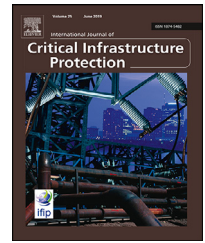


Available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

ScienceDirect

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/IJCIP](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/IJCIP)

# Energy infrastructure as a target of terrorist attacks from the Islamic state in Iraq and Syria

Lukáš Tichý

Research Fellow at the Institute of International Relations Prague, Nerudova 3, 118 50 Praha 1, Malá Strana, Czech Republic

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 20 November 2017

Revised 14 November 2018

Accepted 28 January 2019

Available online 1 February 2019

### Keywords:

Islamic State

terrorism

attacks on the energy sector

Middle East

Iraq

Syria

transport infrastructure

## ABSTRACT

Attacks on energy sectors and transport infrastructure are an important part of the strategy of Islamist militant and terrorist organizations, such as Al Qaeda and its offshoots or the Taliban. The article focuses on the attitude of the global Salafi-jihadist Islamist terrorist and militant group the Islamic State (IS) toward terrorism specifically targeting transport infrastructure and energy sectors, since it makes use of such terrorism as a political instrument of its strategy in the Middle East. The main aim of this article is to analyse the strategic importance of terrorist attacks on transport infrastructure and the energy industry for the IS against the background of the influence of Sunni Islam. The second goal of the article is to describe and analyse examples, goals and motives of the terrorist attacks on energy sectors and the accompanying criminal activities conducted by the IS in two selected Middle Eastern countries, Iraq and Syria, and the possible impact of the attacks on energy security.

© 2019 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

Just a few years after the military overthrow of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship in Iraq, the Islamic State (IS) became an important actor in international security relations in the highly explosive area of the Middle East. Sometime later, this self-proclaimed state spread to Syria, and thus it controlled more energy resources. This brutal expansion gave it a new access to vast funds, which it could use to wage its war against the West, organize new terrorist attacks and disseminate its ideology of intolerance and hate.

The aggressive behaviour of the IS has been the subject of many articles and monographs [see 22,24,51,53,59,71,74,76], and it is hard to find an aspect of this security threat which has not been sufficiently studied. Nevertheless, it is still possible to make further contributions to this field of research.

E-mail address: [tichy@iir.cz](mailto:tichy@iir.cz)

This article offers a profound analysis of IS terrorist attacks specifically targeting the energy sector in the Middle East [see 17,34,45,47,49,50,69,70] as a strategic and political instrument in the years 2014–2017. The main focus will be on IS energy-related terrorist attacks in Iraq and Syria, where the IS controlled large parts of the territory. Although the IS suffered a number of territorial losses in both of these countries in 2016–2017 – especially Mosul, its largest city in Iraq, and the Syrian town of Raqqa as the “capital” of the IS – and has been severely weakened, the IS fighters retained their military strength and are ready to conduct further terrorist attacks on the energy sectors of Iraq and Syria, which can cause serious damage to and jeopardize the countries' energy security<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> One example of (former) IS fighters preparing themselves for further action could be the terrorist and militant organization called the “White Flags” or the “White Banners”, which started in November 2017. The White Flags group is an alliance of former Islamic State militants, disgruntled Kurdish mafia members and

In connection with this topic, the article has two main goals. The first is to analyse the importance that the Islamic State attributes to terrorist attacks targeting the energy industry and infrastructure within its strategy in the context of the influence of Sunni Islam. The second aim is to describe and analyse examples, goals, and motives of the energy-related terrorist attacks conducted by the IS in Iraq and Syria and the possible impact of the attacks on energy security. This article will contribute to the general understanding of the issue of terrorist attacks on the energy sector in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries, and detail the energy-related strategy and fighting methods of the IS in the countries where it is or was active.

On the methodological level, the article is based on the case study method, which is understood to mean a detailed analysis of the case that was chosen as the subject of research. Its aim is to provide a profound comprehension or causal explanation of the case [16,80]. Its advantages are its depth of analysis and its relatively large scope of facts, which it endeavours to evaluate completely. In this treatise a “case” of an energy-related terrorist attack is understood to mean a specific type and form of terrorist activity aimed at an energy sector. The case study then frames the overall IS terrorist attacks targeting the energy industry and infrastructure together with the related criminal activities of the IS in Iraq and Syria.

The structure of the article is as follows. After the introduction, the second and third section briefly describe and define the problem of terrorist attacks targeting the energy industry and the importance of the energy sector in Islam. This definition and description will serve as the main theoretical framework of the article. The fourth part briefly characterizes the IS before delving into a deeper analysis of the importance of the energy issue and energy-focused terrorist activities in the strategy of the IS. Part five then provides some characteristics of the IS attacks on the energy sector in the Middle East, and also some specific examples of such attacks and their possible impact on energy security.

## 2. Terrorism and terrorist attacks targeting the energy sector

In the early 1990s, when the world was full of great expectations for the development of the international security relations and cooperation in an increasingly non-confrontational direction, terrorism was not considered a security threat but merely a risk. However, this opinion was replaced by a different view in the second half of the 1990s, as it was the period after the first terrorist strikes against the West with scores of fatalities and hundreds of injured people. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 were a fundamental turning point. Since the events of that day, terrorism has been re-

independent local Kurdish militias. They are not from the Peshmerga or any official Kurdish security forces. The White Flags militants currently occupy the mountains behind Tuz Khurmatu in Iraq’s Salah-al-Din Governorate. The main aim of the White Flags is to regain control of the oil facilities in Kirkuk so that they could continue in what they claim had been lucrative oil thefts [see 5].

garded as a grave and pressing security threat, with the related discussion focusing on the means of protecting people, countries and objects against it. There are also endless debates about the types of behaviour that may be included under the term “terrorism” and those that do not belong under the concept [41,58,60]. In our article, we consider terrorism, in full accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1566 (2004) [72], as premeditated, politically motivated violence which is perpetrated specifically against non-combatant targets with the aim to influence a local or international audience.

According to Eichler [31], terrorism as a security relations phenomenon is an extreme form of communication with the public which has four main elements: (1) the transmitter of the message, which is always the individual terrorist or terrorist group; (2) the target, which is the dead and wounded people who had the bad fortune to be in the wrong place at the wrong time; (3) the message, which is always addressed to the policy makers of the afflicted states; and (4) the feedback of the terror target, which is the result of a political evaluation. The relations between these four elements are guided by one basic principle: the addressee of the message, that is, the subject of the extortion and terror, is not the victim of the terrorist attack [40]. Meanwhile, the damage deliberately caused by the terrorists is never self-serving but always instrumental. Every dead or crippled person, and every financial loss caused by the attack is a message and an instrument of indirect pressure on leading political representatives, who are expected to either do what the terrorists want or stop doing what the terrorists do not like [40].

The communicational aspect of terror represents a major tool for analysing the goals and motives of an individual energy-sector attack or the threat thereof by the IS. Every terrorist attack on an energy sector has a goal and a motive, and its implementation sends a clear message from the given terrorist organization to both the political functionaries of the afflicted state, and the political representatives of Western countries in general.

According to Koknar [47], the concept of terrorism targeting an energy sector is not limited to armed attacks on power plants, oil and gas infrastructure, or refineries. The concept also includes illegal activities aimed at such facilities, such as the theft of oil or gas from pipelines, extortion, or the funding and support of groups that conduct the aforementioned attacks. In general, it may be said that energy terrorism is a criminal activity aimed at energy facilities that causes significant losses. In connection with this definition, Makarenko [50] divides terrorist attacks targeting energy sectors into seven categories of different degrees of threat to various parties in the industry.

The first, most common form of attack by virtue of its immediate effect and the instability it causes, is bomb attacks on fuel pipelines, which can also cause major damage to the national economy and threaten lives. This type of attack is part of the tactics used by various guerilla groups in civil wars, especially in Latin America, but also by terrorist organizations in the area of the MENA. The second form, which is an inseparable part of these pipeline attacks, consists of sabotaging oil and gas lines. Their primary purpose is causing losses to the national economy. Although sabotages are not very common

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/13420950>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/13420950>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)