

The Utilisation of Transnational Organised Crime by Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

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Thesis Summary

Traditionally, terrorist organisations and organised crime groups have been viewed as two separate entities that diverge in strategic objectives, ideological principles, motives and operational strategy. However, upon examining terrorist organisations which have displayed operational longevity or have made a large-scale global impact, such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (IS), it is inferable that an organisation's involvement in transnational crime has been complementary to their operational and strategic success. This thesis presents a comparative case study analysis of both Al-Qaeda and IS' utilisation of transnational crime and assesses the extent to which transnational crime has supported these terrorist organisations. The research will be framed as a qualitative study with information sourced through document analysis and online data searching. Preliminary results yielded suggest that transnational organised crime is utilised by Al-Qaeda and IS as an avenue for operational financing, resource acquisition and human-resource acquisition. The specific avenues include; the acquisition and selling of antiquities, kidnapping for ransom, human trafficking and drug trafficking. The discussion presented in this thesis may aid in the development of more comprehensively informed counter-terrorism responses and policy. Furthermore, key operational centres of gravity relating to differing terrorist organisations will be determined.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed): H.Lockwood

Date: 11/11/2020

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Traditionally, terrorist organisations and organised crime groups have been viewed as two separate entities that typically diverge in strategic objectives, ideological principles, motives and operational strategy (Schmid 2018, p.16). However, upon examining terrorist organisations which have displayed operational longevity or have made a large-scale global impact, it is inferable that an organisation's involvement in transnational organised crime has been complementary to their operational and strategic success. Following a rudimentary assessment of the current global terrorism landscape, it is evident that both the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, or IS) and Al-Qaeda are organisations that have displayed relative operational longevity, reached unprecedented levels of global notoriety, recruited international sympathisers, secured finances and have established solid organisational structures.

Since establishment in 1988, Al-Qaeda as an organisation has undoubtedly displayed operational longevity and demonstrated a degree of adaptability to evolve in the current global climate. Recognised by many as one of the most notorious contemporary terrorist organisations, Al-Qaeda has been responsible for an array of high-impact terrorist attacks, including the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Due to the extreme impact of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Al-Qaeda has been credited as triggering the Global War on Terrorism as well as shaping global counterterrorism responses and policies. Whilst it is arguable that Al-Qaeda would today struggle to return to their operational capacity and their global threat level at the time of 9/11, they do retain organisational and strategic strength (Byman 2019, p.65). This can be observed in their operational presence in both the Middle East and Africa. As such, Al-Qaeda remains a credible threat to global security. Due to its operational longevity, global impact, sophisticated organisational structure and demonstrated adaptability, Al-Qaeda has been selected as one of two focal organisations for this thesis.

Further to this, Al-Qaeda is a well-funded terrorist organisation that required steady financial income to support terrorist operations and to ensure organisational sustainability. To secure this financial security, Al-Qaeda relies on several avenues of financial income, including

transnational crime. It has been reported that Al-Qaeda has been involved in an array of transnational criminal activities including; human trafficking, drug trafficking, the selling of illicitly obtained petroleum, the smuggling and selling of stolen antiquities and the sale of counterfeit medicine (Abuza 2003, p.170; Clarke 2016, p.5). Al-Qaeda's engagement and success in these transnational crimes have arguably been facilitated by limited law enforcement capacity, poverty, political corruption and porous borders in both Africa and the Middle East (Hübschle 2011, p.87).

Rivalling the success of Al-Qaeda, IS has emerged as one of the most notorious and dangerous terrorist organisations of the twenty-first century. From 2011, the organisation was able to successfully capitalise on increasing instability in Iraq and Syria (Shamieh & Szenes 2015, p.365). Consequently, during the height of their operational success, IS were able to capture an unprecedented amount of territory and secure unparalleled finances (Jones, Dobbins, Byman, Chivvis, Connable, Martini, Robinson & Chandler 2017, p.3). During this peak in operational success, there were approximately 10 million people living in territory under IS control (Byman 2019). Additionally, IS announced the creation of a caliphate in 2014, thus enabling it to mobilise and recruit international supporters and sympathisers. This mobilisation of sympathisers, territorial claims, financial attainment and resource acquisition has undoubtedly contributed to the unparalleled success of IS in the period of 2011-2017. As of April 2020, IS has lost the vast majority of their territorial claims and the former leader of IS and its appointed Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has been killed. Despite this weakened state of IS, the group remains a viable international security threat (Jones et al. 2017, p.4).

IS has therefore been selected as another focal organisation for this thesis. Due to IS' unprecedented territorial claims as well as resource availability, IS has been able to engage in an array of transnational organised criminal activity which subsequently funded terrorist operations. This engagement, in part, led to IS becoming one of the wealthiest terrorist organisations in history (Clarke 2018, p.4). According to the 2015 Financial Action Task Force (FATF) report titled *Financing of the Terrorist Organisation Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)*, it was observed that the top five sources of revenue for IS were; illicit proceeds stemming from the occupation of territory, kidnapping for ransom, donations, material support and fundraising through contemporary technological networks (Financial Action Task Force 2015, p.12). This includes revenue raised from; the sale of natural

resources, the theft and selling of economic assets, oil sales, illicit taxation, bank looting, money laundering, the acquisition and selling of antiquities, drug smuggling, international financial donors and foreign fighter support (Daragahi & Solomon 2014 p.2; Terrill 2017, p.19; United Nations Secretary-General 2019). Through this, it is apparent that a large portion of IS' finances stemmed from involvement in transnational crime. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that engagement in this transnational crime has assisted in supporting IS, particularly during the height of their operations in late 2014 to early 2015 (Clarke 2016, p.1; Daragahi & Solomon 2014, p.4; Hanson 2015, p.5).

Through this outline, it is evident that both Al-Qaeda and IS are prime examples of organisations which have successfully adapted their operational strategy to incorporate transnational crimes to secure financial funding. It is also arguable that this involvement has led to increased operational capabilities for these organisations.

1.2 Research Questions

To further investigate the utilisation of transnational crime by Al-Qaeda and IS, this thesis will answer the key focal research question: 'What forms of transnational organised crimes have supported and sustained the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaeda?'. To provide a robust discussion and answer to this question, the following secondary research questions will be discussed and analysed:

1. To what extent have these transnational crimes supported and sustained the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaeda?
2. Have differing approaches to transnational crime impacted the success and sustainability of Al-Qaeda as compared to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant?

1.3 Hypotheses

This thesis argues that both Al-Qaeda and IS engage in an array of transnational organised crime which financially supports and sustains these organisations. It also argues that this

engagement in transnational crime has evolved due to contextual facilitation, past successful utilisation, the necessity for stable terrorism financing and the interconnectivity between crime and terrorism. As such, this thesis recognises that terrorist group involvement in transnational crime will likely continue due to the financial lucrativeness and resource acquisition which can be obtained through participation in these crimes.

This thesis also argues that operational and characteristic differences between Al-Qaeda and IS have led to these organisations adopting different approaches to transnational crimes. This thesis asserts that IS' unprecedented territorial control ultimately led to an increased capacity and capability to engage successfully in transnational criminal activity although this might have been impacted by its territorial losses after 2017. This is differentiated from the case of Al-Qaeda whereby comparatively reduced territorial claims has resulted in a differing approach to transnational crime. Furthermore, it can be reasoned that the identification of this comparison can fortify a conclusion as to what capacities and capabilities can lead to a terrorist organisation's successful engagement in transnational crime and terrorism financing. It should be noted that this thesis primarily examines transnational organised crime as a potential means of terrorism financing, with other potential intersections of terrorism and transnational crime not being the primary subject of the analysis of this thesis.

1.4 Rationale

Through a review of the literature, it is clear that a synthesised assessment of transnational crime and terrorism as a whole is a relatively under-researched field in the literature. Furthermore, there is a gap in the literature that examines and compares the utilisation of transnational crime with respect to both IS and Al-Qaeda. Aiming to fill this gap in the literature, this thesis aims to provide a deeper insight into the financing capabilities and strategies of both Al-Qaeda and IS. Additionally, the comparative analysis conducted in this thesis would specifically identify the avenues of transnational crime that yield more successful financial outcomes for Al-Qaeda and IS. Ultimately, this may aid both policymakers and academics in determining the key operational centres of gravity relating to differing terrorist organisations. Furthermore, the discussion presented in this thesis may

aid in the development of more comprehensively informed counter-terrorism responses and policy.

1.5 Research Methodology

1.5.1 Research Design and Research Process

As outlined by Bryman (2016), qualitative research relies on literature rather than numerical figures, utilises an inductive perspective on the relationship between theory and research, and focuses on the social world. With respect to the qualitative nature of this thesis, there will be synthesised engagement with relevant existing literature. A qualitative study has been selected for this thesis due to the availability of information as well as the potential misrepresentation of quantitative data in the field of study. Since the research questions posed aims to explore the utilisation of transnational crime in relation to Al-Qaeda and IS, a selection of data sources will be implemented to explain their organisation and strategy in terrorism financing.

Within qualitative research methods, this thesis most closely aligns with a comparative case study analysis. This research thesis thus employs a case study research design with a specific focus on the forms of transnational crime utilised by Al-Qaeda and IS. To investigate this phenomenon, as well as to answer and discuss the secondary research questions presented, sources pertaining to transnational crime, Al-Qaeda and IS have been collected and collated.

1.5.2 Implementation of Sources

The sources utilised in this thesis consist primarily of open-sourced primary and secondary sources that investigate varying aspects of transnational crime and terrorism. To address the primary scope of this thesis, a selection of sources relevant to transnational crime, terrorism financing, IS and Al-Qaeda have been utilised. Primary sources encompassed in this thesis include numeric data sets, published interviews, legislation, financial data, arrest data, government policy and news reports. These sources were obtained through various credible and reputable outlets such as; the United Nations, the Country Reports on Terrorism report,

international government reports on terrorism, official documents, news corporations and international police forces. These sources have primarily been obtained through online mediums.

In addition to these primary sources, this thesis relies on a range of secondary sources. The secondary sources used have taken the form of refereed academic journal publications, articles released by research think-tanks, and books published by reputable scholars and experts on terrorism and crime. Some of the secondary sources used in this thesis include; publications from think tanks such as the RAND Corporation, and reputable academic journals, such as the Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism, the Studies in Conflict and Terrorism Journal and the Journal of Strategic Study, amongst others.

1.5.3 Research Methods and Data Collection

A comparative case study is the primary research method used to answer key research questions posed in this thesis. Through a comparative analysis of Al-Qaeda and IS, this thesis critically examines these organisation's approaches to transnational crime. To conduct this comparative case study analysis, information and data relating to either Al-Qaeda or IS were collected and collated. This included details of pertinent events and references to specific incidents. Through the presentation of the information relating to both Al-Qaeda and IS, this thesis compared and contrasted the two individual case studies to provide a robust and rigorous assessment on the group's utilisation of transnational crime.

Document analysis is another principle research methodology implemented in this thesis. The document analysis entailed an examination and interpretation of sources to elicit meaning and increase understanding (Bowen 2009, p.27). Once this was complete, the findings of the document analysis were used to support and substantiate the discussion relevant to the research questions.

Online data searching is another research method that was heavily relied upon by this thesis. Through the increasing availability of online information, the implementation of online data searching was pivotal in accessing and including a range of international data and information. Furthermore, news publications and press releases sourced online allow this

thesis to discuss and analyse contemporary events and information, thus increasing the applicability and usefulness of this thesis.

Interviews were also utilised as a means of bolstering the rigour of this thesis. Due to constraints on interviewing current counterterrorism policymakers or those involved in terrorist activities, it was impractical for interviews to be conducted. However, to incorporate the perspectives of these individuals in this thesis, published open-source interviews with relevant individuals are included and analysed.

1.5.4 Ethical Considerations

Since the sources utilised in this thesis were sourced solely through open-sourced mediums, there was no ethics approval required for this thesis.

1.5.5 Research Limitations

Due to discrepancies in reporting exact figures and the nature of black and grey market selling, the figures collected and collated from these sources may display some inconsistencies. Additionally, there may be an under-reporting of certain transnational crimes that would lead to incomplete data sets. Furthermore, due to the classification of information, some law enforcement figures are not directly available to the public. To overcome this, this thesis has corroborated a range of reputable sources to establish as accurate an account of transnational organised crime that IS and Al-Qaeda engages in as possible. Additionally, this thesis focuses more broadly on the qualitative data that has become available through an array of primary and secondary sources. As such, quantitative data will not solely be relied upon to answer the research questions presented. Instead, this quantitative data is used to support and validate qualitative assessments.

1.6 Thesis Structure

This thesis will consist of six chapters.

Chapter One: Introduction. This chapter aims to introduce the reader to the problem being investigated, namely, the terrorism-crime nexus with reference to Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. It will familiarise the reader with key concepts being discussed in the thesis as well as presenting relevant background information relating to the subject matter. In addition, the chapter introduces the key research question and secondary research questions, as well as a brief summary of the existing literature. Subsequent to this, a rationale as to why these research questions are significant has been provided. The chapter also outlines the methodology used in this thesis, discusses the constraints of the methodology, and describes the structure of the research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review. This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the literature relating to this thesis. It specifically focuses on ‘terrorism financing’ and the ‘crime-terror nexus’ as it relates to the IS and Al-Qaeda. The literature in this review has been sourced from academic journals, scholarly books and academic theses and have been selected due to their significance and relevance in the field of study. Whilst there was no specific time period adopted for this literature review, the publication years of the sources range from 1994 to 2018. This chapter also identifies the gap in the literature that this thesis attempts to fill and provides a further rationale as to why the research conducted in this thesis is significant to the academic and policy fields.

Chapter Three: Transnational Organised Crimes That Have Supported and Sustained the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaeda. This chapter discusses the question “What forms of transnational organised crimes have supported and sustained the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaeda?”. To adequately address this, both primary and secondary sources are used to explicitly detail IS and Al-Qaeda’s involvement in transnational crime.

Chapter Four: The Extent to which Transnational Crimes have Supported and Sustained the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaeda. This chapter expands upon the conclusions reached in Chapter Three by determining the extent to which involvement in transnational crime has supported and sustained IS and Al-Qaeda and will answer the secondary research question of “to what extent have these transnational crimes supported and sustained the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaeda?”.

Chapter Five: The Impact of Differing Approaches to Transnational Crime on the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant as Compared to Al-Qaeda. This chapter presents a comparative analysis between IS and Al-Qaeda and answers the secondary research question of “Have differing approaches to transnational crime impacted the success and sustainability of Al-Qaeda as compared to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant?”.

Chapter Six: Conclusion. This concluding chapter provides an overall summation of the conclusions reached in this thesis. It will also evaluate the implications of this study for counter-terrorism research and practice and will discuss the future implications of this research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

It is widely accepted throughout the academic literature that fiscal security, financial sustainability and lucrativeness of terrorist organisations are major determining factors in their overall operational success. As such, in an international environment in which the “War on Terrorism” has greatly affected the operational strategy and success of terrorist organisations, these organisations have been required to adapt and evolve their organisational structure and characteristics to ensure the steady flow of funds and resources. It is also clear that terrorist organisations, including Al-Qaeda and IS, incorporate an element of transnational organised crime into their overall operational strategy. Whilst this engagement in transnational organised crime may have secondary strategic benefits to the organisations, it is ascertainable that the primary reasoning behind these groups engaging in transnational organised crime concerns the acquisition of funds and financing. With respect to this, this literature review will focus primarily on the use of transnational organised crime as a means of financial income for terrorist organisations.

Following a comprehensive examination of the existing literature, it is evident that there are two relevant identifiable key bodies of literature: “terrorist financing” and the “crime-terror nexus”. Within these two distinct bodies of literature, there are numerous academics who write from a multitude of academic disciplines including; terrorism studies, security studies, policing, economics, criminology and international politics.

2.1 Terrorist Financing

In general, the discussion surrounding terrorism financing typically involves an explicit identification of avenues of terrorist financing, which is substantiated by both an application of logical theoretical framework and empirical data. Throughout this discussion on sources of terrorism financing, it is evident that there is consistency and consensus across the literature regarding the identification of key sources of terrorist finances. However, there may be some contestation as to the degree of lucrativeness of forms of transnational organised crimes as compared to others. Additionally, there is debate as to the degree to which transnational organised crime funds terrorist operations. Whilst the “terrorist

financing” body of literature has numerous contributions from a range of cross-disciplinary academics, key publications will be discussed and analysed to gain an overview of the key sources of terrorist financing.

In the wider body of literature concerning “terrorism studies”, key scholars include Scott Atran, Mark Sageman, Bruce Hoffman, Brent Smith and Mark S. Hamm. Whilst these scholars’ most renowned works do not critically assess terrorism financing specifically, their contributions to the literature on “terrorism studies” is valuable. Therefore, their inclusion in this literature review will bolster the analysis of this review. As a means to gain a greater understanding of trends in terrorist financing, it first has to be established definitively that terrorist organisations, in particular Al-Qaeda and IS, engage in a level of criminality or transnational organised crime in order to acquire financial resources. Atran and Sageman have both argued that terrorist organisations are using crime, including transnational crime, to fund operations. Sageman (2011) argues that crime is being used by contemporary Islamist terrorists as a means of contributing to operational costs, however, these individuals tend to be Al-Qaeda affiliates or sympathisers and are not necessarily known to the core members of the organisation. Similarly, Atran and Sheikh (2015) state that contemporary terrorist operations, especially those conducted by marginalised Muslim youth, rely heavily on petty criminal networks.

Brent Smith has also made valuable and renowned contributions to the literature on terrorism studies. In one of his most recognised publications *Terrorism in America: Pipe Bombs and Pipe Dreams*, Smith notes that most terrorist organisations and violent extremists have two key targets: those that further political cause and those that assist in funding and financing operations. In relation to this, Smith (1994) notes that many extremist or terrorist organisations resort to criminality to sustain their organisation. Similarly, this notion is further corroborated in Mark S. Hamm’s eminent book *Terrorism as Crime: From Oklahoma City to Al-Qaeda and Beyond* in which he argues that individuals are often recruited to domestic terrorist organisations for their criminal competencies. Due to their criminal competencies, Hamm (2007) argues that these individuals are able to successfully undertake criminal activity that assists in financing and funding the organisation to which they belong (Hamm 2007, p.18).

Further to this, Ian Lesser, John Arquilla, Bruce Hoffman, David Ronfeldt and Michele Zanini have noted in their book *Countering the New Terrorism* that the reduction of state sponsorship has led to a shift in the way in which terrorist organisations finance their operations. To create more effective counterterrorism strategies, these authors have proposed that “following the money” would allow for an accurate identification of terrorist organisations and their sponsors. Specifically, the authors pinpoint that understanding and dissolving the relationship between international crime and terrorist organisations will severely disrupt terrorist operations and would reduce the capabilities of these organisations (Lesser et al. 1999, p.137).

Given that such research, substantiated with empirical data and primary sources, have argued persuasively that terrorist organisations utilise both crime and transnational organised crime as a means of financing their operations, it is reasonable to definitively ascertain that this phenomenon is occurring. While many of these scholars emphasise the importance of identifying the sources of terrorist funding, further evidence of the extent to which both Al-Qaeda and IS core in Iraq and Syria engage in transnational organised crime is not explicitly stated in their work. Since this thesis will contribute to the literature on the sources of terrorist financing, one of the aims of this thesis is to provide valuable insights into the sources of terrorist financing and sponsorship as well as the extent to which Al-Qaeda and IS rely on them.

To substantiate the claims made by the aforementioned scholars, a review of the literature focusing specifically on “terrorism financing” would yield invaluable insights. For this section of the literature review, a selection of works written by recognised academics in the field of “terrorism financing,” such as Nimrod Raphaeli, Colin P. Clarke, Brian Fishman, Matthew Levitt and Michael Jacobson will be analysed and discussed.

A distinguished academic who made substantial contributions to the literature on ‘terrorist financing’ is Dr Nimrod Raphaeli. A former World Bank employee and senior analyst for the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), Raphaeli has published a number of research articles focusing on the politics, economics and terrorism challenges in the Middle East. In his seminal article entitled “Financing of Terrorism: Sources, Methods, and Channels” published in the *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence* in 2003, Raphaeli argued that the amount of financial expenditure allocated to a terrorist attack is a reasonable

indicator as to the success of an attack (Raphaeli 2003, p.60). This conclusion is substantiated by two key examples put forward by Raphaeli: the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the 1995 bombing of the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan. Contextually, it should be noted that throughout the planning phase of the 1995 Egyptian Embassy attack, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden's "right-hand", cited that a lack of financial funding had severely hindered the scope of the attack and prevented Al-Qaeda from attacking their top priority target of both the United States Embassy and Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad (Raphaeli 2003, p.60). In contrast, however, it is widely acknowledged that the 9/11 terrorist attacks were well-financed and therefore, allowed the group to orchestrate a high-impact attack. Raphaeli thus argued that financial availability was a determining factor in the overall success of the 9/11 attack. As a result of this conclusion, it can be determined that the identification of trends in terrorist financing is a valuable insight into terrorist organisations' operational capability and can aid in developing counterterrorism initiatives.

Moreover, Matthew Levitt and Michael Jacobson's article "The Money Trail: Finding, Following, and Freezing Terrorist Finances" has identified the key sources of terrorist financing. Similar to Raphaeli (2003), Levitt and Jacobson (2008) highlight the innate need for terrorist organisations to maintain financial security. This is to fund the training, weapons, resources, operatives wages, and the promotion of their cause. Additionally, the cost of sustaining the organisational infrastructure and conducting attacks is markedly high (Levitt & Jacobson 2008, p.3). To emphasise the significance of financial security, Levitt and Jacobson (2008) identify specific avenues of financial expenditure that Al-Qaeda has undertaken. Substantiated by research collated by Brian Fishman (2008), Al-Qaeda in Iraq required funding to cover costs associated with salaries, family support, travel, recruitment, bribing corrupt officials, training and planning operations (Levitt & Jacobson 2008, p.4). Due to the importance of these expenses to Al-Qaeda's operational success, it is clear that financial resources are critical to the operational longevity and success of terrorist organisations. Despite this relatively consistently held view, some academics question the significance of terrorist financing in the operational success of terrorist organisations. Whilst these academics are a minority in the literature, their inclusion in this literature review is necessary to bolster the rigour and robustness of this review.

Peter Neumann's article "Don't Follow the Money: The Problem with the War on Terrorist Financing" questions the effectiveness of counterterrorism strategies that focus on tracing

financial expenditure of terrorist organisations. Neumann (2017) claims that terrorist operations are inexpensive, especially those that involve self-funded lone wolf sympathisers. Furthermore, Neumann criticises counterterrorism strategies that focus on tracing money trails, citing that the ‘war on terrorism financing’ has failed (Neumann 2017, p.93). Consistent with other scholars, however, Neumann (2017) also acknowledged that terrorist organisations frequently profit from criminal activities such as the acquisition and smuggling of antiquities, oil, counterfeit goods, cigarettes, gemstones and ivory. Additionally, Neumann (2017) notes that these criminal activities often utilise pre-existing networks and are occasionally conducted in cooperation with criminal organisations. Neumann’s (2017) generalisation that terrorist operations are inexpensive contrasts with views held by other scholars including Raphaeli (2003), Levitt and Jacobson (2008) and Fishman (2008). Additionally, Neumann’s (2017) view that tracing avenues of terrorist financing is not beneficial to counterterrorism strategies contrasts with conclusions made by scholars such as Lesser, Arquilla, Hoffman, Ronfeldt and Zanini (1999). Whilst Neumann (2017) is probably correct in saying that terrorist attacks can be conducted with limited finances, he neglects to highlight the importance of terrorist financing in an organisation’s operational success. Thus, Neumann’s assumptions will be considered when determining the implications of this thesis.

RAND political scientist, Colin P. Clarke, has also made a substantial contribution to the literature on terrorism financing, transnational crime, the crime-terror nexus and IS. For instance, in his 2018 article entitled “An Overview of Current Trends in Terrorism and Illicit Finance: Lessons from the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and Other Emerging Threats”, Clarke argued that despite territorial losses, IS has maintained relative financial power. Furthermore, IS’ status as the ‘wealthiest terrorist group in history’ stemmed heavily from the group’s involvement in crime, particularly transnational organised crime. Substantiated by the evidence presented by Daniel Glaser, the Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing in the Treasury Department's Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, Clarke identified the three primary sources of IS’ wealth; oil and gas sales, extortion and taxation, and the looting of Mosul (Clarke 2018, p.4; Glaser 2016). In conjunction with these sources of funding, Clarke also observed that IS has relied on a range of transnational criminal activity to fund the organisation, such as; kidnapping for ransom, robbery, theft, the acquisition and smuggling of antiquities and extortion (Clarke 2018, p.5).

Furthermore, in another article written by Clarke, “Drugs and Thugs: Funding Terrorism Through Narcotics Trafficking”, Clarke put forward the proposition that IS has potentially been involved in the trafficking of narcotics to raise revenue for the organisation. Whilst Clarke accepted there was limited concrete evidence, he argued that drug trafficking was relied upon by IS recruits as a means of microfinancing smaller-scale terrorist activities (Clarke 2016, p.9). In response to these observations, it is possible that further research and investigations into IS’ involvement in drug trafficking could yield a more accurate representation of IS funding and its involvement in transnational organised crime. Overall, this would be beneficial in both understanding criminal networks utilised by IS and developing solutions to disrupt its funding avenues. Clarke’s observation that transnational organised crime may be utilised by terrorist organisations as a means of microfinancing smaller-scale operations is an emerging area of research within the literature. Clarke’s observation of this phenomenon can also be corroborated by the previously discussed works published by Atran and Sheikh (2015) and Sageman (2011).

2.2 Crime-Terror Nexus

In conjunction with the body of literature focusing on ‘terrorist financing’, another body of literature that contributes to research on the funding of Al-Qaeda and IS through transnational organised crime is focused on the ‘crime-terror nexus’. One frequently cited article within the ‘crime-terror nexus’ body of literature is “A Crime–Terror Nexus? Thinking on Some of the Links between Terrorism and Criminality” written by Steven Hutchinson and Pat O’Malley and published in *Studies in Conflict Terrorism*. To establish the crime-terror nexus, Hutchinson and O’Malley argued that recent shifts in the terrorism and counterterrorism landscape have driven terrorist organisation to engage in criminal activity to remain financially stable. According to Hutchinson and O’Malley, this shift has manifested due to an accumulation of factors including: the global “War on Terrorism”, the constriction of financial support for terrorist organisations, globalisation, porous international borders, the availability of small-scale weapons to be trafficked, a lack of dedication to combatting organised crime organisations in some regions, increased ease of travel and the increasing prevalence of weak and failing states (Hutchinson & O’Malley 2007, p.1096).

With respect to this observation, Hutchinson and O'Malley noted two conflicting views within the 'crime-terror nexus' literature. They note that some academics argue that the evolution of terrorist organisations to incorporate transnational organised crime as part of their operational strategy has resulted in terrorist organisations modelling their internal structure to resemble organised crime groups. However, some academics have also argued that the ideological and organisational differences between organised crime groups and terrorist organisations inhibit the collaboration or cooperation between the two organisations (Hutchinson & O'Malley 2007, p.1096). Hutchinson and O'Malley conclude that the organisational capacity of a terrorist organisation is a primary predictor as to which forms of transnational organised crime they will engage. However, it has also been argued that the ideological and political divergences between organised crime and terrorist organisations preclude any interdependent cooperation between the two. As Hutchinson and O'Malley have asserted, evidence of cooperation between terrorist and organised crime groups are typically forced, temporary and parasitical (Hutchinson & O'Malley 2007, p.1096).

Additionally, Hutchinson and O'Malley (2007) explicitly conclude that more organised terrorist organisations which seek operational longevity, such as Al-Qaeda and IS, are more likely to engage in more sophisticated criminal activity (Hutchinson & O'Malley 2007, p.1105). If the inclusion of organised criminal activity in their operational strategy is kept "in-house", these terrorist organisations are able to mitigate risks associated with aligning and cooperating with ideologically divergent or incompatible groups. Therefore, based on this conclusion, it could be determined that Al-Qaeda and IS have, at least to some degree, implemented transnational organised crime in their operational strategy. In addition to this, it can also be determined that the environment in which both Al-Qaeda and IS operate is conducive to facilitating successful outcomes of these transnational crimes.

Relating to this, Tamara Makarenko's frequently cited article "The Crime-Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay Between Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism" attests that the evolving global environment in the post-Cold War era and the decline of state-sponsored terrorism has led to transnational organised crime and terrorism becoming an increasingly significant and interconnected phenomenon. As discussed by Makarenko, and corroborated by Hutchinson and O'Malley (2007), the "War on Terrorism" has contributed largely to the evaporation of funds and resources available to terrorist

organisations. As such, terrorist organisations have resorted to more frequent engagements in organised crime to acquire finances and resources (Makarenko 2004, p.130). Similarly, Makarenko acknowledges that transnational criminal organisations have been significantly affected by shifts in the international environment which, as a consequence, has led to the emergence of hybrid terror/criminal entities (Makarenko 2004, p.130).

Additionally, Makarenko (2004) ascertains that terrorist organisations and transnational criminal organisations share both organisational and operational characteristics. This has led to groups mimicking successful strategies, learning off each other's failures and working collaboratively with each other in practical operation and organisational construction to evade law-enforcement and experience operational success (Makarenko 2004, p.130). Makarenko (2004) also presents the notion of the 'Crime Terror Continuum' whereby; alliances, operational motivations and convergences are identified as levels of relationship between organised crime and terror. With respect to these relationships, Makarenko (2004) argues that whilst alliances do exist between organised crime groups and terrorist organisations, these divergent groups are increasingly attempting to avoid creating alliances. As such, it is argued that these terrorist organisations have mutated their own internal structure to facilitate the engagement in organised crime, rather than aligning with a pre-existing criminal group, to ensure the security of the organisation and its operations (Makarenko 2004, p.133). This is complementary to arguments put forward by Hutchinson and O'Malley (2007).

Furthermore, Makarenko (2004) discusses the notion of the 'Black Hole' thesis, which notes that the convergence between organised crime groups and terrorist organisations is more prevalent in weakened or failed states. A similar sentiment was echoed in Hutchinson and O'Malley (2007) who also argued that alliances, albeit typically parasitical and temporary, between organised crime groups and terrorist organisations are more frequently observed in weak or failing states. Considering that the key theatres of operation for both Al-Qaeda and IS are in weak or failed states, it is possible that further exploration of the dynamic between Al-Qaeda and IS and organised crime groups in these weak or failed states may yield further insight into how these organisations engage in transnational organised crime. This 'Black Hole' thesis, if applied to the environments in which Al-Qaeda and IS conduct operations, may assist in accounting for trends and instances of transnational organised crime utilised by these organisations.

Whilst Makarenko's work has remained influential and widely accepted in the literature, contemporary scholars are questioning whether Makarenko's 'Crime-Terror Continuum' is relevant to modern terrorism. In her 2013 thesis titled "Re-Examining the Crime-Terror Continuum: Understanding the Interplay Between Criminals and Terrorists", Megan Warshawsky has noted that Makarenko's work has served as an exceptional starting-point in uncovering the relationship between terrorist organisations and organised crime groups. However, Warshawsky has suggested that Makarenko's model has become outdated due to shifts in the global environment, updated law enforcement strategies and evolving legislations. Warshawsky notes that Makarenko had redeveloped the crime-terror continuum in 2009, with the key change being the addition of mono-direction to the model that leads to 'transformation' (Makarenko 2009; Warshawsky 2013, p.27). This modification has garnered the most criticism from Warshawsky, who identifies that Al-Qaeda, as well as some Mexican cartels, have been observed as moving along the spectrum multi-directionally (Warshawsky 2013, p.27). Whilst Warshawsky's comments on the weaknesses of Makarenko's crime-terror continuum provides a differing perspective, it is a view that has not yet been commonly expressed through the wider literature. However, Warshawsky's critiques are substantiated by case studies and therefore, her criticisms do have a degree of merit. Consequently, the applicability and relevance of Makarenko's updated crime-terror continuum should be assessed to ensure it is pertinent to the contemporary terrorist landscape.

2.3 Chapter Summary

In summation, there are key observable trends in both the 'terrorist financing' and the 'crime-terror nexus' bodies of literature that suggest that the post-Cold War era has facilitated an increase in instances in which terrorist organisations are utilising transnational organised crime as a means of terrorist financing. Additionally, it can be noted that this phenomenon has applied to both the operational strategy of the core cells of terrorist organisations as well as lone-wolf or low-ranking terrorist sympathisers. Throughout the 'terrorist financing' body of literature, there is consistency across publications that identify specific transnational crimes that terrorist organisations, namely Al-Qaeda and IS are currently utilising. Furthermore, the 'crime-terror nexus' body of literature has established

that there is a relationship between crime and terrorism. This relationship, as identified by key publications in the literature, has most commonly occurred in weak or failing states. As such, the theories including the 'Black Hole' thesis can be readily applied to the organisational strategies of both Al-Qaeda and IS. Through an analysis of the key works of literature focusing on 'terrorist financing' and the 'crime-terror nexus', it is evident that the forms of transnational organised crime that have facilitated and sustained Al-Qaeda and IS is an emerging field of research. However, a comparative analysis of the utilisation of transnational organised crime by Al Qaeda and IS is an under-researched area in the literature. Such a comparative analysis will yield useful insights into the financing strategies adopted by Al Qaeda and subsequently, by IS, thus paving the way for better-informed counter-terrorism responses.

CHAPTER THREE: TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIMES THAT HAVE SUPPORTED AND SUSTAINED THE ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND THE LEVANT AND AL-QAEDA

Through a comprehensive examination of the financing strategies of both Al-Qaeda and IS, it is evident that both organisations are reliant on transnational crime to finance terrorist operations. Specifically, Al-Qaeda and IS are actively engaged in the acquisition and selling of antiquities, kidnapping for ransom, human trafficking and drug trafficking. To answer the key research question posed in this thesis, namely, ‘what forms of transnational organised crimes have supported and sustained the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaeda?’, this chapter will focus on identifying avenues of transnational crimes that have supported and sustained Al-Qaeda and IS. This chapter will then present a descriptive account of the identified transnational crimes utilised by Al-Qaeda and IS, with a particular focus on the crime-terror nexus. It will then outline both Al-Qaeda and IS’ engagement in the aforementioned transnational crimes.

3.1 The Acquisition and Selling of Antiquities

The illicit acquisition, smuggling and selling of antiquities is a profitable transnational crime that is utilised by both Al-Qaeda and IS (Kersel 2008, p.232; Willett 2016, p.833). Antiquities, whether in the form of art, relics, historical documents or curiosities, carry substantial symbolic, cultural, personal, social and monetary value (Brodie 2014, p.6). Due to the high value of antiquities, the trade of illicitly acquired antiquities is a lucrative avenue for individuals or groups seeking financial income (Dietzler 2013, p.330). Whilst exact figures are unavailable, it is estimated that the illicit antiquities trade awards billions of dollars annually to transnational criminal groups (Federal Bureau of Investigations 2007; Proulx 2011, p.4). The high monetary value of antiquities means that the smuggling and selling of antiquities by transnational criminal groups result in heavy financial losses as well as significant cultural and societal damage to source countries. Notably, invaluable and finite artefacts are lost, as well as any knowledge or information pertaining to these artefacts (Bowman 2008, p.5; Proulx 2011, p.4).

Antiquities are typically illegally sourced from historical sites, such as temples, gravesites or churches, in the ‘source country’ (Mackenzie 2005, p.252). Following their acquisition, antiquities are then trafficked internationally for sale in the ‘market country’ (Polk 2001). It should be noted that the movement of trafficked antiquities tends to flow from developing ‘source’ countries to wealthy developed ‘market’ countries (Mackenzie 2019, p.43). In transnational criminal cases, the process by which antiquities are sold for profit includes illicit theft or excavation, international smuggling and finally their sale. Within source countries, the looting and subsequent trafficking and selling of these antiquities tend to be exacerbated by weak or corrupt political infrastructure, unstable economic environments, lax law enforcement, conflict and inadequate funding to combat the illicit antiquities trade (Dietzler 2013, p.330).

As outlined by Mackenzie (2019), there are two streams of transnational commodity flows pertaining to the illicit antiquities market. The first stream is identified as looted antiquities that travel through the supply chain to end up being sold in legitimate shops or auction houses (Mackenzie 2019, p.44). Mackenzie (2019) describes this process as ‘laundering’ antiquities, as the antiquities have entered the supply chain illicitly and are sold in a manner in which references of sale are able to appear legitimate in origin. This typically involves antiquities moving through perceived legitimate sellers and buyers through to lawful auction houses. The second stream as identified by Mackenzie (2019) is antiquities sold on the ‘invisible market’. This market involves non-public sales or incognito sales between individuals (Mackenzie 2019, p.45). These sales are augmented by the increasing utilisation of the internet and technological networks (Brodie 2015, p.11; Campbell 2013, p.125). Antiquities sold in this manner are difficult to trace and as such, accurate quantitative data is unavailable. However, the existence of this market can be verified by the presence of illicit antiquities discovered on channels such as WhatsApp and closed Facebook groups.

3.1.1 The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant’s Involvement in the Illicit Antiquities Trade

The exploitation of antiquities by IS has been a socially and culturally damaging crime that has perturbed both historians and the broader international community (Matfess &

Miklaucic 2016, p.197). This exploitation had largely been facilitated by IS' control of territory when it was at the peak of its success. During the height of its territorial control in 2015, IS occupied over 4,500 archaeological sites including UNESCO World Heritage sites (Financial Action Task Force 2015, p.17; Homeland Security Committee 2016, p.9). The control over this territory, as well as the antiquities located within IS' territory, proved to be financially lucrative and allowed IS to further their political ideology through propaganda (Omar, Engel & Petropoulos 2016). IS has exploited historical sites, museums and the antiquities contained in these sites through two primary means. Firstly, IS looted and sold these antiquities for financial gain (Fisk 2015). Secondly, IS participated in the destruction of antiquities for purposes of propaganda and to further their political ideology (Curry 2015). In addition to these two primary methods, IS generated significant financial profits through smuggling, excavation, control over permits and the levy of taxation (Homeland Security Committee 2016, p.9). Whilst it can be presumed that IS' loss of territory has decelerated IS' involvement in the illicit antiquities trade, antiquities believed to have stemmed from IS are still appearing in auctions and sales transactions. This indicates that IS is continuing to profit from the sale of illicitly obtained antiquities. However, it can be reasonably ascertained that IS' loss of territory has prevented the organisation from continuing to exploit antiquities for profit through taxation levies and control permits.

The key avenue through which IS exploits antiquities for financial gain, however, has been through the transnational selling of acquired antiquities (Pringle 2014; Williams & Coster 2017, p.104). The trafficking and selling of antiquities can be considered a relatively low risk yet lucrative crime, with offenders convicted of offences relating to antiquities trafficking typically avoiding serious punishment (Matfess & Miklaucic 2016, p.197). As a result of the low risk and high reward nature of the illicit antiquities trade, IS has utilised the trafficking of antiquities as a favoured avenue of financial income. To profit from antiquities, IS underwent a similar process of trafficking antiquities as organised transnational criminal groups. To obtain the antiquities, as well as to facilitate the trafficking and selling of the antiquities, middlemen with extensive experience in criminality and looting were utilised by IS (Alamiri 2015). Some of these middlemen had previously operated under the regime of Saddam Hussein and therefore, brought extensive experience in navigating the international market (Alamiri 2015).

Following their acquisition, the antiquities were trafficked transnationally through established channels (Campbell 2013, p.114; Grantham 2016, p.3). Occasionally, antiquities travel through, or were stored in, a third country such as Turkey (Barker 2018). However, the utilisation of a third country was not always necessary, as trafficking antiquities transnationally is reportedly simple in comparison to trafficking other forms of illicit materials due to the difficulty in proving the illegality of antiquities (Al-Azm & Paul 2018; Sargent, Marrone, Evans, Lilly, Nemeth & Dalzell 2020, p.64). Reportedly, a key destination for the antiquities is the West, due to the existence of a vibrant market there for historical relics and ancient art (Myers & Kulish 2016; Terrill 2017, p.28). As a consequence, antiquities sourced by IS have allegedly been found in regions such as North America and Europe (Barker 2018; Swann 2019). Furthermore, antiquities traced to IS have allegedly appeared on overt channels such as social media sites, antique stores and legitimate auction houses (Scatena 2020; Shabi 2015). This, as well as difficulty in tracing the origins of antiquities, has allowed IS to sell trafficked antiquities for a large profit with relative ease and minimal negative consequences.

In conjunction with the selling of trafficked antiquities, IS has also exploited antiquities for political gain through the development and production of propaganda material. IS has distinguished itself from other terrorist organisations through its sophisticated and effective use of social media and online communication (Farwell 2014, p.49). As part of this social media campaign, IS featured footage of militants destroying ancient artefacts in the Mosul Museum as well as Nimrud, the former capital of the ancient Assyrian empire (Westcott 2020, p.3). In an IS propaganda video displaying the destruction of priceless artefacts in the Mosul Museum, an IS militant justified the destruction of artefacts through the assertion that the artefacts were historically worshipped instead of Allah (Mezzofiore, Limam & Schwab 2015). The IS militant also provided further justification for the group's behaviour in the video, with the militant stating that it is easy for the group to destroy millions of dollars' worth of artefacts as they believe it to be Allah's orders (Mezzofiore, Limam & Schwab 2015; Montgomery 2015). Whilst no substantial financial revenue is raised through the destruction of antiquities and ancient sites, IS has been able to gain further international attention and disseminate its political ideology to a wider audience. Yet, despite this public display of distaste for such artifacts, IS has in fact pragmatically engaged in the large-scale looting and sale of historical artifacts, due to the revenue that this brings to the group.

In addition to these two primary methods of exploiting antiquities, IS also maintained control over the antiquities pipeline within their previously held territory. This control was established and maintained through three key steps. Dig permits could be applied for and purchased from IS authorities (Cox 2015). These dig permits provided another avenue for IS to make a financial gain through the exploitation of antiquities within their claimed territory (Lalwani 2020, p.95). Following this, discovered artefacts underwent a process of evaluation, with artefacts deemed idolatrous being destroyed (Cox 2015). Other discovered artefacts were then subsequently sold into the international market (Greenland 2016). Through this control of the antiquities pipeline, IS were able to utilise the taxation of trafficked antiquities as a means of revenue-raising. During the period in which IS controlled extensive territory in Syria and Iraq, IS levied taxes on traffickers who were moving illegally obtained artefacts and antiquities through IS-controlled territory (Financial Action Task Force 2015, p.17; Frenkel 2014). This taxation on trafficked antiquities and artefacts was one aspect of IS' lucrative broader taxation and extortion strategy.

3.1.2 Al-Qaeda's Involvement in the Illicit Antiquities Trade

Information regarding Al-Qaeda's involvement in the illicit antiquities trade is relatively scarce and it is apparent that Al-Qaeda has not heavily relied upon the acquisition and selling of antiquities to fund terrorist operations. However, there is evidence to suggest that Al-Qaeda has indeed engaged in the antiquities trade as a means of supplementing financial income (Bowman 2008, p.8). Through the selling of ancient art, as well as through the smuggling of Afghan antiquities, Al-Qaeda has been able to partially finance jihadist activities (Beck 2020; Bowman 2008, p.8).

In addition, evidence suggests that Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula may be looting and selling antiquities whilst participating in the conflict in Yemen (The Antiquities Coalition 2019; Jarus 2019). However, Al-Qaeda's direct involvement in the looting and selling of antiquities in Yemen, as well as the destruction of cultural and historic sites in Yemen is reportedly limited (Press 2018). Whilst Al-Qaeda, or Al-Qaeda affiliate groups, are engaging in the looting, selling, trafficking or destruction of antiquities, it is likely not a

primary avenue of financial income for the organisation. Instead, Al Qaeda relies on monetary donations, kidnapping for ransom and extortion (Fanusie 2018, p.8).

3.2 Kidnapping for Ransom

Kidnapping for ransom is a violent and aggressive avenue of financial income heavily utilised by both Al-Qaeda and IS (Callimachi 2014, p.1; Mellon, Bergen & Sterman 2017, p.2). By definition, kidnapping for ransom refers to the unlawful asportation and confinement of an individual with the intent of exploitation (Vannini, Detotto & McCannon 2015, p.1). In kidnapping for ransom cases, an individual is kidnapped and held until the payment of the ransom is negotiated and received (Wright 2009, p.34). It is estimated that habitually, these negotiations last between six to sixty days, though it can also last for years (Wright 2009, p.34). Typically, kidnappings for ransom are conducted by an organisation or group rather than a single kidnapper (Vannini, Detotto & McCannon 2015, p.1). Kidnapping for ransom is a common tactic utilised by organised transnational criminal groups and terrorist organisations. With respect to the crime-terror nexus, kidnapping for ransom is most commonly observed in countries with limited law enforcement or weak and corrupt governments (Wright 2009, p.31). Additionally, high levels of domestic conflict also contribute to an increased prevalence of kidnapping for ransom (NYA24 2017, p.3). This is particularly observable in the Middle East, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa (NYA24 2017, p.3).

There is an identifiable process by which organisations archetypally undertake kidnapping for ransoms. As described by Vannini, Detotto and McCannon (2015), the prospective kidnappers ideally conduct a market analysis to identify lucrative opportunities or symbolic targets. Following this, selected teams undertake the capture and asportation of the targeted victim (Vannini, Detotto & McCannon 2015, p.1). Once this process is undertaken, the kidnappers may provide the hostage with food, water and access to basic amenities (Phillips 2011, p.846). These basic amenities are provided for the purpose of keeping hostages alive to elicit a ransom payment. Additionally, personnel are required to communicate with involved parties including law enforcement, the hostage's family, media, foreign governments and negotiators (Vannini, Detotto & McCannon 2015, p.1). Finally, in cases

where ransom payment is made, payment needs to be collected through channels that are difficult for law enforcement to trace and track.

As identified by Pharoah (2005), there are two key categories of kidnapping for ransom: criminal kidnappings and political kidnappings. Criminal kidnappings are characterised by the intention to obtain a ransom from the family, business or associates of the hostage. Payable ransoms include money, valuables, keys or access codes (Pharoah 2005, p.23). On the other hand, political kidnappings are typified by the objective to further the political aims of an organisation. In these cases, ransoms can take the form of money to fund activities relating to political motives or can be conducted as leverage in negotiating political aims (Okoli & Agada 2014, p.138; Pharoah 2005, p.23).

Accurate quantitative data of global kidnapping for ransom cases is unavailable due to underreporting, with estimates noting that as few as 10% of cases are reported (O'Brien 2012, p.321; Zuccarello 2011, p.18). However, it is anticipated that globally, there are approximately 12,500 to 25,000 cases of kidnapping for ransom per annum (Zuccarello 2011, p.18). Additionally, it is reported that kidnapping for ransom is an increasing growth industry worldwide (Pharoah 2005, p.23). This growth has been partially facilitated by emerging technology, as transnational data transfer, international communications and transnational funds transfer can occur instantaneously (Wright 2009, p.32).

3.2.1 The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's Involvement in Kidnapping for Ransom

Kidnapping for ransom is amongst one of the most notable transnational crime that IS has engaged in. Whilst IS's financial income strategy has shifted to adapt to the group's loss of territory, kidnapping for ransom operations are predicted to continue as a means to substitute IS' financial losses (Financial Action Task Force 2018). The 2012 kidnapping for ransom of American journalist James Foley by IS remains one of the most high-profile and infamous kidnappings committed by IS. The US' refusal to pay the US\$132 million for Foley's release resulted in Foley's execution and the video footage of the execution being disseminated on online mediums (Pagliery 2015). Whilst this specific incident caused shockwaves through

the international community, it was not an isolated one. Kidnapping for ransom remains a favoured avenue for financial gain for IS due to its profitability, fearmongering and the difficulties associated with combatting the crime (Homeland Security Committee 2016, p.12).

IS typically abduct civilian victims on the streets and contact their family to demand a ransom payment (Homeland Security Committee 2016, p.12). However, IS also target other individuals such as religious leaders, children, journalists, foreigners, ethnic minorities and political targets (Darden 2019, p.4; Human Rights Watch 2014; Tuttle 2015; U.S. Embassy in Athens 2019). This allows for both financial income for IS and political leverage over foreign governments. To conduct kidnappings, IS employs dedicated operatives, informers, spies and kidnappers to increase the efficacy of the kidnappings (Homeland Security Committee 2016, p.12). An interview with a former IS agent who assisted in facilitating the kidnappings of journalists covering the conflict in Syria highlights the process by which victims were scouted and subsequently kidnapped by armed IS militants (BBC News 2015). Kidnapping victims were forcefully abducted by IS militants, imprisoned, and their family members or foreign governments contacted for ransom payments. Some kidnapping victims were tortured or killed for punishment or to convey a political message (BBC News 2015). To ensure maximum profits and to instil fear in victims, families and governments, IS often implement a period of silence to research their victims and establish confusion within associates of the hostage (Topol 2016).

In addition to standard ransom payments, IS has been known to further exploit the families of their victims. IS exploits the vulnerabilities of victims' families by utilising charlatans who claim to assist families in recovering kidnapping victims (Homeland Security Committee 2016, p.12). An example of this has been highlighted in a United Nations facilitated interview. In this case, a family member of a man who was kidnapped at an Aleppo checkpoint in 2012 allegedly paid 300,000 Syrian Pounds to an extortioner for information on her son's disappearance (United Nations 2015, p.40). Through this practice, IS are yielded another avenue of financial income stemming from kidnapping for ransom.

3.2.2 Al-Qaeda's Involvement in Kidnapping for Ransom

Al-Qaeda, as well as Al-Qaeda affiliate groups, have consistently utilised kidnapping for ransom as a means of financial gain and human resource acquisition, with Nasser Al-Wuhayshi, the former leader of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, stating that kidnapping for ransom is easy, profitable and 'a precious treasure' (Rohde 2014). Due to its profitability, kidnapping for ransom is an increasingly favoured component of Al-Qaeda's financing strategy. A 2014 report by the UN has noted that the use of kidnapping for ransom as a tactic has grown, as have the profits generated (United Nations Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team 2014). This increase, in part, is a result of increasingly successful international efforts to reduce transnational terrorist financing. As a result, Al-Qaeda and Al-Qaeda affiliate groups have increased their reliance on alternative financing methods, such as kidnapping for ransom (Nünlist 2013, p.2). In particular, Al-Qaeda and its affiliates in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and North Africa rely on kidnapping for ransom as a key source of revenue (Weinberg 2015, p.4). In addition to this, Al-Qaeda core has also been responsible for facilitating and coordinating kidnapping for ransoms across North Africa and the Middle East (Woodruff & Callimach 2014).

A process by which Al-Qaeda conducts kidnappings, as well as the objectives and motives of kidnappings is detailed in a manual written by Abdel Aziz al-Muqrin, the former leader of Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia. Key objectives outlined include; subjecting governments to political embarrassment, obtaining information from detainees, acquiring ransoms and to highlight political causes (The New York Times 2014). Frequent targets include tourists, aid workers, diplomats, employees of multinational corporations and government officials (Laub & Masters 2015). This is highlighted through travel warnings issued for regions in North Africa, where Al-Qaeda affiliate groups are active. These regions, in particular Mali, Niger, Algeria, Libya and Burkina Faso, have seen a significant rate of kidnappings for ransom of Westerners, including humanitarian aid workers, journalists, those employed in the business sector and tourists (UK Government 2020). Through the targeting of these individuals, Al-Qaeda, as well as Al-Qaeda affiliate groups, are able to raise significant financial profit, negotiate with international governments for money or diplomatic favours and obtain information or intelligence.

3.3 Human Trafficking

Human trafficking has become another favoured avenue of revenue-raising for IS and is also utilised by Al-Qaeda (Gonzalez 2013, p.20; Welch 2016, p.165). By definition, human trafficking refers to the acquisition, recruitment, transportation, transfer or harbouring of persons through means of force, threat, coercion, abduction, fraud, abuse of power or deception, for the purpose of exploitation (United Nations 2000). This exploitation can take the form of slavery, forced labour, the removal of body organs or prostitution (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2016).

As identified by Betz (2009), factors such as poverty, economic disparity, globalisation, education levels and the disregard of women's rights are all factors that are facilitative of a nation's incident level of human trafficking. Whilst a singular factor for the prevalence of human trafficking has not been identified, it is ascertained that the interaction between the five aforementioned factors contributes to the occurrence of human trafficking (Betz 2009, p.26). In conjunction with these factors, the personal characteristics of individuals can contribute to a predisposition to be trafficked. According to research conducted by Logan (2007), an individual's lack of education, lack of knowledge of legal rights and cultural factors can increase an individual's likelihood of becoming a victim of human trafficking. Furthermore, individual vulnerability factors of being a victim of human trafficking include being female, young, healthy, an abuser of substances, and physical and emotional isolation (Logan 2007, p.5; Logan, Walker & Hunt 2009, p.12).

Accurate data and statistics regarding rates of human trafficking are unavailable. This is partly due to the large portion of victims of human trafficking being members of 'hidden populations' (Tyldum & Brunovskis 2005, p.18). Furthermore, an accurate representation of total populations of human trafficking victims is unavailable due to selection bias (Tyldum & Brunovskis 2005, p.31). Despite this, instances of human trafficking have been reported in nearly every region of the world (World Health Organization 2017, p.1). Human trafficking is also a lucrative business for criminals and transnational criminal organisations, with estimates approximating that US\$31.6 billion is generated per year through the exploitation of human trafficking victims (Belser 2005, p.14; World Health Organization 2017, p.1).

3.3.1 The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's Involvement in Human Trafficking

IS has extensively utilised human trafficking as a means of human resource acquisition, rewarding fighters, revenue-raising and intimidating communities (Binetti 2015). Through the trafficking of girls and women, IS can secure financial profit and provide incentives for IS fighters and recruits. Through the trafficking of ethnic minorities, in particular, the Yazidi population, IS can intimidate and frighten communities. Furthermore, through the trafficking of children, IS can acquire strategically advantageous human resources.

Human trafficking is a financially profitable avenue for IS. In particular, women trafficked by IS are frequently brought by wholesalers and sold to buyers, including IS leaders and IS fighters (Bob 2019). To facilitate the sale of girls and women, IS advertise girls and women on online databases and messaging applications such as Telegram and WhatsApp (Blackburn-Dwyer 2016). Furthermore, auctions are conducted to sell girls and women to the highest bidder. Through the sale of these girls and women, IS are awarded a significant financial profit. Whilst IS are still reaping some benefits of human trafficking operations, IS' defeats in the Middle East has decreased its operational capacity to engage in human trafficking.

In addition to profits, human trafficking can effectively instil fear into a community or population. Whilst individuals of any demographic are at risk of becoming a victim of IS' human trafficking operations, women, girls and the Yazidi population are more likely to become victims (Cetorelli & Ashraph 2019, p.6). Whilst Yazidi men and boys are typically killed or taken and trafficked for labour by IS, Yazidi women and girls are often abducted, trafficked and sold as sexual or domestic slaves. It is reported that by 2016, over six-thousand Yazidi women and children were taken by IS and trafficked throughout Iraq and Syria (Otten 2017). This allowed IS to exploit these individuals as domestic and sexual slaves, profit off the selling and trafficking of these individuals and instil fear in the wider Yazidi population.

Additionally, IS utilise human trafficking as a means of providing an incentive for IS fighters as well as an incentive in recruiting local youth and foreign fighters (Kenny & Malik 2019, p.48). Furthermore, female human trafficking victims can be exploited to retain IS fighters. Since IS pay fighters for additional women they capture, as well as children born to IS

fighters, a strong financial incentive is provided for fighters to remain in, and fight for IS (Kenny & Malik 2019, p.48). This also assists in facilitating and continuing IS' human trafficking operations. A large portion of these exploited women are considered IS Brides. IS Brides, classified as girls and women who travelled to Iraq or Syria to join IS and marry IS fighters, can often fit the definition of victims of human trafficking. Whilst some IS Brides joined IS voluntarily, a portion of girls were transported to warzones in Syria or Iraq as minors by their parents or families. Furthermore, many women joined IS under the proviso and lure of religious honour, glory and a life of luxury (Brown-Jackson 2019, p.7). In reality, a large portion of these girls and women are exploited and forced into sexual or domestic servitude.

IS have also utilised human trafficking as a means of exploiting children, through abduction, recruitment by force or coercion into joining the organisation. Through this, children can be taken from their homes and trafficked into conflict zones to undertake duties for IS. IS view children as strategically advantageous since they can fulfil roles and duties that adult militants are unable or unwilling to undertake (Shelly 2015). Consequently, IS have habitually used children as child soldiers, suicide bombers, executioners, human shields, forced labourers, informants and beggars (U.S. Department of State 2020). Furthermore, IS can indoctrinate the children to establish a supply of manpower who can act as jihadists in the future. Moreover, IS has utilised children in its propaganda material to effectively capture the attention of international media agencies and instil fear in the broader international community (Bloom, Horgan & Winter 2016, p.29). Through IS' exploitation of children, facilitated by an engagement in human trafficking, IS has increased their operational capacity and acquired valuable human resources.

3.3.2 Al-Qaeda's Involvement in Human Trafficking

As a means of revenue-raising, Al-Qaeda has diversified its financing strategy to incorporate human trafficking and human smuggling. Notably, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is a relatively prominent organisation in the trafficking of humans in North Africa. AQIM has raised significant financial profits from the smuggling of economic migrants from Nigeria and Burkina Faso to Europe (Fanusie & Entz 2017, p.11). Whilst concrete

evidence depicting the intricacies of Al-Qaeda's human trafficking operations is limited, it can be determined that Al-Qaeda and Al-Qaeda affiliates have engaged in a degree of human trafficking and human smuggling to acquire financial funds.

3.4 Drug Trafficking

Drug trafficking is a lucrative form of transnational organised crime that both Al-Qaeda and IS have reportedly engaged in (Berry, Curtis, Hudson & Kollars 2002, p.1; Clarke 2017). Drug trafficking can be characterised by the importation, cultivation, manufacturing, distribution and/or sale of illicit drugs (Desroches 2005, p.2). Drug trafficking can be described as a hierarchical system whereby drugs are transferred from manufacturers or growers to intermediates who shift the drugs to local distributors and retailers. These drugs are then distributed and sold to customers and drug consumers (Desroches 2005, p.2). Typically, drugs are cultivated in remote regions of poor nations and trafficked internationally to wealthier nations (Johnson 2003, p.3). Relating to this, Mandel (2011) notes that drug trafficking is particularly prevalent in regions with corrupt law enforcement, weak states and porous international borders. Individuals or organisations involved in drug trafficking employ a wide range of tactics including violence, intimidation, engaging with police corruption and occasionally form mergers with other criminal organisations (Allum & Sands 2004, p.137; Mandel 2011, p.107). As presented by Kleiman (2004), techniques commonly utilised during drug trafficking operations may provide an environment that is conducive to terrorist activity.

Due to the illicit nature of the drug trafficking industry, accurate statistics regarding the scope and prevalence of drug trafficking are unavailable (Clarke 2016, p.180). Data suggests that there is a growth of the drug trafficking industry, especially in organisations utilising the dark web to facilitate the trafficking of drugs (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2018, p.7). However, the extent to which drugs are being trafficked is relatively unknown. Despite the lack of quantitative data, there is an availability of data regarding the global impact of drug trafficking. As of 2016, an estimated 275 million people globally had used drugs within the previous 12-month period (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2018, p.11). Of these people, approximately 31 million have a drug use disorder (United

Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2018, p.11). Consequently, it is evident that the drug trafficking industry has profound negative health, societal and economic effects globally (National Crime Agency 2018, p.54). Due to the global demand for drugs, as well as the exorbitant profits that can be made from illicit drug trafficking, it can be reasonably inferred that drug trafficking will remain a formidable global security threat (Williams & Black 1994, p.127).

3.4.1 The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's Involvement in Drug Trafficking

As a consequence of IS's territorial losses, IS have been required to adapt their financial strategy to incorporate alternative and unconventional methods of financial revenue (Financial Action Task Force 2018). Through the inclusion of drug trafficking in their financing strategy, IS have been able to infiltrate drug markets of the West and increase the diversity of their revenue-raising streams. Despite IS' significant territorial losses, IS are still able to actively and successfully participate in drug trafficking operations (Lurie 2020). Therefore, it is likely that drug trafficking will be a continued avenue of financial income for IS.

Most notably, IS has engaged in the trafficking of the drugs Captagon, Tramadol and hashish (Lurie 2020). The amphetamine Captagon, also known as the 'jihadist drug', has been utilised by IS through two key avenues. Firstly, IS militants have allegedly utilised the consumption of Captagon to remain alert, forgo sleep and minimise pain (Keefe 2016; Lurie 2020). An example of IS' use of Captagon could be observed in the IS led 2015 terrorist attack in France. It is suspected that those responsible for the attacks were under the influence of Captagon, which allegedly put the men in a 'zombie-like state' while undertaking the attacks (Barker 2015). Primarily however, Captagon is trafficked by IS as a means of acquiring financial revenue. This can be seen through a case in 2020, where a shipment of the drug Captagon, believed to have stemmed from IS, was intercepted and seized at an Italian port (Walsh 2020). The drugs had an estimated value of one-billion Euros and were believed to have been trafficked by IS for dissemination across a number of criminal organisations throughout Europe (Neal 2020). As of August 2020, this incident is amongst the largest amphetamine seizures of all time.

Similarly, IS militants are believed to have trafficked quantities of the opioid drug Tramadol through the Middle East and North Africa to Europe. Through the trafficking of Tramadol, IS are able to generate relatively substantial financial funds to support IS' operations (Lurie 2020). Comparable to Captagon, IS has purportedly manufactured and disseminated Tramadol to IS militants to consume for the purpose of increasing the militant's ability to fight. Furthermore, hashish, a drug made from cannabis resin, has also been linked to IS trafficking routes through North Africa into Europe. By trafficking and selling hashish to the European market, IS are able to raise significant financial revenue to supplement terrorist operations (Lurie 2020).

The IS affiliate group Boko Haram has also reportedly engaged in drug trafficking across North Africa. Allegedly, Boko Haram has facilitated the trafficking of cocaine and heroin for financial gain and has also engaged in the consumption of illicit substances (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2017, p.36). Through notable examples of IS, as well as IS affiliate groups, engaging in drug trafficking, it is reasonable to ascertain that the trafficking of drugs remains a prominent feature of IS' financing strategy.

3.4.2 Al-Qaeda's Involvement in Drug Trafficking

Al-Qaeda has reportedly utilised drug trafficking as a means of financial income through both the Middle East and North Africa (Ehrenfeld 2011). Whilst exact details surrounding Al-Qaeda's involvement in drug trafficking are unclear, it is believed that Al-Qaeda has profited from the rising opium poppy trade in Afghanistan (Rana & Moditsi 2017; p.3). Additionally, Al-Qaeda as well as Al-Qaeda affiliate groups have been involved in drug trafficking across the Middle East and North Africa.

In North Africa, AQIM has been reportedly involved in cannabis and cocaine trafficking. Furthermore, it has been reported that AQIM has offered protection for drug traffickers in the region (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2017, p.11). Similarly, Al-Qaeda core operating in the Middle East has also been suspected of selling protection to drug traffickers in the Middle East (Berry, Curtis, Hudson & Kollars 2002, p.6). This provides an

additional avenue of financial revenue for Al-Qaeda through the participation in drug trafficking. Furthermore, evidence suggests that Al-Qaeda has assisted rebel militant groups in North Africa for the purposes of generating financial revenue. Reportedly, Al-Qaeda established ties with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) (Roach 2015, p.118). This arrangement purportedly entailed Al-Qaeda assisting FARC in smuggling cocaine through North Africa to Europe (Bronstein 2010). This arrangement is mutually beneficial for both Al-Qaeda and FARC in achieving its strategic objectives through the raising of funds to sustain their operational capabilities.

Whilst the extent of Al-Qaeda's involvement in drug trafficking is a contested debate in the literature, it is reasonable to determine that Al-Qaeda has exploited drug trafficking as a means to raise financial funds (Howard & Traugher 2013, p.2). Whilst Al-Qaeda has not heavily relied upon the proceeds of drug trafficking to fund their terrorist operations, with the depletion of other financing avenues, it is possible for Al-Qaeda to become increasingly reliant drug trafficking as a method of financial income (Howard & Traugher 2013, p.46). However, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that such a reliance is currently occurring.

3.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a comprehensive discussion on the forms of transnational organised crimes that have supported and sustained IS and Al-Qaeda. Through this discussion, it is evident that both IS and Al-Qaeda engage in transnational crime for financial income, resource acquisition and human resource acquisition, albeit to differing degrees. Specifically, this chapter has identified the acquisition and selling of antiquities, kidnapping for ransom, human trafficking and drug trafficking as key forms of transnational crimes that have supported and sustained IS and Al-Qaeda. With respect to the crime-terror nexus, it is also evident that regional characteristics such as porous borders, weak governments, corrupt law enforcement, poverty and conflict are predictors to both crime and terrorism. Since both Al-Qaeda and IS predominantly operate in regions that match these characteristics, it is reasonable to ascertain that these characteristics facilitate both organisations engagement and success in transnational criminal activity.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE EXTENT TO WHICH TRANSNATIONAL CRIMES HAVE SUPPORTED AND SUSTAINED THE ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND THE LEVANT AND AL-QAEDA

Through the qualitative assessments presented in the preceding chapter, it is evident that both IS and Al-Qaeda has actively engaged in the acquisition and selling of antiquities, kidnapping for ransom, human trafficking and drug trafficking. However, both organisations have engaged in the aforementioned crimes in differing capacities. To answer the secondary research question posed in this thesis of “to what extent have these transnational crimes supported and sustained the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaeda?”, this chapter will expand upon the conclusions reached in Chapter Three and will critically assess how each of the identified transnational crimes has supported and sustained IS and Al-Qaeda. This assessment will be formulated with respect to available financial data and other forms of quantitative data. However, due to the nature of black and grey market selling, as well as the covert nature of some terrorist funding operations, quantitative data can only be indicative and is incomplete. Consequently, this chapter will synthesise an array of quantitative data to substantiate and assist in informing qualitative assessments.

4.1 The Utilisation of the Acquisition and Selling of Antiquities by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

The illicit antiquities trade has played a notable role in the financing strategy of IS, particularly from 2013-2017, when IS had control over extensive territory. Through the acquisition and selling of antiquities, IS was able to bolster its ‘war chest’ to facilitate its terrorist operations (Hughes 2020). Due to the nature of IS’ involvement in the illicit antiquities trade, as well as the nature of black and grey market selling, it is difficult to definitively ascertain the exact extent to which the illicit antiquities trade has facilitated IS’ operations. However, the available quantitative data suggests that the selling of antiquities was a major source of revenue for IS.

Prior to the rise of IS in 2013, Syria’s cultural heritage and antiquities industry generated approximately US\$6.5 billion annually, which comprised around 12% of Syria’s gross

domestic product (Homeland Security Committee 2016, p.9). This data indicates that there was a significantly large antiquities and cultural heritage market that IS could exploit for both financial gains and for the purpose of producing propaganda material. Additionally, since IS occupied approximately 4,500 archaeological sites during the height of its territorial control in 2015, the group had access to thousands of artefacts and antiquities (Financial Action Task Force 2015, p.17; Homeland Security Committee 2016, p.9).

As previously mentioned, exact monetary figures regarding IS' selling of antiquities is unavailable. However, estimates place IS' profits from the sale of illicitly obtained antiquities to be between US\$4 million to US\$7 billion (Rose-Greenland 2016). This wide range is indicative of the difficulty associated with tracing the illicit antiquities market and discrepancies in quantitative data. Additionally, a 2014 estimate by Howard, Prohov and Elliott (2014) asserted that the antiquities trade was the second most lucrative income stream of IS, with the most lucrative being the oil trade which generated approximately US\$1 million per day at this time.

Individual antiquities sold by IS can result in a profit of hundreds of thousands of dollars (Homeland Security Committee 2016, p.9). However, the sale price is dependent on the artefact as well as market interest. For example, it is noted that Greek and Roman antiquities discovered in the Dura Europos region, now located in Syria, are more valuable compared to Bronze Age artefacts discovered in Tell Bi'a, located in modern-day northern Syria (Greenland, Marrone, Topçuoğlu & Vorderstrasse 2019). Greenland, Marrone, Topçuoğlu and Vorderstrasse (2019) estimate that US\$18 million worth of artefacts, excluding coins, are located within the Dura Europos region and US\$4 million worth of artefacts are located within Tell Bi'a. These estimates account for the value of artefacts located in these regions and do not reflect the lucrativeness of IS' involvement in these regions. However, since satellite evidence suggests that IS operated extensively in the area in 2014, it is reasonable to ascertain that IS have acquired and sold a substantial portion of the artefacts in both Dura Europos and Tell Bi'a (Casana & Laugier 2017, p.19). The destruction and looting of Dura Europos and Tell Bi'a are just two examples of sites in which IS has exploited for financial gain. Other notable examples of sites that have been destroyed or pillaged by IS include Palmyra, Nimrud, Hatra and Nineveh (Terrill 2017, p.1). Through the control of these cities, IS has been able to effectively exploit the rich cultural heritage of Iraq and Syria for financial and political gain.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, IS also make a significant profit from antiquities found within their territorial claims. Firsthand reports stemming from excavators working within IS territory have noted that IS required 20% of the sale price of all antiquities found in their territory (Brodie & Sabrine 2018, p.79). Through the implementation of this tax, IS was able to raise significant revenue.

Despite IS' territorial defeats from 2018-2020 slowing down IS' involvement in the illicit antiquities trade, evidence suggests that the organisation is still receiving financial profits from the sale of antiquities in 2020 (United Nations Security Council 2020). Coupled with the fact that IS had previously relied on antiquities trafficking as its second most lucrative avenue of revenue-raising, it can be definitively concluded that the illicit antiquities trade has played a significant role in sustaining and supporting IS.

4.2 The Utilisation of the Acquisition and Selling of Antiquities by Al-Qaeda

Information and data pertaining to Al-Qaeda's exploitation of antiquities is sparse, with financial and monetary data being unavailable. Whilst this does not necessarily indicate that Al-Qaeda is not engaging in the illicit selling of antiquities, it is indicative of Al-Qaeda's limited involvement in the antiquities trade. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the acquisition and selling of antiquities do not play a significant role in the financing strategy of Al-Qaeda. Whilst Al-Qaeda does not currently appear to rely on the exploitation of antiquities, it is possible that Al-Qaeda may resort to antiquity exploitation in the future. This is due to a combination of Al-Qaeda turning to alternative methods of terrorist financing and the availability of antiquities in Al-Qaeda's areas of operations.

4.3 The Utilisation of Kidnapping for Ransom by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

Kidnapping for ransom has played a significant role in the financing and operational strategy of IS. Through kidnapping for ransom, IS was able to effectively raise finances whilst

causing significant intimidation towards political opponents and targeted civilian populations. Due to the under-reporting of kidnapping for ransom cases, as well as the hesitation of some foreign governments to disclose details surrounding ransom payments, exact monetary figures are unavailable. However, open-sourced quantitative data suggests that kidnapping for ransom has played a significant role in supporting and sustaining IS.

It is reported that in 2014, ransoms paid from kidnappings comprised around 20% of IS' revenue (Giovanni, Goodman & Sharkov 2014). Additionally, it was reported that IS had received approximately US\$35-\$45 million in ransom payments in 2014 (Homeland Security Committee 2016, p.12). Similar estimates from the U.S. Department of the Treasury (2016) corroborate these estimates by approximating that IS generated between US\$20-\$45 million through kidnapping for ransom in 2014. However, the US. Department of the Treasury (2016) has also estimated that IS' profits from kidnapping for ransom declined in 2015 and 2016 due to the significantly reduced presence of Western kidnapping targets in the territories controlled by IS.

The profit that IS generates through kidnapping for ransom is largely dependent on the hostages that IS selects as well as the receptiveness and ability of the hostage's associates to pay the ransom. Whilst Western hostages can yield ransom payments of around US\$2.7 million per individual, IS generates the majority of its kidnapping for ransom profit through the kidnapping of local civilians in Iraq and Syria (Homeland Security Committee 2016, p.12; United Nations Security Council 2014, p.18). This is primarily due to the increased availability of local civilians, including religious leaders, businesspeople and local workers to kidnap as opposed to foreign nationals. Ransoms demanded for local civilians tend to be between US\$500 and US\$200,000 (Giovanni, Goodman & Sharkov 2014; Homeland Security Committee 2016, p.13).

Despite IS' territorial defeats, kidnapping for ransom remains a viable avenue of financial income for IS. This is consistent with observable trends since 2013, which depict kidnapping for ransom as a major contributor to IS' strong financial position. In addition to this, kidnapping for ransom has also effectively instilled substantial fear amongst civilian populations, in particular the Yazidi population (Chulov 2014). Due to a combination of financial revenue and intimidation instilled into minority populations, kidnapping for

ransom has remained and continues to be a major strategic operation in IS's financial and operational strategy.

4.4 The Utilisation of Kidnapping for Ransom by Al-Qaeda

Kidnapping for ransom has played an important role in the financing and operational strategy of Al-Qaeda. Through kidnapping for ransom, Al-Qaeda is able to effectively raise finances whilst instilling fear in political opponents and targeted civilian populations. Currently, numerous foreign governments have issued warnings for travellers to northern African countries, in particular Mali, where Al-Qaeda is currently undertaking frequent kidnappings for ransom (World Nomads 2020).

Across the Middle East and northern Africa, Al-Qaeda has made substantial profits through kidnapping for ransom. During the peak of the Iraq war in around 2007, Al-Qaeda in Iraq generated around US\$36 million through the kidnapping of foreign journalists, reporters and aid workers (Conlon 2020). Later estimates from 2016 note that Al-Qaeda raised approximately US\$145 million from 2010-2014 from ransom payments (Pauwels 2016, p.2). Whilst overall financial estimates are unavailable for more recent years, kidnapping for ransom is continuing in the Middle East and northern Africa (The S-RM Analysis Team 2019). Consequently, it is reasonable to determine that Al-Qaeda are continuing to make large profits from kidnapping for ransom. Some estimates note that Al-Qaeda can make US\$2.7 million for a single western hostage (United Nations Security Council 2014, p.18). However, this figure is dependent upon factors such as the citizenship of the hostage and the perceived wealth of the hostage.

In the Maghreb, it is reported that AQIM had previously generated enormous profits from kidnapping for ransom, with approximately 90% of its estimated US\$75 million revenue from 2010-2014 stemming from ransom payments (Pauwels 2016, p.1). However, according to Pauwels (2016), increasing competition from IS in the region has impeded Al-Qaeda's ability to generate such profits.

Despite increased competition in the region, kidnapping for ransom remains a sustainable source of financial income for Al-Qaeda. Additionally, as outlined in Chapter Three, key objectives of kidnapping for ransom including; subjecting governments to political embarrassment, obtaining information from detainees, acquiring ransoms and to highlight political causes are continuing to be met through Al-Qaeda's involvement in kidnapping for ransom (The New York Times 2014). With respect to this, it can be accurately concluded that kidnapping for ransom is playing a significant role in facilitating and sustaining Al-Qaeda.

4.5 The Utilisation of Human Trafficking by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

Human trafficking has played a notable role in the financing and operational strategy of IS. Whilst human trafficking does not generate profits as large as transnational crimes such as kidnapping for ransom or the sale of illicitly obtained antiquities, it does raise substantial profits for IS whilst concurrently facilitating operations (*ISIL Finances: Future Scenarios* 2016).

Evidence suggests that human trafficking and human smuggling is a growth industry which is largely facilitated by porous international borders, weak governments, corrupt law enforcement and regional conflict. This phenomenon is observable in Libya where it is reported that the value of human smuggling has increased from between US\$8 million and US\$20 million in 2010 to between US\$255 million and US\$323 million in 2014 (Bésenyő 2016, p.16; The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime 2015, p.2). Whilst these figures are not indicative of IS' profits, they are indicative of the market and potential profits available to IS.

A 'Price Scheme' issued by IS has outlined the profits that are yielded from the sale of Yazidi and Christian girls and women. Girls aged between 1 and 9 years are sold for approximately US\$172 per child, 10 to 20-year-old girls were sold for US\$129 each and 20 to 30-year-old women are sold for approximately US\$86 per person (Mamoun 2014). In this document, IS also outlined sale prices for IS sex slaves, with women aged 30 to 40 being sold for US\$75 each and those aged 40 to 50 being sold for approximately US\$43 each

(Bésenyő 2016, p.17). Considering IS captured approximately 7,000 Yazidi women and girls from 2014, it can be concluded that IS has profited rather significantly through the abduction, trafficking and selling of these girls and women (Salloum 2018; Von Hein 2020). Additionally, IS was able to instil fear and terror amongst the Yazidi population whilst simultaneously experiencing the organisational benefits of having the availability and provision of sex slaves as a fringe perk for IS members.

Although human trafficking reportedly generates less revenue than transnational crime, such as kidnapping for ransom and the selling of illicitly obtained antiquities, it still plays a significant role in the financing strategy of IS. Through human trafficking, IS have been able to generate financial revenue, intimidate minority populations and provide an incentive for IS militants to remain in the organisation. With respect to these factors, it can be accurately concluded that human trafficking plays an important role in facilitating and sustaining IS.

4.6 The Utilisation of Human Trafficking and Human Smuggling by Al-Qaeda

As mentioned in Chapter Three, Al-Qaeda has been involved in human trafficking and human smuggling as a means of generating financial revenue. Due to the nature of human trafficking and human smuggling markets, it is difficult to definitively ascertain the exact monetary figures yielded from human trafficking. In particular, there is a lack of quantitative data detailing Al-Qaeda's profits from human trafficking. However, there is data on the potential profits of the human trafficking and human smuggling markets in regions such as North Africa and the Sahara, where Al-Qaeda and Al-Qaeda affiliate groups are active.

Human trafficking and human smuggling remain a profitable endeavour for both terrorist organisations and organised crime groups, especially in North Africa and the Middle East, where Al-Qaeda are active. Whilst the human trafficking market remains lucrative, it is reported that the average cost of a trafficked slave is as low as US\$90, compared to the average historic price of US\$40,000 per slave (Gonzalez 2013, p.21). Despite this however, human trafficking remains one of the most profitable transnational crimes for terrorist organisations (Gonzalez 2013, p.1).

AQIM also has access to a relatively lucrative human trafficking market, with human trafficking across the Sahara being worth approximately US\$255-\$323 million. This figure has risen exponentially from the previous US\$8-\$20 million largely due to the developing migrant crisis in the region (Fanusie & Entz 2017, p.11). Whilst it is not possible to determine the percentage of this market that AQIM take, it can be ascertained that AQIM earns a portion of this market through direct sales and taxation (Fanusie & Entz 2017, p.11).

Whilst exact monetary figures are unavailable, it is evident that the human trafficking market is both profitable and expansive, particularly in North Africa and the Middle East where Al-Qaeda and Al-Qaeda affiliates are active. Therefore, it can be inferred that human trafficking may play a sizeable role in the financing strategy of Al-Qaeda and Al-Qaeda affiliate groups.

4.7 The Utilisation of Drug Trafficking by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

Drug trafficking has proven to be a lucrative transnational crime for IS. Despite IS' territorial losses in the Middle East, IS are continuing to effectively raise significant financial profit through drug trafficking. However, due to the nature of the drug trafficking industry, it is difficult to definitively and conclusively ascertain exact monetary figures that were awarded to IS through drug trafficking. To overcome information gaps, consideration of case studies as well as estimates put forward by international agencies will be utilised to determine the extent to which drug trafficking supports IS.

As discussed in Chapter Three, IS utilise drug trafficking primarily for the purpose of financial profit, with a secondary purpose being militants consuming drugs to conduct terrorist attacks with more efficiency. In regard to financial profit, IS has been linked to significant drug seizures. In 2016, Greek authorities intercepted a shipment of drugs valued at US\$13 million that had suspected links to IS (Owen 2016). Similarly, a seizure in Italy in 2017 linked US\$58 million worth of drugs to IS militants in Libya (Lurie 2020). This followed on from the 2017 discovery of US\$75 million worth of drugs linked to IS in Southern Italy (Aggarwal 2017). In 2020, US\$1billion worth of the drug Captagon was discovered in a port in Italy in 2020 and was suspected to have been facilitated by IS (Tondo 2020). Through these notable examples, it is evident that there are significant profits to be

made through drug trafficking. Furthermore, these cases are indicative that IS are most likely engaging in drug trafficking as a means of financing the organisation.

Whilst the aforementioned monetary figures are indicative of the detected drug shipments and the profits that are attainable through drug trafficking, they do not paint an overall picture of IS' revenue from drug trafficking. Whilst there is scarcity in research that details IS' overall involvement in drug trafficking, a 2014 estimate by the Russian Federal Drug Control Service (FSKN) claimed that IS had obtained substantial income through the trafficking of drugs, including heroin, through the Middle East into Europe. The FSKN had estimated the extent of IS' drug trafficking could award the group around US\$1billion annually (Watkinson 2015).

In conjunction with these large-scale drug trafficking cases, drug trafficking has allegedly been utilised as a means of micro-financing IS operatives in Europe (Clarke 2017). Clarke (2017) ascertains that through this micro-financing, IS were able to travel to and from IS conflict zones as well as facilitate terrorist attacks through the purchasing of resources including weapons, mobile telephones and vehicles. Whilst this activity is likely relatively small scale, it is another avenue in which IS utilise drug trafficking as a means of facilitating attacks, mobilising fighters and supporting the organisation.

Whilst drug trafficking is a viable and lucrative avenue of financial acquisition, evidence suggests that it is not the key financing stream for IS. However, with recent drug seizures allegedly stemming from IS, as well as reports of IS being involved in drug trafficking, it is reasonable to determine that drug trafficking is supporting and sustaining IS to some degree. Considering the monetary magnitude of recent drug seizures linked to IS, it is possible that drug trafficking may be playing a larger role in IS' financing strategy than first anticipated.

4.8 The Utilisation of Drug Trafficking by Al-Qaeda

Drug trafficking is a lucrative transnational crime for Al-Qaeda. Despite competition from other organisations across the Middle East and northern Africa, Al-Qaeda is continuing to utilise drug trafficking as a means of generating revenue and financial profits. Due to the

nature of drug trafficking, it is difficult ascertain the extent to which Al-Qaeda participate in drug trafficking (United States Government 2001). Reportedly, Al-Qaeda made US\$1 billion from the drug trade in 2016-2017 (Trad 2020). However, this figure is yet to be verified and should be viewed as a tentative estimate of the profits that Al-Qaeda could yield through drug trafficking.

AQIM is also currently benefiting from the drug trafficking trade, in particular, the cocaine and cannabis trade. The majority of AQIM's income from drug trafficking has stemmed from proceeds derived from taxes on traffickers operating in AQIM territory (Luengo-Cabrera & Moser 2016, p.2; Shelley 2018, p.5). Estimates note that up to 50% of profits generated from drug trafficking groups operating through AQIM's territory is paid to AQIM. This levy can take the form of money, weapons, resources, cars, ammunition and other equipment (Strazzari 2015, p.3). Allegedly, drug traffickers could yield US\$2,000 per kilogram for trafficking cocaine across North Africa (Gonzalez 2013, p.20). To profit from this, Al-Qaeda, as well as Al-Qaeda affiliates, would be awarded a portion of this US\$2,000 per kilogram in exchange for the protection of the drug traffickers. One estimate has placed the average weight of cocaine seizures in north-west Africa to be approximately 175kg (Faso, Verde & Colombia 2013, p.13). Whilst this estimate cannot be verified as accurate, it is potentially indicative of the cocaine market in North and West Africa as well as the profits that are available to Al-Qaeda through the implementation of a protection levy.

In conjunction with this, Al-Qaeda has been involved in the opium trade in Afghanistan. Whilst this trade is operating under Taliban control, Al-Qaeda has still generated financial revenue through the opium trade in Afghanistan (Hedayatullah 2020; Rowlatt 2019). Whilst exact monetary figures are unavailable, Peters (2009) ascertains that Al-Qaeda has heavily relied upon the illicit drug trade in Afghanistan to fund and recruit soldiers and militants (Piazza 2012).

Whilst drug trafficking is a financially lucrative industry, it is likely not the primary income stream for Al-Qaeda. However, considering the revenue that can be generated through taxing drug traffickers in regions of operation as well as Al-Qaeda's potential direct engagement in drug trafficking, it can be determined that drug trafficking is contributing to the support and sustenance of Al-Qaeda.

4.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter evaluated the extent to which transnational crimes have supported and sustained the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaeda. A key conclusion is that the transnational crimes that IS and Al-Qaeda have engaged in are financially lucrative for both groups and yield relatively high-profit margins. However, some transnational crimes are more financially lucrative than others. It is evident that kidnapping for ransom is one of the most lucrative transnational crimes for both Al-Qaeda and IS. Additionally, drug trafficking and human trafficking has proven to be a relatively lucrative endeavour by both IS and Al-Qaeda. The acquisition and selling of antiquities have proven to be very profitable for IS, while it is yet to yield substantial profits for Al-Qaeda. Overall, it is clear that there is evidence to suggest that transnational crimes play a significant role in sustaining the operational capabilities of both IS and Al-Qaeda.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE IMPACT OF DIFFERING APPROACHES TO TRANSNATIONAL CRIME ON THE ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND THE LEVANT AS COMPARED TO AL-QAEDA

With consideration of the data presented in the preceding chapter, it is evident that transnational crime plays a considerable role in the financing strategies of both Al-Qaeda and IS. However, with consideration of the quantitative data, as well as the qualitative assessments presented, it is apparent that Al-Qaeda and IS have had differing approaches to transnational crime. To answer the secondary research question: “have differing approaches to transnational crime impacted the success and sustainability of Al-Qaeda as compared to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant?”, this chapter will conduct a comparative analysis of IS and Al-Qaeda. Whilst Al-Qaeda and IS can be labelled as financially successful terrorist organisations, each organisation has faced a set of external and internal limitations to financial gain and stability (Zehorai 2018). In order to evaluate the financial capabilities of Al-Qaeda and IS, this chapter will assess IS and Al-Qaeda’s engagement with transnational crimes, such as antiquities exploitation, kidnapping for ransom, human trafficking, and drug trafficking. It will also compare both IS and Al-Qaeda’s engagement in these transnational crimes with respect to the multi-million-dollar proceeds elicited. Additionally, this chapter will discuss how factors such as the occupation of territory have differentiated IS from Al-Qaeda.

Al-Qaeda has historically relied upon donations and an extensive financial network to generate financial revenue (Comras 2005). However, as a result of the international war on terrorism financing following the events of 9/11, Al-Qaeda has been forced to diversify its operational strategy to increase reliance on transnational criminal activities (del Cid Gómez 2010, p.3). This can be compared to IS which, since its inception, has heavily relied on transnational crime to fund the organisation (Blannin 2017, p.14). Whilst both Al-Qaeda and IS engage in transnational criminal activity, this thesis asserts that such engagement is to differing degrees. Through the quantitative data presented in Chapter Four, it can be seen that in general, IS has engaged in transnational crime to a much higher degree than Al-Qaeda. This can be attributed to a number of factors including the occupation of territory, differences in operational capacity, differing financing strategies and the aptitude and attitude of recruits.

With respect to both Al-Qaeda and IS, it can be reasonably ascertained that IS' former extensive territorial claims allowed IS to engage in more lucrative transnational criminal activities as compared to Al-Qaeda. Consequently, when IS had extensive territorial claims, IS was able to fund a payroll of hundreds of millions of dollars annually, funded partially through revenue raised from transnational crime with the rest stemming primarily from taxation and extortion (Blannin 2017, p.17; Fanusie & Joffe 2015, p.3). Through the occupation of territory, IS was able to exploit the natural or cultural resources located within their territory (Zarate & Sanderson 2014, p.2). Consequently, IS generated an estimated US\$3 billion annually at the height of its territorial control in 2015, making it the wealthiest terrorist organisation in history (Zehorai 2018). However, following the loss of its territories as a result of concerted multinational combat operations, IS' annual financial income has been significantly reduced, with Zehorai (2018) estimating an annual income of US\$200 million following IS' loss of territory in late 2017. Whilst a number of factors may have contributed to this, it can be inferred that IS losing access to oil reserves and being unable to tax local civilians living under IS control contributed largely to a decline in IS' revenue (Kenner 2019). Due to the loss of these two major income streams, IS are forced to rely more heavily on transnational crime to sustain the organisation. It is evident that IS strives to be financially self-sufficient and aims to be adaptable and resilient to changes in financing capabilities (Johnston, Alami, Clarke & Shatz 2019, p.23). As such, it can be predicted that IS will continue to utilise transnational crime to continue to be financially self-sufficient and adapt to changes in financing capabilities.

Additionally, by controlling expansive territory, IS was also able to place levies on other criminals, such as drug traffickers, looters and human traffickers operating within their territory (Homeland Security Committee 2016, p.7). Whilst Al-Qaeda does place levies on criminals operating in or through the limited territory they control, it can be inferred that this has not occurred to the same degree as IS when IS had extensive territorial claims (Strazzari 2015). Additionally, due to Al-Qaeda's minimal territorial control, they have not been capable of exploiting natural or cultural resources to the same extent that IS has been able to.

5.1 The Acquisition and Selling of Antiquities

A clear distinction between Al-Qaeda and IS' engagement in transnational crime can be seen through the acquisition and selling of illicitly obtained antiquities. Through IS' territorial claims, IS had access to an array of sites that were rich with cultural heritage and ancient antiquities (Jones 2018, p.45). Through IS' control of these sites, IS were able to effectively pillage sites for antiquities and sell them for a significant financial profit. It is arguable that IS' territorial claims allowed the group to obtain a higher quantity of antiquities which in turn, increased their financial gains. Additionally, through IS' control of territory, IS were able to place taxes and levies on individuals or groups who were engaged in the acquisition or selling of antiquities to generate considerable financial income. IS' approach to the exploitation of antiquities is in stark comparison to Al-Qaeda's. Through financial data presented in Chapter Four, it is evident that Al-Qaeda is limited in its involvement in the illicit antiquities trade. Whilst the exploitation of antiquities is seemingly not a priority for Al-Qaeda, it can be inferred that an absence of territorial claims has, to a degree, inhibited Al-Qaeda's involvement in the illicit antiquities trade. Since Al-Qaeda had never had considerable territorial control compared to IS, Al-Qaeda has had less access to cultural or historical sites and antiquities. Furthermore, Al-Qaeda had not been able to tax or place levies on looters of antiquities as readily as IS. As a result, IS' approach to the acquisition and selling of antiquities has substantially contributed to the success and sustainability of IS, unlike the case for Al-Qaeda.

5.2 Kidnapping for Ransom

A key similarity can be seen in both Al-Qaeda and IS' approach to kidnapping for ransom. As highlighted in Chapters Three and Four, Al-Qaeda and IS both target similar hostages, elicit comparable ransom payments and follow a somewhat similar operational procedure (Cragin & Padilla 2017, p.670). Despite this however, there are some distinct differences between Al-Qaeda and IS' engagement in kidnapping for ransom. First, it can be observed that IS places a greater emphasis on producing propaganda material relating to kidnapping for ransom. Notable IS kidnapping victims such as US journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff, and US aid worker Peter Kassig, are prominent examples of those who have had

their deaths exploited for the purpose of creating IS propaganda material (Mellon, Bergen & Sterman 2017, p.4). The videos of the beheadings of James Foley and Steven Sotloff were distributed through IS' official media channels (McMah 2015). Furthermore, videos and images of IS militants alongside Peter Kassig's severed head were also distributed by IS as propaganda material (Callimachi 2014). These videos and images allowed IS to communicate their message to a regional and international audience (Herfroy-Mischler & Barr 2019, p.533). Whilst this was of benefit to IS, as IS views such barbaric tactics as assistive in augmenting the terror instilled in the global community, Al-Qaeda has been much more circumspect, having largely avoided such open displays of cruelty.

Thus, while Al-Qaeda gains substantial financial profits through kidnapping for ransom and has killed a number of hostages, it has not exploited the killings of hostages for the purposes of propaganda production to the same extent as IS. In fact, Al-Qaeda and Al-Qaeda affiliate members have condemned the actions of IS for executing US aid worker Peter Kassig and British aid worker Alan Henning (Byman 2015). Al-Qaeda condemned these killings based on the fact that both Kassig and Henning were risking their own safety to help alleviate the suffering of Muslims in the region (Byman 2015; Harper 2014). Additionally, the leaders of an Al-Qaeda affiliate group Jabhat al-Nusra labelled the executions to be counterproductive and in breach of Islamic law (Byman 2015). Al-Qaeda has also granted western journalists and researchers interviews with Al-Qaeda representatives, including Osama bin Laden prior to his death in 2011 (Byman 2015; Counter Extremism Project 2020). Through this, Al-Qaeda has been able to communicate their message to a regional, local and international audience through more legitimate and passive channels. This can be compared to IS, which has been less likely to have positive or constructive interactions with Western journalists, researchers or aid workers. Through this, it can be seen that Al-Qaeda and IS have different approaches to kidnapping for ransom. Al-Qaeda's preference to convince Muslims to adopt Al-Qaeda's teachings compared to IS' more forceful and violent coercion of Muslims to adopt IS ideology has led to diverging attitudes between the two organisations (Byman 2015). Additionally, Al-Qaeda's focus on the US as its primary 'far enemy' compared to IS' 'near enemy' of Shiite Muslims and regional religious minorities has impacted upon IS and Al-Qaeda's differing attitudes to overt displays of cruelty (Byman 2015).

Whilst both groups have similar targets, follow similar operational procedures and elicit similar financial revenue, it is observable that compared to IS, Al-Qaeda is more

accommodating and tolerant to Westerners when it suits their strategic or operational objectives (Byman 2015). Overall, IS exploits kidnapping for ransom to support and sustain the organisation through the creation of propaganda, financial revenue acquisition and the promotion of political ideology and agendas. On the other hand, Al-Qaeda primarily exploits kidnapping for ransom to support and sustain the organisation through financial revenue acquisition, although some of its kidnappings do serve its political agenda.

5.3 Human Trafficking

Another distinct difference between Al-Qaeda and IS' utilisation of transnational crime can be seen through their approach to human trafficking. Whilst both IS and Al-Qaeda have reportedly engaged in human trafficking, IS are more focused on exploiting human trafficking as a means of instilling fear in civilian populations, raising financial revenue and rewarding militants. This can be compared to Al-Qaeda which focuses primarily on raising financial revenue through human smuggling in North Africa (Fanusie & Entz 2017, p.10). On the other hand, it can be observed that IS exploit human trafficking to further both its strategic and operational objectives. By targeting minority civilian populations, such as the Yazidi population, IS has been effectively able to instil fear in the population, engage in the destruction of Yazidi society, and meet operational objectives by providing IS militants access to these trafficked individuals as slave-labour, including as sex slaves (Gönültaş 2020). IS are also able to fulfil its operational objectives by generating significant financial profit from the trafficking of individuals. IS' utilisation of human trafficking has sustained and supported IS through financial and human resource acquisition, aided in the promotion of its ideology and helped suppress minority populations. On the other hand, Al-Qaeda's utilisation of human smuggling appears to be aimed primarily at financial acquisition to contribute to sustaining the organisation.

5.4 Drug Trafficking

Data regarding IS and Al-Qaeda's involvement in drug trafficking is relatively challenging to source so it is difficult to conduct an accurate comparative analysis of Al-Qaeda and IS'

utilisation of drug trafficking. However, evidence suggests that drug trafficking aids in supporting and sustaining both IS and Al-Qaeda through financial acquisition. Additionally, drug trafficking has also assisted IS militants undertaking terrorist attacks to enhance combat performance (Lopez 2015). However, this plays a minimal role in supporting or sustaining IS as an organisation. This can be compared to Al-Qaeda, who has reportedly had minimal recorded instances of drug use within the organisation (Hasan 2015).

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter evaluated whether differing approaches to transnational crime impacted the success and sustainability of Al-Qaeda compared to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. As a result of international efforts to disrupt terrorist financing, both Al-Qaeda and IS have had to diversify their financing strategies to ensure organisational sustainability (del Cid Gómez 2010, p.3; Gomes & Mikhael 2018, p.15). Additionally, IS has been forced to adapt to new financing strategies following the organisation's territorial losses since 2017. As a result, both Al-Qaeda and IS are continuing to rely on transnational crime as a means of supporting and sustaining their organisations. This chapter concluded that broadly, IS has been able to engage in and exploit transnational crime more effectively than Al-Qaeda. Through IS' former territorial claims, IS was able to exploit natural and cultural resources to generate unprecedented financial profits. Through this exploitation, as well as through engagement in transnational crime, IS was able to effectively increase its operational capacity and support, and sustain the organisation through financial acquisition, human resource acquisition and propaganda dissemination. Additionally, through the utilisation of transnational crimes such as the selling and destruction of antiquities and kidnapping for ransom, IS was able to produce impactful propaganda material which was distributed to a broad international audience. Following IS' territorial losses, IS has continued to rely on transnational crimes such as drug trafficking, human trafficking and kidnapping for ransom to support and sustain the organisation (Soylu 2020; U.S. Department of State 2020; Walsh 2020). On the other hand, Al-Qaeda has also utilised transnational crime as a means of supporting and sustaining the organisation. However, Al-Qaeda's lack of territorial control has prevented the organisation from exploiting natural, cultural and human resources that were available to IS during the height of its territorial control.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This research thesis focused on the key research question of ‘What forms of transnational organised crimes have supported and sustained the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaeda?’. In evaluating this question, the thesis assessed the extent transnational crimes supported and sustained IS and Al-Qaeda as well as assessed whether differing approaches to transnational crime impacted the success and sustainability of both organisations.

The thesis also included a literature review that focused primarily on ‘terrorism financing’ and the ‘crime-terror nexus’ bodies of literature. While this thesis is situated at the intersection between the two bodies of literature, it is clear that there is a gap in the literature in evaluating the extent to which the two terrorist organisations have relied on transnational crime to sustain themselves. A comparative study could thus yield interesting and useful insights into the similarities and differences, potentially paving the way for better strategies in targeting terrorism financing.

Following a comprehensive discussion of the utilisation of transnational crimes by Al-Qaeda and IS, it is evident that transnational crime continues to play a significant role in supporting and sustaining both these organisations. This concluding chapter provides an overall summation of the conclusions reached in this thesis. Additionally, this chapter will evaluate the implications of this study for counter-terrorism research and practice. This chapter will conclude by discussing the limitations of this study and suggest directions for future research.

6.1 Thesis Findings

This thesis identified the acquisition and selling of antiquities, kidnapping for ransom, human trafficking and drug trafficking as four major transnational crimes that have made notable contributions to both Al-Qaeda and IS’ operational capacity and capability. During the period when it controlled substantial territory in Iraq and Syria, IS’ heavy reliance on the acquisition and selling of antiquities allowed it to raise substantial financial revenue through both the actual selling of antiquities as well as financial levies placed on individuals

pillaging antiquities within IS territory. Additionally, through the destruction of antiquities and historical cultural sites, IS was able to produce effective propaganda material that garnered attention from the international community. This thesis noted that IS' former territorial claims largely facilitated IS' involvement in the acquisition and selling of antiquities. On the other hand, Al-Qaeda had minimal involvement in the antiquities trade, due largely to its lack of control over territory, forcing it to use other avenues to raise funding for its activities.

Al-Qaeda and IS have both also engaged in kidnapping for ransom. Both Al-Qaeda and IS elicit comparable ransom payments, target similar hostages and follow a somewhat similar operational procedure. Thus, kidnapping for ransom plays a significant role in the financing strategy of both organisations. IS readily exploits kidnapping for ransom victims for the purpose of propaganda production and instilling terror within the international community through its use of cruel and barbaric tactics such as beheadings recorded on video. On the other hand, while Al-Qaeda has executed individuals whose ransoms have not been paid, Al-Qaeda has refrained from exhibiting similarly overt displays of cruelty as compared to IS.

Al-Qaeda and IS have also engaged in human trafficking, which has elicited financial profits for both. However, the comparative analysis in this thesis concluded that IS has exploited human trafficking to a higher degree than Al-Qaeda. IS has observably engaged in human trafficking for finance acquisition, human resource acquisition and to instil terror in minority populations. Whilst human trafficking has allowed IS to generate significant financial profits, IS has also exploited the trafficking of women and girls as sex slaves to provide an incentive for individuals to join IS as recruits and for militants to remain in the organisation. Additionally, through IS' systematic targeting of Yazidi women and girls, IS was able to effectively instil fear and terror amongst the Yazidi population. IS' approach to human trafficking can be viewed as contrasting to Al-Qaeda's engagement in human trafficking. Al-Qaeda has exploited human trafficking for financial revenue through both directly conducting human trafficking operations and through the imposing of taxation on human trafficking operations areas where Al-Qaeda has some control. For Al-Qaeda, human trafficking has been predominately a financial operation, shorn of the other objectives pursued by IS while it controlled territory.

Finally, Al-Qaeda and IS' engagement in drug trafficking was evaluated in this thesis. While both Al-Qaeda and IS utilise drug trafficking as a means of financial acquisition, IS militants have also engaged in the consumption of drugs to enhance combat performance. This can be contrasted to Al-Qaeda, which has had minimal reported instances of its members engaging in drug use.

Thus, this thesis concluded that both IS and Al-Qaeda utilise transnational criminal activities to support and sustain themselves, although there are clearly differences in the way they have approached these activities..

6.2 Research Implications

The conclusions reached in this thesis may be of relevance to both counter-terrorism policy and scholarly research in the areas of terrorism financing and the crime-terror nexus. This thesis has highlighted four key transnational crimes that have supported and sustained both IS and Al-Qaeda. Additionally, it identified key differences between IS and Al-Qaeda that have determined each organisation's success in engaging in these transnational crimes. Understanding this difference could potentially aid in the identification of strategies to better target transnational criminal activities by the two groups. Furthermore, this thesis identified key centres of gravity relating to both IS and Al-Qaeda's financing strategy. This may promote a consideration within the policy field of the strategic elements of both IS' and Al-Qaeda's involvement in transnational crime, as well as their financing strategy. In addition, a comparative study of this nature could be applicable and relevant to emerging terrorist organisations in the future.

6.3 Research Limitations

This thesis relied primarily on qualitative data, with publicly available, open-source quantitative data utilised to inform qualitative assessments. Quantitative data regarding terrorist financing has been difficult to source and available data may not be entirely reliable. Indeed, there are observable discrepancies in the data on terrorism financing. These

challenges regarding quantitative data presented a limitation to this research thesis. This is primarily due to the fact that reliance on quantitative data, as well as treating the available quantitative data as infallibly accurate, would result in potentially misleading research and misinformed qualitative assessments. To overcome this limitation, this thesis thus employed a broad range of qualitative primary and secondary sources to present as accurate an account of Al-Qaeda and IS' utilisation of transnational crime as possible. In addition, despite the limitations in terms of the accuracy of the available data, some of the data does provide approximate estimates which are useful in indicating the trends.

6.4 Future Research

Research into the financing strategy and capabilities of terrorist organisations will continue to be a relevant field of research in the future, given the continued threat and challenges posed by terrorist groups. As terrorist organisations continue to adapt and evolve in a dynamic counter-terrorism landscape, research in this field needs to continually keep pace, so as to inform counter-terrorism strategies. While this thesis focused on IS and Al-Qaeda, further research examining other terrorist organisations could help in understanding better the trends, direction and nature of terrorism financing.

Additionally, future research examining the exploitation of transnational crime by terrorist organisations during and after the COVID-19 global pandemic should be undertaken. It has been hypothesised that the global COVID-19 pandemic will exacerbate transnational crimes such as human trafficking and kidnapping for ransom, as terrorist organisations and organised crime groups can capitalise on the chaos and fear caused by the global pandemic (Damora 2020; UNF Political Science Class 2020). Consequently, both IS and Al-Qaeda, as well as other terrorist organisations should be monitored to determine whether and how terrorist financing will be impacted by the global pandemic.

6.5 Executive Summary

In summation, this thesis determined that the acquisition and selling of antiquities, kidnapping for ransom, human trafficking and drug trafficking have supported and sustained IS and Al-Qaeda. These transnational crimes have played a significant role in the financing strategy of both terrorist organisations. This phenomenon has been largely observable following the events of 9/11 and the subsequent international efforts to disrupt terrorism financing. Overall, both IS and Al-Qaeda will likely continue to rely on transnational crime to support and sustain their respective organisations.

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