conundrums in the Syrian Civil Conflict: the nexus between Financial and Logistics Support and the Rise of Islamic State Movement. This is yet to be given adequate systematic treatment in extant literature and this gap in knowledge is what the present study seeks to fill. This is essential in view of the continuous merchandize of conflict in Africa and the radicalization of extremist movements across the Middle East.

## METHODOLOGY

The findings of this research were based on data from a wide collection of existing works by experts and agencies interested in the subtleties of external intervention in the civil conflicts in a state and its effects on international politics and the dynamics of global power relations. As it is with most secondary research works, the study adopted qualitative method to generate data while qualitative descriptive analysis was used to assign descriptive explanation and analysis to the data in order to show the relationship between the variables. Thus, library materials, internet sources, journals, official reports and UN documentations on the civil conflict in Syria were used to generate relevant data. The generated data were subjected to analytic and textual analysis through examining the critical issues that have come to assume importance.

### Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the Marxist Political Economy theory. The use of this theoretical framework is mainly to cover such issues in International Relations that depart from mere description to such analysis that meet both philosophical and scientific standards. The Marxian Political Economy theory as expanded by Karl Marx and Fredreich Engel (1959). In 1970, Marx wrote "*A contribution to the critique of political economy*" largely in Russia and the Soviet Union... The theory was however moved from its embryonic state to where it is today by other scholars who share the same or similar radical orientation like Lenin (1984), Andre (1967), Offiong (1976), Valenzuela and Valenzuela (1993), Wallerstein (1974), Chumpeter (1919), Ibeanu (1998), Eze (2002), Nnoli (2003). There are different political economy models of analysis but there are common grounds among them. These principal ones include: (1) there is a strong connection between the political and economic structures of society; (2) that the political and economic structures of society give shape to its general norms, values, culture, religion and pattern of governance; (3) that a more comprehensive analysis of society can only be made by understanding the linkages between the economy and polity as well as their dialectical connections to other structures and social institutions (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005, Bouchat, 2013, Eze and Onwo, 2002). The relationship between external involvement and the

Islamic State movement evidenced in the Syrian conflict since 2011 is explained in the light of the Political Economy theory. The framework will not only facilitate our appreciation of the intricacies, dynamics and trajectory of external involvement in the Syrian conflict but will also assist in unraveling how Western and Gulf states through their support for Syrian anti-government movements provides the context for the revival and expansion of the Islamic State movement and the control of territories in Syria in the wake of the conflict in the state.

The application of this theory to the understanding of the conundrums of external financial and logistics involvement and the Islamic State movement in Syria suggests that the problem of civil unrest and extremism, order and disorder, law and lawlessness, conflict and peace are to be understood as reflections, perceptions or product of the way society organizes its economy, especially the dominant interest that drive it (Eze and Onwo, 2013:57). Since the state is thus seen as the most powerful coercive mechanism for the control of these dominant interests as well as the control of all things in Syria, the move to capture state power (Politics) would naturally take dominance over the economy itself so that politics became tantamount to good live and wellbeing of the people of Syria. The above clearly paints the picture of the prerequisite and ultimate aim of the Syrian opposition movement and the activities of extremist movements linked to the Islamic state. This is the major strand (Primacy of material condition (Ake, 1981:13), emphasized by the Political Economy theory that is adopted for this analysis.

In adopting and applying this theory for analysis, the imports of such concepts as ‘the state,’ the ‘economy’ (Production) and the ‘struggle of opposites’ are closely considered. The theory contends that the relationship and interplay between these variables result in conflict in states and explain why and how external interest and involvement in such conflict can be correctly gauged. The ‘dynamic character of social reality’ is another key strand of the theory. It points to the dynamic nature of social relations in a state. Thus, Ezeibe (2010:18) noted that “relations of production and of course distribution of the proceeds of the economy are more often than not characterized by antagonism amongst discontent factions”. This discontentment provides the initial grounds for revolt and the splitting up of Syria into extreme groups seeking to control the soul of Syria at the wake of the slightest provocation. The antagonism in discontent factions resulting from the relations of production explains why a large percentage of Syrians not connected to the unpopular Bashar’s Alawite lineage went up in arms at the slightest incitement from government forces in Syria. The permutation was simply that the grab of state power by the opposition group will ultimately translate to the grab of the means of production and distribution from which they had long been separated by the ruling household that was largely monarchical and autocratic- a major character of states within the Middle East region and its neighborhood.

The theory also assumes that where opposites exist, there must be struggles between contending parties leading to the negation of the existing system of governance and administration of the economy by states and elements within and outside the state. This again throws up two important issues worthy of close examination; they include:

1. There is an obvious dislodgment of interests between the ruling party and the opposition movement and between the ruling Alawite household and the West- in terms of who runs the state and the economy and in whose interest. Since this conflict of interest exists as predicted by the theory in use, it was merely and only natural that the Syrian conflict will dfand has actually lingered to this point.
2. Arguably, the central issue that gave rise to the civil conflict in Syria is the economy and the target of the political struggle by confrontational movements and extremist groups is still the capture of the economy of Syria. Thus, the struggle for the soul of the Syrian economy becomes paramount both to the west, opposition pro-democracy movement and the Islamic State. But the economy cannot be captured without an appropriate political context. This explains, the relationship between external financial and logistics involvements in the Syrian civil conflict and rise the Islamic State movement in

Syria.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This review focuses on legality or otherwise of external financial and logistics support by Western countries on developing countries facing conflict. The preponderance of financial, logistics and other forms of external supports to radical groups have been a subject of debate. In the Syrian civil conflict for instance, some have argued that these external support to opposition pro-democracy or radical movement by the West and other regional blocs have contravened the provisions of International Law, others have argued otherwise. The support which ranges from formal recognition of the Syrian Coalition as the official representative of the people, to the supply of arms, training, logistics, finance and humanitarian aid amongst others are deemed to have fallen short of International Law (Pipe, 2011, Chovac, 2015 and CRS, 2022). Thus, it is argued that the supply of arms to the Syrian opposition and the Islamic state would amount to a violation of Security Council Resolution 2083 (2012) establishing arms embargo against individuals and entities associated with Al-Qaida. It is also argued that the States supplying arms to the Syrian opposition or other groups in the Syrian civil conflict would incur State Responsibility for aiding and assisting in the commission of internationally wrongful acts. Asserburg & Wimmen (2012, CRS, 2022, Dwik, 2023).

Pollack (2014), for instance, specifically argued that the declaration by prominent Western states' that President Assad must relinquish power as a precondition for any political process which is supported by Turkey and EU foreign ministers as well as the formal recognition of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Anti-government Forces (or Syrian National Coalition), stands in clear contradiction to the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June, 2012.

Again, a discussion paper by the Foreign Ministry of Austria (FMA) circulated on 13 May, 2013 to EU member states made up of 28 independent countries including Croatia, forcefully puts forward several political and security arguments against lifting the ban on arms support to Syrian rebels. The arguments are summarized include among others that: lifting the EU arms embargo on Syria undermines the EU-Russia understanding that opens a window of opportunity towards a renewed political process; that, the 'Syrian National Coalition for Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (SOC)' does not have full authority and control over all armed opposition groups. They cooperates with groups which include various extremist and terrorist fighters; that there are more than enough weapons in Syria and that the supply of arms to the opposition by EU member states constitutes an additional threat to the security of United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), which supervises the implementation of the 1974 disengagement agreement and the ceasefire between the Israeli and Syrian forces peacekeepers. The most interesting part of the paper argues that the supply of arms to the Syrian opposition or the Islamic state movement would be in breach of International Law and EU law. (<http://www.guardian.com.uk/world/julianburger-global-security-blog/interaction/2013/15-austria-eu-syria-arms-embargo-pdf>).

The paper argues further that:

1. The supply of arms to the Syrian opposition would amount to a breach of the customary principle of non-intervention and the principle of non-use of force under Article. 2 paragraph 4 of the UN Charter.
2. The supply of arms to the Syrian opposition would violate EU Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP on the control of arms exports by EU Member States. The article further provides as follows:
  - Criterion 2(c) (Human Rights and Humanitarian Law): Member States shall deny an export license if there is a clear risk that the equipment might be used in the commission of serious violations of International Humanitarian Law. The UN Commission of Inquiry reported that "war crimes, including murder, extrajudicial killings and torture were perpetrated by anti-Government armed groups and the

extremist groups in Syria” (Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/21/50, 16 August 2012). This meant that such support increased the radicalization of the various groups involved in the conflict including the Islamic State.

- Criterion 3 (Internal Situation): Member States shall deny an export license for military technology or equipment which would provoke or prolong armed conflicts or aggravate existing tensions or conflicts in the country of final destination. Again, it must be noted that a number of radical groups including the Islamic State were already on ground even before the Syrian conflict sparked off. The implication therefore is that the final destination of most of the financial, logistics and military support from external actors was the hands of anti-government forces, the IS and all other extremist groups. This helped to aggravate the existing tension and expand the operations of the Islamic State in Syria.
- Criterion 4 (Regional Peace, Security and Stability): Member States shall deny an export license if there is a clear risk that the intended recipient would use the financial aid and military technology or equipment to be exported aggressively against another country or to assert by force a territorial claim.
- Criterion 5(b) (National Security of Member States): Member States shall take into account the risk of use of the military technology or equipment concerned against their forces or those of Member States and those of friendly and allied country.

According to Pollack (2012), Gulmohamad, (2014) and (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>, 2022 and Dwik, 2023), one main reason for external involvement was to prevent the ‘spillover effect’ of the conflict and ensure regional peace and security. Yet, it was clear that the various forms of support had the risk of being used aggressively by the intended recipients against Syria and other neighboring states and this was actually so (<http://www.guardian.com.uk/world/julianburger-global-security-blog/interaction/2013/15-austria-eu-syria-arms-embargo-pdf>).

From the foregoing, it is clear that the supply of arms, funding and other forms of assistance to the opposition movement and the Islamic state in the wake of the civil conflict in Syria was in violation of the provisions of International Law on Internal Security, Regional Peace and the safety of lives and property in the international system. Consequent on this, the United Nations in 2022, estimated that 14.6 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, an increase of 1.2 million from 2021 (Congress Research Services, (CRS), 2022).

Those who have justified external financial and logic support to pro-democracy movement and other radical groups hinge their argument on the following:

1. The overthrow of regimes that were anti-West by whatever means was a matter of western foreign policy and not just a mere fall-out of circumstances in the affected state. The study reveals that the US has been financing and training anti-government opposition and extreme groups in Syria with regime-change in view. Thus, it was US policy to attack and destroy the governments of 7 different countries at a specific timeframe, starting with Iraq, then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and finishing off with Iran.
2. The ostensible justification for financial and logistics supports to opposition movement is ‘democracy promotion,’ which translates to putting in power leaders who are pro-Western and anti-Russian ... before the next great superpower comes on to challenge U.S. This is the hall mark of the 1991 ‘Operation Desert Storm’ initiated by the U.S. (Pollack (2014, Chovac, 2015) concludes that the support of regime-change opposition groups is a policy.
3. International Hegemony. Since U.S assumed political hegemony in the international system, after the gulf war, no country has been spared in the enterprise of western states. Thus, financial and logistics support to pro-west opposition group or other extremist groups was a matter of a means to maintaining political hegemony (Echezona, 1998:144).
4. The rise in political consciousness among opposition movements in Syria. This consciousness in

undemocratic states like Syria had made the masses of North Africa and the Middle Eastern states to set off in the quest for democracy and to assertively demand their long denied socio-economic and political justice by the autocratic rulers of their region” (Shivji, 1991, Habisso, 2011:1-2. The scholars justified external financial and logistics support and all revolts, again any undemocratic regime on grounds of securing human right and good governance. This is enhanced by the activities of western media. According to Chosseudovsky (2011), *Western media presented the events in Syria as part of the broader Arab pro-democracy protest movement, spreading spontaneously from Tunisia, to Egypt, and from Libya to Syria necessitating all forms of western support to make it a success since Syria is the only independent secular state in the Arab world whose populist, anti-Imperialist and secular base was inherited from the dominant Baath party, which integrates Muslims, Christians and Druze.*

In sum, scholars such as Pollack (2014); Chosseudovsky (2011), Shivji (1991); Cartalucci & Bowie (2012) and Habisso (2011) see external financial and logistics support as necessary following the effect of the Arab spring and the need to promote democracy and fundamental human right. Others like Echezona (1998); Hirshschman (1970); Lyons and Lowery (1989) see it as a worthy course by the West where and when citizens feel dissatisfied with the system of governance within their jurisdiction.

### **External Financial and Logistics Support and the Radicalization of the Islamic State in Syria.**

According to Echezona (1998:150), “Democracy remains the hallmark of the western crusade”. What really distinguishes this new crusade is that it is tied to aid and support to regimes that allow it and economic, trade and other sanctions to regimes that disallow it. Thus, Mbah (2008:147), sees “the funding of Islamic fundamentalists as a deliberate tool of Western foreign policy and that of United States in particular. It was invented and promoted by Former United States adviser to Jimmy Carter, Zbgnier Bizezinki in the 1980s and funded covertly through Pakistan as a strategy for the control of Central Asian countries.

Following the Afghanistan revolution which ushered in the communists into power vis-a-viz the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan politics, about 30 million refugees from the contending factions entered Pakistsan from Afghanistan. A good number of them were Mujahideen made up of elements opposed to the communist government. They were already cast out in the power play that brought in Kabul in December, 1979. Immediately the Soviet Union withdrew, Afghanistan was plunged into a civil war between the Najibula regime and its Mujahideen challengers and of course the Mujahideen triumphed and installed Islamic fundamentalism in Aghanstan. Apart from U.S arms and money pumped to this Islamic radical groups, the West led by the U.S began editing and printing text books at the University of Nebraska and then for schools in Afghanistan.

Mbah (2008:148) noted that “these books were filled with pictures of Islamic fundamentalists’ primers and Muslims killing infidels with modern weapons which were no doubt, provided by the West”. All these were designed to poison the heart of youths with fundamentalist ideas. He further revealed that the West in collaboration with Saudi Arabia sponsored the wahabbi fundamentalist climate where Saudi citizen Osama Bin Laden found his niche and built his Al- qaeda network. To him, the staunch support of United States for the Islamic state is tied up with other elements of the secret operations of the West and U.S in particular. This is in consonance with the overall neo-globalist policy of meddling with the internal affairs of other countries and preventing developing states from autocentric or independent policies and development. This historical account of the formation of the Islamic State movement provides a lot of insight in understanding the ac of the Islamic state in Syria.

As it affects military and financial assistance to this movement, Mbah (2008:148) posits that “with the funding by the West led by U.S, the ISI later known as Islamic State was formed by Pakistan leader-General Zia U Hag. They funded the movement with six billion dollars in arms and supplies to the Afghan Mujihadeen during the 1980s”. What the Islamic fundamentalist Zia U Hag and the CIA created, together

became so powerful that it essentially controlled Pakistan and is today responsible for the capture of territories and collapse of many other states including Syria that fell out of the ‘good books’ of the West and U.S in particular. According to Cartalussi & Bowie (2012, Dwik, 2023), the U.S. money for Syrian opposition figures began flowing under President George W. Bush after he effectively froze political ties with Damascus in 2005. The financial backing has continued under President Obama, even as his administration sought to rebuild relations with Assad. Syrian authorities “would undoubtedly view any U.S. funds going to illegal political groups as tantamount to supporting regime change championed by the opposition movement in Syria” Cartalussi & Bowie (2012:4). To this end, The *Washington post* cited by Cartalucci & Bowie (2012) reports that since 2005, the Bush and Obama administrations contributed funding to opposition groups affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood. The report went on to explain that the US “organized training sessions for 5,000 activists in different parts of the world enhanced the strength of the opposition movements in Syria.

Iran sees itself at the forefront of a strategic/ideological conflict about nothing less than liberating the region from U.S. and Israeli hegemony. Iran therefore supports the Syrian regime with military advisers, financial transfers and energy supplies, while the rebels receive political and logistical support from Western actors like France, the United States and Turkey, and financial and military aid from the Gulf States. While the Lebanese Hezbollah and the Iraqi government stand by the Syrian regime, Sunni politicians in Lebanon and Sunni tribes and jihadist groups in Iraq support the rebels. Here again, the logic of confessional mobilization is at work (Asserburg & Wimmen, 2012, Dwik, 2023). These various forms of support based on religion and democratic values have added fuel to the flames and expanded the operations of the Islamic State in the wake of the Syrian conflict. Accordingly, the authors noted that the problem threatens to spread the Sunni-Shi’a antagonism to other unrelated fields. Thus, it was felt by Western states and other regional blocs that if they were to somehow eventually ignore the civil conflict in Syria and left Syria to burn, the flames would probably return at some point (Pollack, 2014, Dwik, 2023).

To this end, the Islamic state seeks to establish itself as a mini state with its own core objectives and their financing system is shaped by the experiences of the group’s predecessor organizations-the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) and Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). The group now depends on incoming foreign fighters for funds, internal transfers from other areas under ISI’s control, local donations, and conflict loot. It also in order to keep pace with outlays for daily operations, particularly salaries. ([www.crethiplethi.com/isis-s-financial-and-military-capabilities/islamic-countries/syria-islamic-countries/2015](http://www.crethiplethi.com/isis-s-financial-and-military-capabilities/islamic-countries/syria-islamic-countries/2015)). Arguably, the Islamic state movement is the richest terrorist organization in history. Since the group began sweeping across Eastern Syria and into Iraq, experts estimate that its leaders have gained access to £1.2 billion in cash—more than the most recent recorded annual military expenditure of Ireland and a little below the annual military expenditure of United States (2.7%) in 2023 (Dwik, 2023). The Islamic State is not out in the economic boondocks of Afghanistan or hidden in deserts and caves... it is developing in a vital oil, gas and trade area of the world it can grab as it expands. Their greatest financial triumph according to Reuter’s report (2014) came when they captured the Iraqi town of Mosul in June and looted the city’s banks. Reports at the time suggested the group’s fighters may have made off with £240 million. Five captured oilfields provide up to £1.8 million per day in revenue, with much of the oil smuggled across the border into Turkey and Iran. They are thought to earn up to £5 million a month through extortion of local businesses. They are estimated to have made £40 million from taking hostages, with each foreign hostage thought to be worth £3m. The only exceptional case was the £80 ransom demand for the kidnapped American journalist, James Foley.

Private donations from supporters in the Gulf also contribute to their funding of the Islamic state – although Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations have tried to make it harder to do so without government approval. When they captured Mosul, Iraq’s envoy to the UN said they obtained nearly 881 billion (40kg) of nuclear material, in the form of low-grade uranium compounds seized from a Scientific Research facility; though the nuclear material would not be easily turned into weapons. After conquering swaths of western Iraq, IS



fighters also now control territories where 40 percent of the country's wheat is grown. The group's members are also reportedly milling grain in government silos and selling the flour on the local markets. (Alexander & Beach -Reuters, 23 July, 2014).

In a separate study carried out by Humud, –Analyst in Middle Eastern and African Affairs, Pirog, specialist in Energy Economics and Rosen, specialist in International Crime and Narcotics, April 10, 2015 on Islamic State financing and U.S policy approach available on [www.Crs.gov](http://www.Crs.gov),R43980, It reveals inter alia, that the Islamic State, which has seized significant territories in Iraq and Syria and threatened to conduct attacks against the United States and its citizens, has become a significant national security priority for policymakers, including Members of Congress. Thus, policymakers seek to reduce its capability to conduct terrorist attacks, as well as to ultimately 'degrade and destroy' the group. This effort includes a comprehensive look at how the group gets its funding and military might. The above submissions differ significantly from that made by Mbah (2008) and constitute a point of departure in the prevalent line of argument.

While IS funding streams remain fluid, the group's largest revenue sources appears to include oil sales, taxation and extortion, and the sale of looted antiquities. Oil sales initially provided the majority of the group's revenue, but gradually declined as a percentage of overall IS profits due to an extensive campaign of airstrikes by the United States and coalition partners against oil and gas facilities used by the group. The study by Humud *e tal* (2015), further reveals that the Islamic State's financial strength depends not only on its income but also on its expenses, and the extent to which it is able to devote its resources to military operations. According to the study, U.S. officials have stated that the Islamic State's decision to hold and govern territory is a financial burden for the group, and thus a vulnerability that the United States could potentially exploit by diminishing the group's ability to generate and utilize revenue. If the Islamic State cannot afford the expenses associated with governing its territory, some argue that the resulting public backlash would undermine its ability to rule.

Financial and logistics supports to states, non- state actors or even radical groups pursuing an objective that is in tandem with the foreign policy thrusts of another states is based on a number of logic. First, financial support replaces direct conquest as much as it amounts to it. Thus, what cannot be gained through war can subtly be gained by supporting opposition groups indigenous to the unwanted system or government. Rosecrance's (1986) concept of "trading state" is an example of this line of thought and illustrates how financial and logistics exchanges may decrease the incentive to engage in direct war when a state goal is been pursued. Hypothetically, the above is relevant in explaining the capture of territories in Syria by the Islamic state. The second logic here is that financial and logistics support to opposition prodemocracy groups or any organized radical groups will dampen the hard-wearing regime while encouraging the group to pursue the intended course. This argument which Stein (1993:353) refers to as "binding commercial liberalism" has been stressed in most recent studies of International Conflict (Oneal & Russet 1997, 1999). The literature therefore argues that "increased financial and logistics support encourages specialization in the production of war tools thus rendering other subgroups dependent on foreign assistance" (Pevehouse, 2004:249). A third and more recent logic emerged from the rationalist causes of war literature. It offers a similar prediction about financial support and perhaps other forms of support and conflict.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis on the conundrums of external financial and logistics support examined in the study above, we conclude that external support in terms of fiancé and logistics especially by the West and the rise of Islamic State movement in the Syrian conflict is mainly driven by the need for regime change in a bid to install western democracy that is justified by its supposed benefits and fostering of interdependence of nations. What proceeds from the review of extant literature are the contentions that external financial and

logistics support of the activities of opposition movements is the direct fall-out of the desire for a regime change in Syria. Thus, being the hall mark of western recolonization, it can therefore be accepted that Western financial and logistics support to opposition groups offers them the means for political interference in the internal affairs of Syria and the proper establishment of its presence in the state. Its initial support gave rise to the formation and expansion of the Islamic state but its current foreign policy thrust is the territorial defeat of the Islamic state; limiting the resurgence of the Islamic state; supporting SDF partner forces; securing Islamic State detainees; limiting Asaad government finances and avoiding measures that could empower the Asaad government. Where these desired goals appear unachievable, Syria will remain plunged in ethnic, religious and other forms of conflict with high profile financial and logistics support to opposition group that would aid the eventual crack down of the Asaad regime as Syria would be considered a nuisance or a burden in the global march forward.

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