

Roundtable: The Troubled Tringle: IS, Iran, and Syria

IS and the regional (dis)order – Dr Amjed Rasheed, Durham University

Ever since the rise of the Islamic State (IS) in 2014, most of the literature on IS has focused on how MENA regional powers have reacted to this phenomenon. This presentation takes a reverse angle and investigates instead how IS reacts to crises in the region and regional events. It will, first, discuss how IS understands the regional system; and secondly, inspects how IS reacts to regional events in terms of the quantity and the quality of its media outlets. The paper explores IS' newsletter *al-Naba'*, published in Arabic, and its magazines, *Dābiq*, *Rumīyah*, *Dār al-Islām*, published in English and French respectively, for insights.

Analysing the complex relationship between the Syrian regime and IS – Dr Neil Quilliam, Chatham House

The relationship between the Syrian regime and IS is poorly understood. Not only is the relationship complex and multifaceted, but it is also further complicated by deep political divisions within both the regime and IS. This talk will analyse the push and pull factors that have shaped the relationship since March 2011.

Iran and Syria in the eyes of the Islamic State – Ms Juline Beaujouan, Durham University

Ever since its first territorial gain in Iraq and Syria in January 2014, IS has developed a highly effective use of language and discourse as a tool for portraying, carrying and circulating its ideology in societies of the MENA region and beyond, thereby waging an intensive and extensive communications campaign aimed at both friendly and hostile audiences. This paper discusses IS' views of the Syrian and the Iranian regimes from both religious and political perspectives. It surveys IS' newsletter, *al-Naba'* in Arabic language, and the magazines *Dābiq*, *Rumīyah* and *Dār al-Islām*, respectively in English and French language, to investigate the group's perception of the two countries. It concludes that the Islamic State delegitimises the Syrian and Iranian governments, painting the regional picture with the brush of sectarianism. Iran is depicted as the major actor that plays a devil's game by using Syria and other allies and puppet governments to achieve its grand scheme of achieving Shia domination over the Middle East.

Iran's complex relationship with the Syrian regime and IS – Dr Sanam Vakili, Chatham House

Iran's regional strategy since 2003 has seen an expansion in Iranian power/influence beyond its borders in a significant way. This strategy, which has defensive strategic objectives, seems overtly successful as Tehran has increased its influence in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and beyond. This paper will analyse Iran's strategic defence posture as well as shed light on the converse effects of Iranian expansion, suggesting that this strategy, designed to strengthen the Islamic Republic, could actually be weakening it.