ISIS: Past, Present and Future?: Pro-ISIS Media and State Formation

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ISIS: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE?

Pro-ISIS Media and State Formation

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"ISIS: Past, Present and Future?"

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This paper examines the role that media plays in the state building strategy of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). It analyzes the ways in which ISIS spreads its message and determines the significance of that message as it relates to state formation. Research findings suggest that ISIS is a sophisticated organization driven by powerful religious and political ideas. This paper is thus a means of uncovering ISIS's own arguments and state building aspirations. Examination and analysis of ISIS publications, public statements, and social media posts (such as those found on Twitter, Youtube, and web forums) constitute the main methods of research for this report.

Analysis of social media indicates that ISIS uses conventional social media platforms (such as Twitter and Youtube) as a primary means of media dissemination, making the distribution of its media decentralized. ISIS appears to be sacrificing strict control over the delivery of its message in exchange for widespread circulation and distribution. Pro-ISIS social media accounts are arranged into hierarchical virtual networks that allow users to communicate and coordinate posts. ISIS's media campaign is thus well organized and relatively controlled.

The content found in ISIS propaganda is particularly significant in understanding ISIS's current success and long-term goals. Media allows ISIS to demonstrate to its sympathizers that it not only has a post-war vision, but also a means of making that vision a reality. ISIS portrays itself as possessing many of the necessary features of modern statehood, including governance and legal structures, a viable economy, and the ability to provide basic and complex public services. ISIS also invests heavily in religious rhetoric, adding another layer to the group's appeal and overall legitimacy. Pro-ISIS media indicates that ISIS is not driven primarily by grand sectarian war or anti-western sentiment, but by a desire to restore the Islamic Caliphate. Global media, by helping ISIS to bolster its own political and religious legitimacy, contributes heavily to the actualization of its goals.

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List of Acronyms

AAS
    Ansar al-Sharia

AQ
    Al-Qaeda

AQI
    Al-Qaeda in Iraq

JN
    Jabhat al-Nusra

JTWJ
    Jama'at al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad

ISI
    The Islamic State of Iraq

ISIS
    The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham

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Thank you to everyone who gave me the confidence and motivation to tackle such difficult subject material. This research project was challenging at times, but the support and encouragement I received from the Boston College community kept me going. I am extremely grateful.

Thank you,
Dana Hadra

1. Introduction

He was born in 1971 in Samarra, Iraq, to a conservative Sunni family of Islamic preachers and classical Arabic teachers. He is highly educated, having received a PhD in Islamic studies from the University of Baghdad, and has been described as shy and deeply religious. Much of his past remains a mystery, but in less than a year, he has managed to become the world's most powerful Islamist leader. This is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-proclaimed caliph of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), otherwise known simply as the Islamic State.[1]

Not much is known about Baghdadi, earning him the title, "the invisible sheikh."[2] Only a few authenticated photographs exist of him, and, according to media sources, even his own followers do not interact with him directly.[3] Baghdadi thus captured the world's attention when, on July 4, 2014, he arrived at the Grand Mosque in Mosul, Iraq to deliver his first public sermon as leader of the newly restored Islamic Caliphate. Within hours, Baghdadi's sermon was posted on the Internet, and images of Baghdadi slowly climbing the stairs of the pulpit dressed in a black robe and turban circulated global media.

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[1] Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, announced the formation of a unified Islamic Caliphate on June 29, 2014, thereby changing the group's name from "the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham" to simply "the Islamic State." For the purpose of this paper, I will continue to use the acronym "ISIS."

[2] Benjamin Russel, "Who is Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi? The 'invisible sheikh' waging brutal war in Iraq," *Express,* June 12, 2014, accessed October 9, 2014, http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/481968/Who-is-Abu-Bakr-Al-Baghdadi-The-invisible-sheikh-waging-brutal-war-in-Iraq.

[3] Ibid.

Baghdadi spoke calmly in classical Arabic before several dozen men and boys, who stood beneath the black ISIS flag draped on the wall next to them. In his sermon, Baghdadi defended his intention to establish an Islamic State, explaining, "this is a duty upon the Muslims-a duty that has been lost for centuries…the Muslims sin by losing it, and they must always seek to establish it, and they have done so, and all praise is due to Allah."[4] In only a few short months, ISIS has become the most powerful and sophisticated insurgent organization in the world.

Figure 1. Screenshot of Baghdadi delivering a sermon at the Grand Mosque in Mosul, Iraq on July 4, 2014.[5]

Since June of 2014, ISIS has seized control of large swaths of territory between Raqqa, ISIS's "capital" in northern Syria, Mosul in northern Iraq, and Fallujah, west of

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[4] Thomas Joscelyn, "Analysis: Islamic State's 'caliph' leader prayers in Mosul," *The Long War Journal,* July 5, 2014, accessed September 10, 2014,
http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/07/analysis_islamic_sta.php.

[5] "English subtitles of full sermon posted by ISIS's Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi, Caliph of the 'Islamic State,'" Youtube video, posted by "D Brett," July 12, 2014, accessed August 8, 2014,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PxJSm7XwxqA.

Baghdad. While estimates vary, most sources report that ISIS controls nearly a third of both Syria and Iraq.[6] Relentless violence and human rights atrocities have come to characterize ISIS's method of operation. However, while the world maintains a state of horror, buttressed by images of beheadings and stonings, ISIS has managed to establish governance structures, schools, health centers, and a viable economy. One of ISIS's media centers, al-Hayat, has launched a global propaganda campaign so alluring that thousands of fighters from all over the world have flocked to Syria and Iraq in defense of a romantic vision of the Islamic Caliphate. ISIS's intellectual might and ability to posture itself as a legitimate state is what will make ISIS successful in the long run.

The immediate military threat that ISIS poses is only the surface of the challenge. ISIS is not merely a group of terrorists; it is an organization driven by ideas and by what many of its members believe to be the command of God. Combating a group like ISIS, therefore, requires intellectual diplomacy. The goal of this paper is not merely to react to ISIS's actions, but also to analyze ISIS's own arguments and state building aspirations. Careful analysis of ISIS's media campaign serves as the means through which I will accomplish this goal. I will both examine how ISIS spreads its message and analyze the significance of that message as it relates to state formation. This will allow me to gain a deeper understanding of ISIS's post-war aims. In this way, I will add a new perspective to the current debate about the nature of the group, examining how, on the one hand, ISIS is a new kind of security threat, different from what we in the West have encountered in the past, and on the other hand, represents a body of beliefs as old as the seventh century.

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[6] Joscelyn, "Analysis: Islamic State's 'caliph' leader prayers in Mosul."

This paper is not intended to bolster sympathy for ISIS or justify the group's actions. Rather, it is a means of taking ISIS seriously, not just militarily, but intellectually. I plan to take ISIS under the microscope and examine the group from new and perhaps controversial angles in order to truly understand the driving forces behind ISIS. Through its media campaign, ISIS claims a degree of political and religious legitimacy to which other insurgent groups can hardly compare. It is thus vital that we understand how ISIS uses media as a weapon of statecraft.

CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

What role do media play in ISIS's state building strategy? What do pro-ISIS media tell us about ISIS's long-term goals? These central questions will guide my research and lead me to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of ISIS. This paper will address Iraqi and Syrian politics only as they relate to the emergence of ISIS. This paper will also not discuss in detail ISIS's military strategy or foreign policies concerning ISIS, but will focus instead on characterizing ISIS's political and ideological visions. First, I will provide an overview of the literature concerning state formation. In order to understand how and why ISIS functions, it is important to gain familiarity with some of the existing theories on the origins and development of early and modern states. This literature review will cover five theories concerning state formation: conquest theory, voluntary theory, war theory, and media theory.

The next section of this paper will examine the evolution and emergence of ISIS by describing the historical and political environment in which ISIS developed. These

chapters will focus primarily on the emergence of ISIS within the contexts of the Syrian Civil War and political instability in Iraq. I will begin by describing the activities of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) in 2004 under the leadership of Abu Masab al-Zarqawi. I will then trace the evolution of AQI to the emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq, which would later become, under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham. I will also discuss the emergence of al-Qaeda in Syria and the point at which ISIS broke away from al-Qaeda and became an independent organization. Until February of 2014, ISIS existed under the banner of al-Qaeda, which first began operating in Syria in 2012 under the name Jabhat al-Nusra (JN). The split between JN and ISIS in 2014, however, marked the beginning of a violent rivalry between the two groups. I will thus analyze how and why the split occurred so that I might begin to characterize ISIS better and understand what makes ISIS distinct.

In the next section of this paper, I will attempt to characterize the philosophy behind ISIS and the Islamic Caliphate more generally. How, for example, does Baghdadi justify the Caliphate and what is the historical and theological significance of the Islamic Caliphate? Answering this question will require an examination of the first Islamic Caliphate. I will also provide an overview of the contemporary debates regarding the restoration of the Caliphate. The first Islamic Caliphate was established in 632 AD and rose and fell until its final demise in 1924. The leader of a caliphate, the caliph, was and still is meant to be the shadow of the Prophet Muhammad, capable of implementing the same system of governance that existed during the Prophet's time. Baghdadi's 2014 declaration of the Islamic Caliphate thus represents a desire to emulate a system that

ruled the Muslim world nearly 15 centuries ago. In order to understand Baghdadi's role as

Caliph, I will trace this role back to Abu Bakr, who was given the first title of caliph

following the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Abu Bakr was one of four caliphs known

as the "Rashidun," or "Rightly Guided Caliphs." The Rightly Guided Caliphs are known

to have shared a close, personal relationship with the Prophet Muhammad, and are

therefore looked upon as models of perfect and righteous Islamic state leadership.

What then, according to the example of the Rashidun, does it mean to be caliph?

While Baghdadi was the first to officially declare the establishment of the Caliphate since

1924, many radical Islamist leaders have informally declared themselves caliphs. Al-

Qaeda, for example, has publicly advocated the re-establishment of the Caliphate in

rhetoric throughout its history. Despite such rhetoric, the idea of the Caliphate has not

driven the group's agenda. ISIS is therefore unique in its ability and desire to turn its

vision of a re-established Islamic Caliphate into a political reality. This section will thus

end with a brief overview of some of the contemporary debates regarding the restoration

of the Caliphate.

Following an in-depth examination of the Caliphate, I will analyze ISIS's media

strategy. I begin by looking at how ISIS disseminates its media. ISIS is known for its

adept use of social media platforms and modern technology as a means of

communicating with its sympathizers abroad. Platforms such as Twitter and Youtube

have proven powerful instruments of ISIS statecraft and play an incredibly significant

role in ISIS's larger political strategy. This chapter provides a glimpse at the inner

workings of ISIS's media strategy and analyzes ISIS's overall approach to the Internet.

The next chapter will examine some of the theological themes present in ISIS's official publications. Recognizing these themes is a necessary step towards understanding ISIS's claim to religious authority. Religious authority, in turn, bolsters ISIS's image as a legitimate caliphate. This section thus looks at how ISIS's theological vision, as presented in its media campaign, factors into ISIS's overall method of state building. I also provide a brief chapter on how public displays of violence fit into ISIS's overall strategy. ISIS is perhaps more widely known for its merciless brutality. While ISIS's use of violence is not the main focus of this paper, I nevertheless demonstrate that all of ISIS's decisions, even those that require the use of violence, are highly calculated and motivated by ISIS's long-term goals.

In the next chapter, I will analyze how ISIS presents itself as a functioning state through its media campaign. How does ISIS claim to be governing the territories under its control? I will analyze ISIS's use of aesthetics, symbols, and rhetoric to determine what ISIS is hoping to project or accomplish. This chapter is organized according to the various state-like functions and features ISIS claims to possess. Through ISIS self-reporting, I examine ISIS's ability to provide public services and security forces, establish educational institutions, promote the role of women, build complex legal structures, and provide economic stability. The aim of this chapter is to assess the degree to which these various functions contribute to ISIS's overall legitimacy.

METHODOLOGY

<u>Secondary Research</u>

Secondary desk research, stemming from both print and online sources, will contribute heavily to the research methodology of this paper. A number of book titles by distinguished authors will provide useful background information concerning the nature of the original Islamic state and the intended role of the Caliph, for example. I will also use a number of publications and journals that cover relevant topics, many of which I found through various databases, scholarly magazines, and prominent think tanks.

<u>Primary and Original Research</u>

The bulk of my research on ISIS itself will stem from original and primary sources. Given that the emergence of ISIS in international politics is so recent, most of my information concerning ISIS developments will stem not from books, but from print, online, and audio media.

<u>- English and Arabic Newspaper Articles</u>

Like social media, English and Arabic newspaper articles will be vital to tracking developments concerning ISIS. Arabic newspapers in particular will allow me to analyze how Arab countries perceive these developments.

One of the best ways to track rebel movements and statements made by Islamist leaders is through social media. Rebel and Islamist groups in Syria, particularly ISIS, are notorious for communicating with each other, and the broader jihadist community, through social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, blogs, and jihadi web forums. Through jihadi blogs and web forums in particular I will have access to some of the conversations currently taking place within the jihadi community regarding ISIS. Activists working on the ground in Syria and Iraq also report through social media. Thus, in order to closely track current events, I will follow various Facebook and Twitter accounts, bearing in mind that social media sites are often used as a political tool or a way of disseminating propaganda. Much of the social media coming out of Syria and Iraq is biased, but this in itself can offer insight on the mindset of these Islamist groups and their members. Due to the potential dangers associated with visiting jihadi web forums and pro-ISIS social media accounts, I will use a proxy server provided by Top Browser, which acts as an intermediary between my personal computer and the Internet. This, in turn, will allow me to browse the Internet with a relative degree of anonymity.

- ISIS Publications and Propaganda

ISIS has become well known for its outstanding media campaign, coordinated and disseminated through ISIS's many formal media centers. Through its media centers, ISIS has been able to publish and disperse a number of publications that document ISIS achievements and advertise its broad military and political strategy. I will carefully examine these publications, including *Dabiq,* ISIS's English-language magazine, and the

frequently published "Islamic State Report," as a means of analyzing ISIS's political and religious vision. ISIS has also circulated a number of self-made videos, flyers, and short publications that advertise the Islamic Caliphate to the Muslim community elsewhere in the world, including in the West. ISIS has become well known for its propaganda, which has drawn hundreds of foreign fighters from all over the world into Syria to fight alongside ISIS. Careful analysis of the aesthetics and rhetoric used in ISIS media will be crucial to my research.

<u>- Public Statements</u>

I will keep a consistent record of public statements and speeches made by ISIS leaders and members, paying close attention to the rhetoric used and how such rhetoric relates to the group's objectives and ideology. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's public sermon delivered in Mosul on July 4, 2014 is among the many audio and print statements I will carefully analyze. Such statements are frequently circulated on the Internet, either formally through ISIS media centers, or informally through social media sites.

<u>Websites: Monitoring and Analysis</u>

A number of online blogs and websites dedicated to monitoring Islamist activity will prove vital to my research. I will conduct a lot of my research with the help of sites such as SITE Intelligence Group (specifically the group's "INSITE Blog on Terrorism" and "SITE Monitoring Service: Jihadist Threat"), TRAC, Jihadica, and Jihadology. These monitoring services track, compile, analyze, and occasionally translate information

coming from jihadist websites and blogs, videos, and social media. They will prove

crucial in my endeavor to closely track pro-ISIS media.

CONCLUSION

While we have seen calls for the restoration of the Islamic Caliphate throughout

the twentieth century, an Islamist group has not threatened modern nation-state borders in

the way that ISIS has. Unlike other militant Islamist organizations, ISIS expects to

establish a sustainable, fully functioning state. This paper will serve as a means of

moving beyond daily media coverage pertaining to ISIS, which appears focused on

ISIS's use of extreme violence and brutality. I plan to look beyond the headlines and

beneath the surface of ISIS, where one will likely find a smart and sophisticated

organization driven by historically and religiously inspired ideas. Only by confronting

these ideas head on and examining how these ideas manifest themselves in the form of a

state can we truly begin to understand and combat groups like ISIS.

2. Literature Review

STATE FORMATION

Since the Second World War, the number of states in the world has quadrupled, making the nature and origin of the state a subject of increasing interest in political science, sociology, and anthropology.[1] Over time, scholars have developed a wide range of theories explaining the formation of the state. Such theories have developed significance in the way that they impact the legitimacy of existing states and the basis on which existing governments claim authority.[2] The variation in state formation theories stems from disagreement over what it is that constitutes a state in the first place, whether it is a system of formal institutions, a mechanism of dominance and authority, or merely an association of peoples. At the most basic level, and for the purposes of this paper, the state can be defined as having the following components: a permanent population, a defined territory, and a centralized government.[3] Given this definition, we can begin to examine various theories concerning the formation of the state, that is, the development of state structures in an area where no effective state previously existed.

Generally speaking, state formation theories can be divided into two areas of study: early state formation and modern state formation. Early state formation concerns

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[1] Christian Krohn-Hansen and Nunstad G. Knut, "Introduction," in *State Formation: Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 3.

[2] Martin Sicker, *The Genesis of the State* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 19.

[3] H. J. M. Clasessen and Peter Skalnik, "The Early State: Theories and Hypotheses," in *The Early State* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), 17.

the study of primitive forms of social organization. According to Fukuyama, most human civilizations began as tribal societies defined in terms of kinship.[4] The evolution of primitive tribal societies into organized polities is the subject of early state formation. Theories concerning early state formation typically stem from the anthropological study of Africa, Mesopotamia, South and East Asia, and Peru.[5] Prominent scholars such as Oppenheimer, Carneiro, and Wittfogel are vital to the development of early state formation theories.

Theories on modern state formation begin with the study of medieval Europe and continue through the periods of colonization and decolonization. Modern statehood is often associated with the Westphalian model of sovereignty, which requires that a state has sovereign authority over a given territory and is not controlled by any external actors.[6] Fukuyama asserts that changes in ideology also marked the shift from early statehood to modern statehood. He explains:

> The passage from band- and tribal-level societies to state-level ones represented, in some sense, a huge setback for human freedom. States were wealthier and more powerful than their kin-based predecessors, but that wealth and power led to a huge amount of stratification that left some masters and many others slaves.[7]

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[4] Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order* (London: Profile Books, 2011), 53.

[5] Ronald Cohen, "State Origins: A Reappraisal," in H. J. M. Claessen and Peter Skalnik, *The Early State* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), 39.

[6] Stephen D. Krasner, "Rulers and Ruled: Minority Rights," in *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 73.

[7] Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order,* 445.

The rise of modernism, however, meant the rise of "equality and recognition" at the level of the state.[8] Theorists such as Tilly, Weber, and Tyler contribute heavily to the scholarship on modern state formation.

Most theories concerning the origins of the state, early and modern, revolve around human agency in state formation. During the Hellenistic period, however, the state was widely considered a divine, rather than human, creation. As Sicker explains, ancient Greek thinkers viewed the state and its institutions as an extension of human nature, and therefore a concern of the gods. The Greeks' conception of the nature of the state "led them to consider the state more as an end in itself than as a means for furthering human purposes. As a consequence, the state took on a significance that dwarfed that of its citizens who, for the most part, submitted docilely to its virtually unlimited authority."[9] The theocratic conception of the state is thus associated with some of the earliest societies in which political authority was derived from God(s) alone. Political power was legitimized by the common belief that certain individuals were agents of the divine. In his analysis of early state formation, Service discusses the divine origin of the state as proposed by Greek and Roman philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and the Epicureans. Service explains:

> During the Revival of Learning in Europe from the thirteenth to fifteenth century, Aristotle's idea of *natural law* to be fulfilled in terms of an ideal universal state, or *cosmopolis,* was united with Stoic philosophical thought to become finally theistic, particularly on the basis of "natural" (i.e. God-given) desirability of the state.[10]

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Sicker, *The Genesis of the State,* 20.

[10] Elman R. Service, *Origins of the State and Civilization* (New York: Norton, 1975), 22.

Modern sociologists and political scientists, however, view the divine theory of state

formation as deeply flawed and largely irrelevant in explaining most instances of state

formation. Service, for example, discounts the divine theory as "antirevolutionary,

antideterministic, and antiscientific."[11] Sicker notes:

> By stipulating that all power derives from God, the theory allows anyone
> who aspires to political power to assert that his inclinations are also of
> divine origin and of equal standing with that of the established political
> authorities, entitling him to the same legitimacy irrespective of prevailing
> law or custom in a particular political society.[12]

This idea stems from Ibn Khaldun, who argues, "human society can exist without such a

Divine Law, merely in virtue of the authority which compels the others to follow and

obey him."[13] Most agree, then, that divine agency alone is not sufficient to explain how

and why states formed throughout history. This following literature review explains more

widely credited theories, some of which relate, directly and indirectly, to the divine

theory of state formation. The theories discussed concern both early state formation

(including conquest theory and voluntary theory) and modern state formation (including

warfare theory, culture theory, and media theory.)

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Sicker, 41.

[13] Charles Philip Issawi, *An Arab Philosophy of History* (Princeton, NJ, USA: Darwin Press, 1987), 101,
quoted in Sicker, *Origins of the State and Civilization,* 40.

CONQUEST THEORY

Scholars have taken a number of approaches to explaining the conquest theory, sometimes referred to as the "force theory," but some of the earliest theories take a socioeconomic approach. At the most basic level, the conquest or force theory of state formation holds that states form as a result of the dominance of one particular group over another. While the conquest theory has its roots in the work of Ibn Khaldun, Ludwig Gumplowicz is widely considered to be one of the first sociologists to develop the conquest theory using anthropological evidence. According to Gumplowicz, the origin of the state rests in the social stratification of society. Gumplowicz observed that early societies were divided into two broad social classes, namely, the conquerors and the conquered masses. The conquering class was motivated primarily by material gains achieved by exploiting the subjugated class. So as to maintain its dominance, the ruling class built institutions around this divided society, forming what we now know to be the state.

Following closely in Gumplowicz's footsteps was Franz Oppenheimer, one of the leading sociologists of the modern era to explain and analyze state formation according to the conquest theory. Oppenheimer argues that all primitive states arose following the use of force. According to Oppenheimer:

> The State…is a social institution, forced by a victorious group of men on a defeated group, with the sole purpose of regulating the dominion of the victorious group over the vanquished, and securing itself against the revolt from within and attack from abroad.[14]

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[14] Franz Oppenheimer, *The State*, (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1975), 8, quoted in Sicker, 70.

Thomas Holland similarly characterizes the state in terms of force and domination, defining the state as:

> A numerous assemblage of human beings generally occupying a certain territory amongst whom the will of the majority, or of an ascertainable class of persons is, by the strength of such a majority or class, made to prevail against any of their number who oppose it."[15]

Thus, the purpose of the state according to these scholars is to secure the dominance of the ruling class over the subjugated masses. The state was, in its origin, an instrument of oppression.

In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State,* Frederick Engels similarly views conquest as the primary method of state formation, but examines why and under what circumstances conquest happens in the first place. Engels' thesis rests on the idea that force is a consequence of economic development and stratification. Engels' argument begins with primitive societies. As economies began to develop, Engels argues, people established new modes of production and traditional social structures began to change. Distinct social classes and sects formed, distinguished primarily by the possession of land and modes of production. By establishing control over the economy, the possessing class is then able to rule over the non-possessing class, and, as Krader notes, "the means by which this control is achieved is political force, including physical power. The highest (that is, most centralized), tightest, and most monopolistic control of

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[15] Thomas Erskine Holland, *The Elements of Jurisprudence* (6th ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893), 40, quoted in Sicker, *Origins of the State and Civilization,* 69.

the political power resides in the state, which is the organ of the ruling class."[16] Like

Gumplowicz, Oppenheimer, and Holland, Engels views the state as a mechanism for

preserving a certain social order. In his review of Engels' thesis, Sicker assesses that "the

primary purpose of the state…is to consolidate the existing class divisions of the society

and thereby to ensure the security of the property of the dominant class."[17] Engels'

emphasizes internal socioeconomic division as the precursor to state formation by force.

This implies that the state arose out of force or conquest from within society rather than

from some external force.

In his analysis of Chinese dynasties, Fukuyama asserts that economic or material

interests alone cannot explain the use of force in state formation. He argues that

throughout human history, the use of force "has often been perpetuated by people seeking

not material wealth but recognition." Recognition, Fukuyama states, is "the

acknowledgement of another human being's dignity or worth, or what is otherwise

understood as status." Fukuyama goes on to explain that recognition is not just sought

after by conquerors, but also by what he calls "humble peasant rebels," such as Arab

tribes which were able to "settle their differences and conquer much of North Africa and

the Middle East because they sought recognition for their religion, Islam, much as

European warriors conquered the New World under the banner of Christianity."[18]

According to Fukuyama, then, the formation of the state by force stems not just from

economic interests, but from ideological interests as well. Following from a similar

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[16] Lawrence Krader, *Formation of the State* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 44-45.

[17] Sicker, *Origins of the State and Civilization,* 72.

[18] Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order,* 441.

argument, Benedetto Croce broadens the definition of conquest to include not just physical force or military might, but also the power of persuasion and the exertion of intellectual pressure. In his assessment of Croce's thesis, Sicker explains, "Whoever possess the power to persuade must be considered as a force in society."[19]

William Lilly argues that successful state formation requires a combination of physical force and a widely accepted ideology. In *First Principles in Politics,* Lilly argues, "Every polity, however rude, requires the ideas of right, and of law for the maintenance of right. Might, without these ideas, would not give rise to a commonwealth, but to a gang of robbers; to anarchy plus the sword."[20] In other words, while conquest may be a contributing factor to state formation, force alone is not sufficient to establishing a sustainable state. Force and might must be backed by ideas concerning right and wrong, and a system capable of implementing those ideas.

Carneiro argues that the force theory of state formation only applies under certain conditions, noting that many instances of warfare throughout history did not lead to the creation of a state.[21] Carneiro presents what he calls "environmental" and "social circumscription" theories. Both theories of circumscription describe the isolation of a society. Environmental circumscription refers to a situation in which a population is geographically isolated within a confined area, surrounded by natural boundaries such as mountains, bodies of water, or deserts.

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[19] Sicker, *Origins of the State and Civilization,* 75.

[20] Samuel William Lilly, Lilly, *First Principles in Politics* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), 19.

[21] R. L. Carneiro, "A Theory of the Origin of the State," *Science* 169, no. 3947 (1970): 734, accessed September 30, 2015, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1729765?seq=1.

Social circumscription describes a society isolated not because of natural boundaries, but because of human barriers. Carneiro explains that a society might find itself surrounded by rival or warring populations or tribes, preventing the isolated society from growing geographically. Following population growth, however, the isolated society likely faces extreme pressure to expand, forcing the society into conflict with surrounding tribes. Conquest thus becomes inevitable, according to Carneiro, and the conquered, if they seek survival, are forced to submit to the rule of their conquerors. Under conditions of social circumscription, Carneiro argues, the conquest theory of state formation may apply.

VOLUNTARY THEORY

Most voluntary theories of state formation extend from the social contract model first proposed by Enlightenment philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Hobbes, and Immanuel Kant. The social contract model of political legitimacy suggests that individuals have willingly given up their autonomy to some higher authority in exchange for protection. Carneiro's explanation of the voluntary theory closely reflects the social contract model. Carneiro defines all voluntary theories as being similar in that "they demonstrated inability of autonomous political units to relinquish their sovereignty in the absence of overriding external constraints."[22] Carneiro thus suggests that given certain external constraints, "autonomous political units" willingly and voluntarily give up their sovereignty to the authority of the state. According to Carneiro, the voluntary

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[22] Ibid.

theory of state formation holds that "at some point in their history, certain peoples spontaneously, rationally, and voluntarily gave up their individual sovereignties and united with other communities to form a larger political unit deserving to be called a state."[23]

Though Carneiro supports the conquest theory of state formation under conditions of social circumscription, other conditions, specifically conditions of environmental circumscription, better support the voluntary theory of state formation. In "A Theory of the Origin of the State," Carneiro begins by describing one theory of voluntary state formation, or what he calls the "automatic theory," first introduced by British archeologist V. Gordon Childe. According to the automatic theory, as agriculture developed in primitive societies and food was produced in surplus, people no longer had to produce their own food. People came to specialize in other forms of production, and the division of labor was established. Due to the division of labor, society became more economically and politically integrated, demanding certain institutions and organizational structures. Such structures are what we now know to be the state.

Carneiro argues, however, that the automatic theory alone is not sufficient in describing the formation of the state, noting that states have, throughout history, formed even in cases where agriculture did not create a food surplus. Carneiro thus introduces the voluntary theory of state formation under conditions of environmental circumscription. As previously explained, environmental circumscription occurs when a society becomes geographically isolated by natural boundaries. As population increases, resources become

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[23] Ibid, 733.

constrained. Eventually, people begin searching for a means of cooperation and organized distribution of limited resources. The desperate need for resources, Carneiro suggests, leads people to voluntarily submit to some organized structure or means of cooperation, which we might consider the beginnings of early statehood.[24]

One of the most notable theories concerning early state formation is the "hydraulic hypothesis," developed largely by Karl Wittfogel. Wittfogel, like Carneiro, asserts that early populations voluntarily submitted to the authority of the state in exchange for the preservation and distribution of a particular resource. In *Oriental Despotism,* Wittfogel begins by examining ancient civilizations. He observes that most ancient civilizations relied heavily on irrigation and large-scale water supplies, and that the effective management of irrigation required an organized system of cooperation. This is where the state began to take shape. According to Wittfogel, state formation occurs when:

> A number of farmers eager to conquer arid lowlands and plains are forced to invoke the organizational devices which- on the basis of premachine technology- offer the one chance of success: they must work in cooperation with their fellows and subordinate themselves to a directing authority.[25]

Wittfogel thus asserts that the state formed around society's stock of water, a resource of common interest. Wittfogel also observes that while the hydraulic theory implies state formation occurred according to the will of the people, states often produced despotic

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[24] Ibid, 734.

[25] Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A comparative study of total power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 18.

governments, with one person or a small group of people claiming a monopoly on the control of irrigation and governance. However, despotism in such states, Wittfogel argues, was both legitimized by claims to religious authority, and considered necessary to the effective maintenance of water systems. Water supply thus became completely dependent on the state. Wittfogel notes, however, that while the hydraulic theory applies to early state formation, not all states throughout history formed around systems of irrigation.[26] Wittfogel thus applies his analysis to modern state formation by characterizing the state as an entity or system meant to manage any particular resource of common interest.

Elman Service's theory on state formation requires a nuanced understanding of the voluntary theory. According to Service, states do not emerge out of common material interests, but out of association, or out of a common interest in a particular social order. In *Origins of the State and Civilization,* Service describes what he calls "chiefdoms," or primitive societies characterized by primitive and theocratic rule. Service explains:

> Chiefdoms have centralized direction, hereditary hierarchical stratus arrangements with an aristocratic ethos, but no formal, legal apparatus of repression. The organization seems universally to be theocratic, and the form of submission to authority that of a religious congregation to a priest-chief.[27]

Though power is highly concentrated with the chiefdom's leader, Service argues, "The leader's position is strengthened by his doing the job well and fairly."[28] Institutions and

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Service, *Origins of the State and Civilization,* 16.

[28] Ibid, 293.

sanctions "backed by the use of force, or the threat of it,"[29] form around this type of leadership, and this, according to Service, is where the state begins to form. Service explains that those living under the leader voluntarily submit to the state after the leader "engineers the consent of the governed by the adroit use of supernatural powers."[30] It is thus believed that "the benefit of being part of the society (which) obviously outweighed the alternatives."[31] According to Service's theory, then, the state forms when people voluntarily submit to a leader that they believe to be not only beneficial, but an agent of the divine.

Unlike Service, Herbert Spencer sees the state as stemming not from belief in or commitment to a particular leader, but from formal and informal welfare systems. In his analysis of state formation, Spencer distinguishes between two types of societies: militant societies and industrial societies. The industrial society, Spencer explains, is more progressive and complex than the militant society. The industrial society is defined by the rise of traders, merchants, and new modes of production, giving society's members "freedom to experiment and enrich themselves."[32] States stemming from industrial societies, according to Spencer, form around voluntary alliances and social obligations. While Spencer sees state formation primarily as a consequence of warfare, he also views the state as a system "which directly seeks and subserves the welfare of the individual."[33] Therefore, in the industrial society Spencer describes, individuals view statehood as a

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[29] Claessen and Skalnik, "The Early State: Theories and Hypotheses," 16.

[30] Service, *Origins of the State and Civilization,* 294.

[31] Ibid, 301.

[32] John Offer, *Herbert Spencer: Critical Assessments, Volume 4* (London: Routledge, 2000), 163.

[33] Service, *Origins of the State and Civilization,* 39.

mechanism for preserving their personal interests, and consequently choose to submit to the state system.

WARFARE THEORY

In the militant society, however, Spencer attributes political evolution and the development of the state primarily to warfare. A militant society is one that "imposes authority upon its members" and is "designed for war with other societies."[34] It is also a society in which "the individual is subordinated to the collectivity."[35] Unlike conquest theory, warfare theory rests on external conflict between societies rather than between internal social classes or individuals. Warfare, Spencer explains, requires cooperation, and efficient cooperation requires the subjugation of society to the command of a governing authority. In early modern states, this structure influenced the establishment of similar forms of cooperation in all areas of civil and political life.

Spencer develops the theory of "social Darwinism," whereby warfare favors stronger and more efficient societies over weaker, less organized societies, which are often overrun by the stronger societies.[36] Societies would not be militarily strong and efficient, however, if it were not for the prevalence of war more generally. As Service explains, "it is the *prevalence* of successful warfare in a state that leads to the prevalence of military institutions, which carry their influence over to peacetime."[37] If war, or the

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[34] Offer, *Herbert Spencer: Critical Assessments, Volume 4,* 163.

[35] Service, *Origins of the State and Civilization,* 39.

[36] Ibid, 38.

[37] Ibid.

threat of war, is continuous, society becomes increasingly dependent on the state, and the state, as governor of the military, becomes stronger and more centralized.

The origins of the warfare theory of state formation can be traced to Charles Tilly. In *Coercion, Capital, and European States,* Tilly examines the European experience in state formation. He notes that military development and innovation in pre-modern Europe made fighting wars very expensive, and that only the wealthiest states with the most capital could afford to pay for their own security. Powerful, centralized states thus developed so as to concentrate resources in the event of war. According to Tilly, "relations among states, especially through war and preparation for war, strongly affected the entire process of state formation."[38] The conditions and resources needed to fight wars, however, often required the restructuring of society. Thus, the subsequent state formation "was often the product of bargaining, cooptation, legitimation, and sheer coercion between state-makers and societal forces…"[39] The strength of the state depended on the extent to which it was able to extract resources from its own people in order to wage war, resulting in "distinct organizations that control the chief concentrated means of coercion within well-defined territories, and exercise priority in some respects over all other organization operating within those territories."[40]

Tilly explains, however, that state-makers, the wielders of coercion, in order to most effectively concentrate their means of making war, found themselves obliged to

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[38] Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990* (Cambridge, MA: B. Blackwell, 1990), 14.

[39] Karen Barkey and Sunita Parikh, "Comparative Perspectives on the State," in *Annual Reviews of Sociology* 17 (1991): 527-528.

[40] Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States,* 19.

manage those they were deriving their resources from. Such states thus became involved

in "extraction of resources, distribution of goods, services, and income, and adjudication

of disputes."[41] States also needed certain formal structures capable of extracting the

means of war. Tilly describes the buildup of infrastructure for taxation as being vital to

war preparation, as all state leaders had to find a way to finance wars. Tilly also

acknowledges, however, that state structures vary, which Tilly attributes to variation in

the relationship between capital and coercion. For example, states with a limited

concentration of capital, marked by a weak urban market economy, faced a more

imminent threat of invasion from surrounding powers. This led to "the formation of states

founded on the elaboration of a strong, internal state power" and followed a more

"'coercion-intensive' path of development."[42] Ultimately, however, Tilly argues,

"Extraction and struggle over the means of war created the central organization structures

of the state."[43]

 According to Roberts, however, military revolutions, rather than state-makers,

contributed to the formation of the state. Roberts looks to sixteenth and seventeenth

century Europe to demonstrate his hypothesis, arguing that the nature of war in Europe

changed drastically during this time period. He first highlights changes in military tactics

and developments in military technology, pointing specifically to the emergence of

portable firearms. As military technology advanced, there grew a need for more skilled

and well-trained troops. The size and professionalism of armies thus expanded. As

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[41] Ibid, 20.

[42] Barkey and Parikh, 338.

[43] Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States,* 28.

militaries became larger and more sophisticated, military strategies became increasingly complex. Certain administrative functions thus became necessary in order to keep militaries organized and well financed in the face of the newly complex and war-ridden surrounding environment. Government institutions, Roberts argues, took on this administrative role. The state, therefore, by building up military and disciplinary structures, was the only unity capable of enduring the general chaos and violence of European warfare.

As Rasler and Thompson emphasize, the warfare theory of state formation rests largely on foreign policy concerns. States had to organize and build up their militaries in order to protect themselves from threats posed by surrounding states. "Tough neighborhoods," Rasler and Thompson argue, "mean that everyone had to play the same realpolitik game, lest they be overrun by a local conqueror."[44] Ironically, as Rasler and Thompson point out, "the more successful a state's resource mobilization for warfare, the more tempting the ambitious foreign policy schemes became."[45] From here, Rasler and Thompson make a number of proposals. First, they argue, "The greater the perceived external threat, the more likely a state is to develop and maintain a high level of domestic power inequality."[46] This stems from the idea that in order to ward off a potential threat, the state must have the ability to extract resources from the people, which in turn requires the concentration of state power. Therefore, "the greater the level of domestic power

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[44] Karen Rasler and William R. Thompson, "The Democratic Peace and a Sequential, Reciprocal, Casual Arrow Hypothesis," in *Comparative Political Studies* 37, no. 879 (2004), 882.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid, 885.

inequality, the less likely a state is to democratize."[47] Following from this argument then, the greater a state's level of democratization, the more constrained a state is in dealing with foreign conflicts.

Schmitt expands the warfare theory further by tracing state formation and development to human diversity. Diverse identities and subgroups, Schmitt argues, give rise to conflict and hostility, eventually leading to war. Political entities, or states, form as a means of managing hostility between diverse societies. Schmitt writes specifically about the modern era, in which irregular combatants and non-state actors, rather than states themselves, are engaged in warfare. The concentration of power with the state, according to Schmitt, has thus become necessary in order to re-establish a level of order and control over the way wars are fought.

Like Schmitt, Anslo argues that the state formed as a means of fighting chaos and imposing order. Ironically, Anslo argues, the very root of chaos lies with societies' intention to impose order. According to Anslo, "The historically and socially constructed struggle against chaos (or terrorism, or barbarism, or impurity) makes it not only possible but also indeed necessary to view the deployment of force and violence as a legitimate part of the fight."[48] Anslo analyzes eighteenth and nineteenth century Mexico and concludes that the line between a society characterized by anarchy and disarray, and one characterized by order and civility, is maintained by violence and war. Further, "the forms of modern state violence may vary considerably from one society to another, in

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[47] Ibid.

[48] Krohn, "Introduction," 20.

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part as a product of how governments and state institutions seek to divert, fight, and control what they view as threats and dangers."[49]

Anderson explains the formation of the state by offering a nuanced understanding of the warfare theory. After the Second World War, Anderson argues, territorial competition between states diminished as modern states became economically and politically dependent on one another. "States," according to Anderson, "particularly the highly industrialized states, have become so locked to one another that territorial competition between them has become impractical and irrelevant."[50] Warfare theory, then, as it applies to the modern era, relies not on physical conflict, but on ideological competition in which states fight to gain political, economic, or ideological influence. Anderson looks specifically to the interaction between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War to support his hypothesis. "The competition between the superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union," Anderson explains, "from the closing stages of the Second World War to the mid-1980s, was not so much to gain sovereign control of territory, but a struggle for territorial spheres of influence."[51] Anderson thus attributes ideological warfare to the formation and development of the modern state.

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[49] Ibid

[50] Malcom Anderson, *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1996), 31.

[51] Ibid, 30.

CULTURE THEORY

Anderson also supports the culture theory of state formation by arguing that identity and feelings of unity are central to state development. Durkheim, however, is often regarded as one of the first theorists to take a sociological approach to understanding state formation. For Durkheim, material interests cannot be the sole determinants of the progress of the state. Durkheim introduces what he calls the "conscious collective" as a factor in state formation. The conscious collective, Durkheim explains, is a type of social unity or solidarity defined by common beliefs or interests. Primitive societies, according to Durkheim, can be described as systems of segmented entities connected by the conscious collective, or "mechanical solidarity." From the beginning, according to Durkheim, religion was central to social solidarity and the subsequent nature of the state. He argues, for example, "It is from religion that have emerged, through successive transformations, all the other manifestations of collective activity - law, morality, art, science, political forms, etc. In the beginning, everything was religious."[52]

Culture and tradition at the level of society, then, greatly influence how the state develops. For Anderson, the relationship between the state and society is critical to state formation. Anderson examines the development of state frontiers, or the physical boundaries of the state. According to Anderson, culture and collective identity are the primary determinants of state frontiers. Though identity is a broad and often ambiguous term, Anderson clarifies, "Locality, social class, language, ethnicity, and religion have

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[52] E. Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), 135.

also been the basis of deeply rooted identities."[53] State frontiers, according to Anderson, are markers of a collective identity and are "part of political beliefs and myths about the unity of the people, and sometimes myths about the 'natural' unity of a territory."[54] State borders are thus often tied to a historical narrative concerning social unity.

Anderson acknowledges that in the modern era, disputes about state frontiers are often considered "a relic from the past."[55] However, "territorial ideologies," or ideas that demand the establishment or re-establishment of state frontiers, occasionally re-surface, particularly in times of war and political upheaval. Under such circumstances, Anderson points out, "Territorial ideologies…are more likely to be espoused by populations in a weak and vulnerable position," due largely to the fact that territorial ideologies appeal to historical identity, real or constructed, and focus on "their function of social protection…"[56] The state thus seeks to "construct the widest territorial entity which can be effectively integrated into an area of political stability and economic prosperity in a dangerous world."[57] The state, according to this view, functions as the protector of a historic sense of identity within the context of instability and marginalization.

Like Anderson, Barkey argues that to understand fully the formation and development of the state, we must examine the nature of state-society relationships. According to Barkey, "The state gained power over the population through coercion but was then able to gain their consent as well by making them citizens entitled to certain

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[53] Anderson, *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World,* 5.

[54] Ibid, 2.

[55] Ibid, 34.

[56] Ibid, 35.

[57] Ibid, 35.

rights from the state."[58] The strength of the state stems from its cultural symbolism and

from the "allegiance and the identification of the community as a national community."[59]

Barkey uses the example Negara in nineteenth century Bali to support his thesis. The

state, Barkey explains, performed administrative and political functions, but also

"constituted the normative order in which society is embedded." The legitimacy of the

state came from "its symbolized center, which focused on acting out cultural unity."[60]

Scholars that support the culture theory of state formation also argue that the state

forms as a means of maintaining social integration. Barkey argues that the state can more

easily form and gain legitimate authority where there is weak social integration or where

pre-existing state structures are very weak. In Sierra Leone, for example, where "the

British pursued a strategy of fragmenting social control at the societal level, a weak post-

colonial state ensued." Conversely, in Israel, "where the British encouraged the

consolidation of various societal groups under the aegis of Jewish agency, the end result

was a strong state."[61] The state thus gains strength and legitimacy by appealing to a sense

of societal unity or identity.

The extent to which society determines culture and identity, however, is a point of

debate amongst scholars. Corrigan and Sayer, for example, argue:

> The power of the state 'rests not so much on the consent of its subjects but
> with the state's regulative and coercive forms and agencies, which define

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[58] Barkey, "Comparative Perspective on the State," 530.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid, 532.

and create certain kinds of subjects and identities while denying' others thorough everyday routines and rituals of ruling.[62]

Culture theory, according to this view, rests not on physical coercion like warfare and conquest theory do, but on emotional and ideological coercion.

As an advocate of culture theory, Anslo acknowledges the power of group feeling and shared identity, but aims to examine how "feelings" are "embodied in material practice and lived experience."[63] "The spatial matrix in the operation of the state system," Anslo argues, "shapes the imagining of personhood as well as place."[64] That is, the state exists not only as physical territory, but also as a determinant of personal identity. Brown, meanwhile, writes specifically about the role of kinship in shaping communities, arguing that kinship can "draw upon the past not simply to posit a common origin but also to claim substantial identity in the present."[65] Anslo notes that feelings of kinship can also "sacralize" the state, or the relationship between the state and society. For example, "the father-son-mother relations in Mexican nationalist discourse recall the relations among God, Jesus, and Mary; or priests, the Church, and the religious community…"[66] When the state becomes "sacralized," the protection of the state not only becomes desirable, but obligatory, which helps to explain why so many throughout history have been willing to die in defense of the state.

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[62] Corrigan and Sayer, quoted in Ana Anslo, "The Politics of Space, Time and Substance: State Formation, Nationalism and Ethnicity," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23 (1994): 381.

[63] Ibid, 382.

[64] Ibid, 384.

[65] Brown, quoted in Anslo, "The Politics of Space, Time, and Substance," 384.

[66] Ibid, 385.

According to scholars such as Adams, then, the state is more often a consequence of emotion rather than rational choice. Adams begins by describing the rational choice model of state formation, whereby state-makers consciously construct the state so as to advance their own material interests. After examining state formation in early modern Europe, however, Adams explains that the rational choice model is undermined by culture, which includes "culturally cognitive expectations and cognitively informed practices." It also includes the actors' "expressed feelings about ancestors and descendants," which often imply political privilege and group feelings of passion or sentiment.[67] According to Adams, cultural expectations, often more so than rational choices, contribute to the formation of the state.

GLOBAL MEDIA AND THE STATE

Only recently have political scientists begun to explore the development of states in the Digital Age. With the birth of the Internet and the explosion of online information sharing, political scientists are becoming increasingly interested in how global media impacts statecraft and state development. Kraidy and Mourad are among the most prominent scholars in this field of study. In one particular article, Kraidy and Mourad analyze the implications of new global communications for the modern states, particularly those in the Middle East. They look specifically at the relationship between

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[67] Julia Adams, "Culture in Rational-Choice Theories of State-Formation," in *State/culture: State-formation after the Cultural Turn* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 108.

"hypermedia space and political agency."[68] Kraidy and Mourad define hypermedia space as a "fluid communicative environment" made up of "mobile telephony, tweets, emails, social networks, text messaging, digital cameras, electronic newspapers, and satellite television…"[69] This new hypermedia space, Kraidy and Mourad explain, makes production of and access to information easy and incredibly swift. Hypermedia space also allows for a much wider range of participation. Thus, "since more people are now theoretically able to shape a message…we can expect a multiplicity of discourses to arise in public culture."[70]

Hypermedia space plays a particularly crucial political role in contexts of social and political tension. For example, Kraidy and Mourad examine Iran's "Twitter Revolution" following the 2009 Green Movement, and conclude that Twitter successfully facilitated the exchange of information across borders. As a result, Iranian activists were able to mobilize support outside of an exclusively Iranian context. Hypermedia space, in other words, blurs the boundaries between nationally based cultures and ideologies. Because social media is free from the restrictions (such as censorship) of physical space, it allows others to enter the "opinion-making game," or to participate in the development of politics. All of this enables the expression of an ideal counter-state.

According to Kraidy and Mourad, this can be problematic because it encourages a double-reality, one real and one virtual. Often, the physical reality cannot undergo the

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[68] M.M. Kraidy and S. Mourad, "Hypermedia Space and Global Communication studies: Lessons from the Middle East," *Global Media Journal* 8, no. 16 (2010): 1.

[69] Ibid, 2-3.

[70] Ibid, 3.

changes needed to mimic the ideal state experienced in virtual space. Simply watching a

Youtube video or reading a Twitter post, Kraidy and Mourad explain, does not constitute

a political act. Unless new media translates into real, material change, "hypermedia space

can reflect political stagnation."[71] Kraidy and Mourad also ask whether hypermedia space

is capable of influencing permanent or sustainable change. Based on their analysis of

Lebanon's Independence Intifada and Iran's Green Movement, they conclude that, "for

hypermedia chains to be effective, they must necessarily be integrated in pre-existing

social networks and institutions to endow hypermedia space with trust, authenticity and

ultimately popular acceptance."[72]

Hafez similarly notes the difficulty in translating virtual reality, formed through

social media and propaganda, into material reality. He begins by arguing that the

inevitable connection between media and politics is not easy to define, as it depends on a

number of socioeconomic and cultural factors. Nevertheless, Hafez acknowledges what

he calls a "deep gulf" between public media and real political change.[73] Hafez also

explains how media is manipulated by state actors to serve the political interests of the

state. Focusing specifically on the Arab world, he observes that Arab media often

exhibits modern forms of "spin doctoring," or control over the way certain events are

described to the public. For example, Hafez makes note of "beat systems," or informal

networks between politicians and journalists whereby politicians grant loyal journalists

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[71] Ibid, 14.

[72] Ibid, 16.

[73] Kai Hafez, "Introduction," in *Arab Media: Power and Weakness* (New York: The Continuum
International Publishing Group Inc, 2008), 2.

privileged information in exchange for portraying such information in a specific way.[74]

This exchange relationship between media and politicians thus gives politicians influence over how the public interprets a certain event or news story. Media, far from being an objective source of news, becomes a powerful political tool of the state and a means of controlling public opinion.

Global media is not reserved for the purposes of the state alone, however. According to Wolfsfeld, global media is a public sphere that authorities and their challengers are constantly fighting for control over.[75] As Hafez explains, the challengers' ability to gain influence in the media depends on their ability to "maximize their individual news value through political and social status factors." Such factors may include, for example, extreme or exceptional behavior, such as "demonstrations, staged events, or even violence…"[76] In other words, by engaging in exceptional or violent behavior, a group may increase its own relevance in, and influence over, the public media space.

Anholt and Kingsepp analyze exactly how state actors or their challengers use global media as a political tool. Anholt in particular explores how propaganda, or "nation branding," impacts the strength of the state, and vice versa. Political scientists agree that countries, much like companies, depend on their national image for political and economic success. Anholt pushes this argument further, stating:

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[74] Ibid, 6.

[75] Gadi Wolfsfeld, *Media and Political Conflict: News From the Middle* East (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, referenced in Hafez, *Arab Media: Power and Weakness,* 5.

[76] Hafez, *Arab Media: Power and Weakness,* 5.

We live in a world where perceptions regularly trump reality…today it's all about the survival of those *perceived* to be the fittest. Knowing how to deal with intangibles is just as important in such times as traditional military, political, or fiscal competence.[77]

Anholt digs further into the ambiguous relationship between national image, or the perceived nation, and the strength of the nation in reality. He asks whether:

A good image is merely the natural consequence of successful statecraft, or whether in fact it is possible to address image directly and thus in some ways reverse the process: an enhanced image leading to enhanced respect and increased business, and thus an improved reality.[78]

Anholt admits that few studies aim to answer this question, but he nevertheless makes a number of observations. First, Anholt points out that propaganda campaigns in the modern age do not always work, since they rely on "a closed society and control over the sources of information reaching the target…"[79] Globalization and international media, Anholt argues, makes strict control over the flow of information nearly impossible, undermining a state's ability to use media for its own political purposes. Anholt also notes that propaganda alone cannot easily alter one's perception of a nation-state. He explains that the nation's reputation is "deeply buried in the perceptions of countless people around the world - indeed, it is often rooted in their national cultures - and can only be rebuilt slowly and painstakingly by altering its causes."[80] In other words, one's perception of a particular nation is not the product of propaganda alone, but may be linked to historical or

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[77] Simon Anholt, "Nation 'Branding': Propaganda or Statecraft," *Public Diplomacy Magazine,* no. 2 (2009).

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid.

cultural factors as well. Anholt concludes that often, state media and propaganda project a certain state reputation that is not necessarily deserved. Anholt, like Kraidy and Mourad, notes a gap between perceptions, shaped by media, and material reality.

Propaganda can nevertheless influence real political changes. This is especially true in times of conflict, as Kingsepp observes. Kingsepp presents two case studies, one focusing on the conflict between England and Spain in the 16th and 17th centuries, and the other focusing on the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union after WWII. Kingsepp notes that while military force was sometimes used in both conflicts, hostilities were more commonly expressed through propaganda. This is what Kingsepp defines as political or ideological warfare. Kingsepp concludes that in these cases, England and the United States used propaganda as an instrument of statecraft.

Both England and the United States used propaganda to emphasize "the dignity of individual conscious" and "other aspect of human nature common to all."[81] In the case of the Cold War conflict, for example, "by declaring solidarity with the portion of humanity oppressed by Communist Eastern European governments, Regan was strengthening the natural inclination to resist those governments, laying the foundation for movements like Poland's Solidarity even before the effects were visible."[82] Kingsepp also points out that both England and the United States, in their respective conflicts, made use of counter-propaganda by "being aware of the enemy's subtle mistakes and prepared to expose

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[81] Eric J. Kingsepp, "Propaganda as an Instrument of Statecraft: Two Case Studies," *Social Science Research Network,* April 25, 2008, accessed March 3, 3015, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2285151, 9.

[82] Ibid.

them."[83] Kingsepp concludes that propaganda can serve as a powerful political weapon in times of conflict. The spread and presentation of information can be manipulated by the state consolidate the support for and political power of the state.

CONCLUSION

Obviously, there is much debate among scholars about the origin of the state and the process by which the state develops. For all state formation theorists, understanding interstate relations and the relationship between the state and society is central to understanding state formation. Scholars disagree, however, over whether state formation is primarily a consequence of internal or external affairs. Advocates of the warfare theory of state formation, for example, tend to view external threats as cause for the formation of the state, while conquest theorists view internal social divisions as the precursor to state formation. Scholars also disagree about what motivates state formation. Oppenheimer, for example, argues that material interests drive state formation while Anderson argues that ideology or culture more heavily influences state formation. Kraidy and Mourad, meanwhile, argue that global media has an important role to play in the development of modern states. Whether one theory alone is sufficient to describe the formation of the state is often another point of disagreement. Early state formation theorists, such as Oppenheimer or Engels, for example, tend to argue that all primitive states arose following the use of force. Scholars such as Spencer and Anslo, meanwhile, view state formation as a consequence of many factors straddling more than one theory.

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[83] Ibid, 10.

State formation theories vary in part due to the lack of consensus on the nature of the state. State functions and behavior change drastically over time and space, making it difficult to generalize about the way in which states form and develop. Interestingly, much of the literature concerning state formation revolves around the example of pre-modern Europe. The following paper explores how state formation theories might be understood in the modern Middle East, and specifically in the case of the ISIS.

3. The Evolution and Emergence of ISIS
1999 - July 2014

1999-2006: ABU MUSAB AL-ZARQAWI

ISIS's seizure of Mosul on June 10, 2014 shocked the world, and left many

wondering what ISIS is and where it came from. The origins of ISIS can be traced to Abu

Musab al-Zarqawi, a militant Islamist from Jordan who, after being released from prison,

made his way to Afghanistan to establish his own paramilitary organization. With the

help of al-Qaeda (AQ) leaders present in Afghanistan at the time, including Osama bin

Laden, Zarqawi established *Jama'at al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad* (JTWJ) in 1999. Having

been taught by well-known Sunni Salafist preacher Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, Zarqawi

was highly motivated by sectarianism and fierce opposition to the state. The initial aims

of JTWJ, therefore, included toppling the Jordanian government and carrying out violent

attacks on Shia Muslims. After being accused of plotting a terrorist attack in Amman,

Jordan, Zarqawi and his new paramilitary organization were forced underground.

But, Zarqawi and JTWJ would resurface several years later in northern Iraq. After

the US invaded Iraq in 2003, Zarqawi saw an opportunity to establish a JTWJ base in

Iraq. Looking to expand the organization and its operations, Zarqawi joined the

insurgency, gaining international attention for coordinating a number of high profile

attacks. Zarqawi is widely known, for example, to have coordinated the bombing of the

United Nations Headquarters in Baghdad, an attack that killed 22 people, including UN

special envoy Sergio Viera de Mello.[1] Zarqawi also claimed responsibility for attacks on a number of Shia holy sites, most notably the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf, Iraq, which ended in the death of 83 worshippers.[2] In February of 2004, Zarqawi helped organize yet another deadly attack in Iraq during the Ashura festival, an important Shia holiday. 183 Shias were subsequently killed in Karbala and Baghdad.[3] Zarqawi is perhaps most widely remembered for beheading two American hostages, Ken Bigley and Nick Berg, in 2004. Zarqawi's use of violence and horrible brutality contributed to what would become a fractious relationship between Zarqawi and Osama bin Laden.[4]

Zarqawi's main targets included Iraqi Shia, which Zarqawi viewed as "the chief threat to Sunni power in Iraq and the wider region." He thus hoped to "take advantage of the resulting chaos to cast itself as the defender of the Sunni community and to usher in the establishment of an Islamic state."[5] Due to the sectarian nature of his agenda, Zarqawi was able to gain many followers from amongst alienated Sunnis in Iraq. He was also able to gain support from Sunni ex-Baathists who, after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, were purged from seats of power. When Prime Minister Maliki assumed office, Sunnis

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[1] Lawrence Joffe, "Abu Musab al-Zarqawi," *The Guardian,* June 8, 2006, accessed December 9, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/jun/09/guardianobituaries.alqaida.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Elliot, Friedland, "Special Report: The Islamic State," *The Clarion Project* (November 2014), accessed December 4, 2015, http://www.clarionproject.org/sites/default/files/islamic-state-isis-isil-factsheet-1.pdf.

[5] Charles Lister, "Profiling the Islamic State," *Brookings Doha Center,* December 1, 2014, accessed December 15, 2014, http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports2/2014/12/profiling-islamic-state-lister.

were largely shut out of politics. Thus, though Baathists are relatively secular, Zarqawi and many ex-Baathists shared a common anti-Shia and anti-state agenda.

Zarqawi also made many enemies. Even within the Iraqi Sunni community, nationalists and Islamists alike were horrified by Zarqawi's use of violence. Hoping to gain more recruits, Zarqawi formally joined al-Qaeda (AQ) in September of 2004 by pledging *bay'ah* (an oath of allegiance) to Osama bin Laden, changing the name of his organization to al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Bin Laden had his reservations. An open letter from Zawahiri, bin Laden's deputy at the time, to Zarqawi revealed a difference of opinion between Zarqawi and AQ leadership.[6] While Zarqawi felt the only way to achieve his mission was through brutal force, AQ leaders warned Zarqawi against the use of violence, particularly against the Shia community, for fear of "damaging the image of the jihadi project."[7] Nevertheless, bin Laden encouraged Zarqawi to expand the AQ franchise in Iraq. Only two years after AQI was established, the US launched a counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq, which came to be known simply as "the surge." Subsequently, in 2006, Zarqawi was killed in a US airstrike.

2006-2010: ABU OMAR AL-BAGHDADI

Soon after Zarqawi's death, AQI joined with other AQ affiliates operating in Iraq at the time, forming the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) led by Abu Omar al-Baghdadi. The change in name from al-Qaeda in Iraq to the Islamic State of Iraq had symbolic

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[6] "Letter from al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi," *Global Security,* accessed December 10, 2014, http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/report/2005/zawahiri-zarqawi-letter_9jul2005.htm.

[7] Lister, "Profiling the Islamic State," 8.

importance and marked a shift in the group's strategy and vision. Rather than merely carrying out high profile attacks and inciting sectarian violence, ISI sought to establish its own state, one capable of generating revenue, governing territory, and implementing its interpretation of sharia law. Despite its name change, ISI remained an official affiliate of AQ. Thus, while Abu Omar al-Baghdadi governed ISI operations in Iraq, he was nonetheless subordinate to the leadership of Ayman al-Zawahiri, leader of AQ Central.[8]

Following its establishment, ISI focused its efforts on Anbar province in western Iraq. Anbar is a tribal area of Iraq populated predominantly by marginalized Sunnis who felt sympathy for ISI's anti-Shia campaign. ISI thus sought to establish a base in Anbar, setting up governance structures and implementing sharia law. By 2006, ISI had taken control of Anbar and prevented the government in Ramadi, the capital of Anbar, from functioning.[9] After ISI fighters assassinated members of Anbar's Provincial Council, the tribesmen of Anbar turned against ISI and its extreme application of sharia law. According to Sheikh Abdul Satter al-Rishawi, ISI insurgents were "killing innocent people, anyone suspected of opposing them." "Building an alliance with the Americans," Rishawi continues, "was the only solution."[10] US troops stationed in Anbar met with

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[8] Ayman al-Zawahiri replaced Osama bin Laden as leader of AQ Central following bin Laden's death in May of 2011.

[9] Kimberly Kagan, "Anbar Awakening: Displacing al-Qaeda from its Stronghold in Western Iraq," *Institute for the Study of War* (Washington,, D.C.)*,* accessed December 10, 2014, https://www.understandingwar.org/report/anbar-awakening-displacing-al-qaeda-its-stronghold-western-iraq.

[10] Todd Pitman, "Sunni Sheiks Join Fight Vs. Insurgency," *The Associated Press,* March 25, 2007, accessed December 10, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2007/03/25/AR2007032500600.html/.

Rishawi who agreed to help form a council of Sunni tribal militias, known as Sahwat al-Anbar, to combat ISI. In the midst of the 2007 US-led surge, the Sahwat were successfully able to expel ISI from Anbar and Fallujah in a movement that came to be known as "the Anbar Awakening."

Following the US-led surge in 2007, Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki grew fearful of the threat the newly empowered Sahwat posed to Iraq's Shia majority. Subsequently, Maliki refused to incorporate the Sahwat into Iraq's Shia-dominated government. Having been excluded from the political scene, many Sunni tribesmen from Anbar reverted back to fighting alongside ISI.[11] Meanwhile, between 2006 and 2010, ISI had grown very weak, due largely to the US-led surge in Iraq and the global "War on Terror."[12] Many ISI fighters were either killed or detained, leaving ISI with very little manpower. By 2010, ISI was very much on its last legs, evidenced by a significant decrease in sectarian violence during this time.[13] In 2010, Omar al-Baghdadi was killed in a joint American-Iraqi airstrike, yet another blow to an already weakened ISI. By this point, American military forces had begun to withdraw from Iraq, and ISI's newly appointed leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, saw an opportunity to revamp ISI efforts.

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[11] Graeme Wood, "The Three Types of People Who Fight for ISIS," *The New Republic,* September 10, 2014. Accessed September 20, 2014, http://www.newrepublic.com/article/119395/isiss-three-types-fighters.

[12] Suhaib Anjarini, "The war in Syria: ISIS's most successful investment yet," *Al Akhbar English,* June 11, 2014, accessed August 31, 2014, http://english.al-akhbar.com/print/20133.

[13] Lister, "Profiling the Islamic State," 9.

2010-2013: ABU BAKR AL-BAGHDADI

Sources conflict on certain details pertaining to Baghdadi's life and career.

Though a general narrative describing Baghdadi's background is clear, he nonetheless

remains an enigmatic figure. According to a widely cited biography of Baghdadi released

by jihadist websites, Baghdadi was born in 1971 in Samarra, Iraq to a religious Sunni

family.[14] His original name was Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samaarai, only

later taking the name Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi al-Husseini al-Qurayshi. Baghdadi is said to

have received his undergraduate and master's degrees in Islamic studies and his PhD in

sharia law from the University of Baghdad. Prior to Saddam Hussein's overthrow in

2003, Baghdadi lived in a small room attached to a mosque in Diyala, northeast of

Baghdad, where he worked as a Sunni Salafist preacher.[15] Around the time of the US

invasion of Iraq in 2003, Baghdadi founded a militant Islamist group called *Jaysh Ahl al-*

Sunnah al-Jamaah, one of the many small militant groups that would eventually unite

under the flag of ISI.[16] In 2004, however, Baghdadi became involved in a dispute with

the owner of the mosque at which he taught. When asked to join the political Islam Party,

Baghdadi refused, arguing that political organizations are against Salafist teachings.[17]

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[14] "Biography of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi," *SITE Intelligence Group,* August 12, 2014, accessed August 19, 2014, http://news.siteintelgroup.com/blog/index.php/entry/226-the-story-behind-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi.

[15] Lamiat Sabin, "Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi profile: The mysterious leader of ISIS-and why he is called 'invisible sheikh*," The Independent*, November 9, 2014, accessed November 19, 2014, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/abu-bakr-albaghdadi-profile-the-mysterious-leader-of-isis--and-why-he-is-called-the-invisible-sheikh-9849413.html.

[16] Martin Chulov, "ISIS: the inside story*," The Guardian*, December 11, 2014, accessed December 14, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/11/-sp-isis-the-inside-story.

[17] Sabin, "Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi profile."

Baghdadi was thus asked to leave the mosque, and not long afterwards, US forces

detained Baghdadi and brought him to Camp Bucca, a US military detention facility in

southern Iraq.[18]

At the time of Baghdadi's capture, the Sunni led insurgency, in which Zarqawi

played a major role, was consuming central and western Iraq. Most of the men being held

in Camp Bucca were Sunni insurgents, some closely associated with Zarqawi.[19] Baghdadi

was unlike other prisoners in Bucca in one important way. Having come from the

Quraysh tribe, the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad, Baghdadi was able to claim direct

lineage to the Holy Prophet. According to an interview with Abu Ahmed, who spent time

with Baghdadi in Bucca and is now a senior official within ISIS, Baghdadi was quiet, but

had a way with words and was a skilled mediator. American prison guards saw him as

someone who could "solve fractious disputes between competing factions and keep the

camp quiet."[20]

At the time of Baghdadi's arrival, Camp Bucca held about 24,000 detainees.[21]

Analysts have called the camp the perfect environment for radicalization and the

exchange of violent and extreme ideologies.[22] Military veteran Andrew Thompson

described the Iraqi military prisons as "virtual terrorist universities: The hardened

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[18] It is unclear exactly when and where Baghdadi was detained. Most sources indicate that Baghdadi was detained around Fallujah, west of Baghdad, somewhere between 2004 and 2005.

[19] Chulov, "ISIS: the inside story."

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] "From Bucca to Kobani: The Hybrid Ideology of the Islamic State," *The Soufan Group* (New York), October 24, 2014, accessed October 30, 2014, http://soufangroup.com/tsg-intelbrief-from-bucca-to-kobani-the-hybrid-ideology-of-the-islamic-state/.

radicals were the professors, the other detainees were the students, and the prison authorities played the role of absent custodian."[23] According to Abu Ahmed, "Bucca was a factory. It made us all. It built our ideology."[24] Many militant extremists established alliances with former Baathist military officers who had been detained following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

These alliances formed because each had what the other needed. The Baathists had military experience, but little motivation, having been crushed first by US forces, then by Maliki's forces. Baghdadi and his close followers, on the other hand, had religious fervor and inspiration, but little military or administrative experience. Thus, in Camp Bucca, "the math changed as ideologues adopted military and bureaucratic traits and the bureaucrats became violent extremists."[25] The result was an extremely powerful alliance motivated by a common anti-Shia agenda. In March of 2009, after the US ordered the closing of Camp Bucca, the detainees were released. Many at the time predicted that the released prisoners, now dangerously radicalized, would return to militant Islamist groups.[26] These predictions would soon prove correct. Analysts estimate

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[23] Terrence McCoy, "How the Islamic State evolved in an American prison," *The Washington Post*, November 4, 2014, accessed December 12, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/11/04/how-an-american-prison-helped-ignite-the-islamic-state/?tid=hp_mm.

[24] Chulov, "ISIS, the inside story."

[25] McCoy, "How the Islamic State evolved in an American prison."

[26] Anthony Shadid, "In Iraq, Chaos Feared as U.S. Closes Prison," *The Washington Post,* March 22, 2009. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/21/AR2009032102255_pf.html

that 9 members of ISIS's current leadership did time with Baghdadi in Camp Bucca between 2004 and 2009.[27]

It remains unclear exactly when and how Baghdadi became involved with AQ, but not long after his release from Camp Bucca, Baghdadi was appointed leader of ISI. By 2010, US troops had begun pulling out of Iraq, and Baghdadi immediately took to rebuilding ISI and gaining new followers. He started by arranging an organized campaign of deadly car bombings and suicide attacks. ISI is known to have been capable of carrying out 20 to 30 attacks in difference provinces of Iraq within one hour.[28] On August 19, 2011, ISI published a statement on its website promising to carry out hundreds of other attacks across Iraq. According to a UN Security Council narrative summary, "the statement warned that the campaign would include raids, suicide attacks, roadside bombs, and attacks with small arms in all cities and rural areas across Iraq."[29]

ISI was truly able to rebuild itself thanks to the onset of the Syrian Civil War in 2011. Though the conflict in Syria began as a relatively peaceful series of demonstrations amongst secular elements of society, the struggle quickly devolved into a violent civil war. Initially Baghdadi saw Syria as a distraction from ISI's Iraq-centric campaign. Eventually he seized the opportunity to capitalize from the emerging chaos in Syria, which provided an open space in which ISI could conduct military operations and recruit

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[27] Richard Barret, "The Islamic State," *The Soufan Group* (New York), November 2015, accessed December 3, 2014, http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/TSG-The-Islamic-State-Nov14.pdf.

[28] Lister, "Profiling the Islamic State," 11.

[29] United Nations Security Council, Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, (QI.A.299.1), June 3, 2014.

new fighters. By mid-2011, as the Syrian uprisings spread and became increasingly violent, Baghdadi planned to send several members of ISI to northern Syria to join Sunni rebels fighting against the Assad regime. In August of 2011, a small group of ISI fighters, led by Abu Mohammed al-Golani, arrived in Hasakah province in northeastern Syria.

Zawahiri supported Baghdadi's decision, and sent other AQ militants, mostly from Afghanistan and Pakistan, to fight alongside Golani. As news of ISI's campaign in Syria circulated on the Internet, Golani began to attract recruits from all over Syria and from abroad. By 2012, Golani had an estimated 2,000 followers.[30] Meanwhile, funds began pouring in from surrounding Sunni states, primarily the Gulf States, in support of Syria's Sunni opposition. According to security analysts a large portion of those funds ended up being funneled to Golani and his followers.[31] With no shortage of money and a sizable fighting force, Golani and his fighters gained large swaths of Syrian territory and oil fields. On January 23, 2012, the Al-Nusra Front for the People of the Levant, or Jabhat al-Nusra (JN), was formally established with Golani as its leader.

During this time Baghdadi's primary focus was centered on operations in Iraq and on building up ISI. In July of 2012, ISI launched a spectacular series of attacks on Iraqi prisons in a campaign called "Breaking the Walls." The entire campaign lasted 12 months and included waves of car bombings and explosive attacks on eight major prisons.[32]

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[30] Lister, "Profiling the Islamic State," 13.

[31] "The Rise of ISIS," Martin Smith, *Frontline,* aired October 28, 2014, on PBS video, accessed November 27, 2014, www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/rise-of-isis/.

[32] Jessica Lewis, "Al Qaeda in Iraq's 'Breaking the Walls' Campaign Achieves its Objectives at Abu Ghraib-2013 Iraq Update #30," *Institute for the Study of War* (Washington, D.C.)*,* July 28, 2013, accessed August 1, 2014, http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2013/07/al-qaeda-in-iraqs-breaking-walls.html.

Many of the detainees being held in these prisons were former members of AQI or other militant Islamist groups that were suppressed during the counterinsurgency of 2006 and 2007. The "Breaking the Walls" campaign was thus an effort to build ISI's manpower, the expectation being that newly freed detainees would join the ranks of ISI. The most notable prison break occurred on July 21, 2013, after members of ISI attacked Abu Ghraib prison, located west of Baghdad. Reliable estimates suggest that as many as 500 prisoners were freed, most of them hardened AQI veterans.[33]

Seven months prior to the Abu Ghraib prison break Prime Minister Maliki sought yet again to undermine Iraq's Sunni population. In December of 2012, Maliki's police force arrested the bodyguards of a highly respected Sunni politician and Iraq's Finance Minister Rafi al-Issawi, accusing them of plotting a terrorist attack against Maliki and his regime.[34] Very few people, particularly those of the Sunni community, believed al-Issawi's bodyguards were capable of terrorism. Most perceived Maliki's accusation as an attack on Sunnis and an attempt, yet again, to purge Sunnis from Iraq's Shia-dominated government. Massive protests soon broke out in Ramadi and Fallujah, eventually expanding to other Sunni-majority cities including Mosul and Tikrit. Initially, the demonstrations centered on Iraq's anti-terrorism laws, which protestors claimed were being used to target Sunnis. Soon demonstrators began demanding greater respect for civil rights and, eventually, for Maliki's resignation. Despite their intensity, the demonstrations remained relatively peaceful for several months. Money poured in from

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[33] Lewis, "Al Qaeda in Iraq's 'Breaking the Walls ' Campaign."

[34] Little evidence has since been found to support the charges placed against al-Isawi's bodyguards.

surrounding Sunni countries to support the protests and to help establish protest "camps" in which demonstrators could sleep and receive food.[35] In March of 2013 several men attending the protests in Ramadi were seen waving the flag of AQ and calling themselves the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS).

2013-2014: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ISIS

Around this time, the Syrian war had escalated drastically and JN, under the leadership of Golani, was gaining significant influence. Baghdadi, meanwhile, who still considered Golani his subordinate, saw attention shifting to Syria and away from the insurgency in Iraq. In April of 2013, in an effort to reassert his authority, Baghdadi announced the unification of ISI and JN to form the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). This marked a significant shift in Baghdadi's ambition. Rather than focusing his efforts solely on Iraq, Baghdadi now sought to take control of operations in Syria as well. He thus claimed the authority to instruct and fund operations in both Syria and Iraq.[36]

When it appeared as though ISIS fighters had begun to infiltrate the protests in Ramadi and elsewhere, Maliki responded forcefully and violently. In April of 2013, regime forces cracked down on the protests in Hawijah in northern Iraq with extreme force, killing hundreds of demonstrators.[37] ISIS members seized this as an opportunity to recruit Sunni protesters, arguing that greater force would be needed to oppose the regime successfully. This argument resonated with many marginalized and desperate Sunnis,

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[35] Smith, "The Rise of ISIS.

[36] UN Security Council, Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011).

[37] Smith, "The Rise of ISIS."

who now felt they had nowhere else to turn for protection and support. Thus, many Sunni protesters, despite being highly educated and relatively secular, joined ranks with ISIS.[38]

Maliki, meanwhile, issued yet another crackdown on Sunni opposition. In December of 2013, Maliki claimed that the protest camp in Ramadi had "turned into a headquarters for the leadership of al-Qaeda" and subsequently ordered that security forces dismantle the camp. Clashes subsequently broke out, resulting in the death of 10 Sunni civilians.[39] That same month, Maliki sent the Iraqi police force to arrest Sunni Parliament member Ahmed al-Alwani, who had supported the protests. The Sunnis of Anbar, consequently, rose up in revolt and demanded that the Iraqi army leave the province. As chaos ensued, ISIS fighters, many coming directly from Syria, flooded into Anbar's cities. Violent clashes broke out between ISIS and the Iraqi Security Forces, which proved to be "no match."[40] Having gained control of Anbar, ISIS began to set its sights on the Sunni-dominated city of Mosul in northern Iraq.

Around this time a bitter feud had developed between Baghdadi and Golani. After Baghdadi announced the creation of ISIS, Golani refused to fall under Baghdadi's leadership. Golani, therefore, reaffirmed his allegiance to AQ Central by appealing to Zawahiri. After several months of negotiations, Zawahiri ordered Baghdadi to limit his operations to Iraq, and appointed Golani as the leader of operations in Syria. Baghdadi

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[38] Ibid.

[39] "Ten Die as Iraq security forces dismantle Sunni camp," *BBC,* December 30, 2013, accessed December 15, 2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25548776.

[40] Smith, "The Rise of ISIS.*"*

refused to limit his efforts to geographic boundaries, reportedly telling Zawahiri, "I chose the command of God over the command that runs against it in letter."[41]

Baghdadi's insistence on maintaining control over operations in Syria pushed Zawahiri to break the affiliation between ISIS and AQ. In February of 2014, Zawahiri announced, "ISIS is not a branch of the al-Qaeda group, we have no organizational relationship with it, and the group is not responsible for its actions."[42] Shortly after Zawahiri's announcement, ISIS, now an independent organization, significantly increased its operations in Syria, gaining control of territory and numerous oil fields in eastern Syria. For a brief period of time, the split between ISIS and JN remained somewhat unclear to fighters on the ground and, subsequently, many JN fighters defected to ISIS in early 2014. According to some estimates, nearly 65 percent of JN fighters, mostly non-Syrians, defected to ISIS.[43] The dispute between JN and ISIS would, nevertheless, intensify over time and devolve into an all-out jihadi "civil war."[44]

While some have described the rivalry between Baghdadi and Golani as little more than a power struggle, there are in fact important ideological differences between the two leaders that help to explain the hostile relationship between ISIS and JN. ISIS

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[41] Terrence McCoy, "How ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi became the world's most powerful leader," *The Washington Post,* June 11, 2014, accessed December 6, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/06/11/how-isis-leader-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-became-the-worlds-most-powerful-jihadi-leader/.

[42] "Syrians March in Support of Jabhat al-Nusra Militants," *France 24,* December 16, 2012, accessed December 6, 2014, http://www.france24.com/en/20121216-syria-march-support-jabhat-nusra-militants-us-terrorist/.

[43] Anjarini, "The war in Syria: ISIS's most successful investment yet."

[44] Ibid.

members, for one, are uninterested in remaining underground and surfacing only to terrorize or commit violent attacks. They have a plan to establish a state and to overrun any person or group in opposition. Unlike AQ, ISIS is a state-building enterprise, one that aims to create a real, high-functioning state. Golani, like Baghdadi, also seeks to establish a state, but he does not believe the time has come to restore the Islamic Caliphate. The state that Golani envisions, therefore, is limited mainly to Syria. Golani has also chosen to postpone answering questions regarding state building and governance until after Assad's overthrow.[45] Baghdadi, on the other hand, seeks to establish a global caliphate that not only includes Iraq and Syria, but also encompasses the entire Arab world.[46] Unlike Golani and Zawahiri, Baghdadi believes that the Islamic Caliphate must be restored now rather than later, and that a single emir must rule as the state's central authority.

After increasing its territorial control and manpower in Syria, and having solidified its control over parts of western Iraq, ISIS saw an opportunity to attack Mosul. On June 6, 2014, ISIS detonated several car bombs in downtown Mosul. Four days later, 800 ISIS fighters,[47] with the help of an "uneasy alliance" with former Baathists, Sunni

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[45] Joshua Landis, "The Battle Between ISIS and Syria's Rebel Militias," *The Clarion Project,* January 9, 2014, accessed December 10, 2014, http://www.clarionproject.org/research/battle-between-isis-and-syria's-rebel-militias.

[46] Holly Yan, "What's the difference between ISIS, al-Nusra and the Khorasan Group?" *CNN,* September 24, 2014, accessed December 10, 2014, http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/24/world/meast/isis-al-nusra-khorasan-difference/.

[47] Smith, "The Rise of ISIS."

tribesmen, and other Sunni rebels,[48] captured control of Mosul, Iraq's second largest city. The capture of Mosul gave ISIS fighters a tremendous boost of confidence and left them with a supply of Russian and American-made military equipment. ISIS fighters then made their way quickly south, capturing the cities of Qayyarah, al-Shiqat, Hawijah, and Tikrit.

Then, on June 29th, the first day of Ramadan, Abu Mohammad al-Adnani, the official spokesman of ISIS, announced the restoration of the Caliphate and cited Baghdadi as caliph.[49] That same day, ISIS 's media center released a video titled "The End of Sykes Picot," which shows an ISIS fighter pointing to a bulldozed Syria-Iraq border saying, "This is the so called border of Sykes-Picot…we don't recognize it and we will never recognize it."[50] Nine Syrian rebel groups, including JN, immediately rejected the establishment of the caliphate, and warned other jihadist organizations not to support the Islamic State.[51] Nevertheless, on July 4th, Baghdadi delivered a sermon in Mosul in which he reminded Muslims of their "obligation" to support the Islamic State and to

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[48] Elliot, "The Islamic State," 10.

[49] Mark Tran and Matthew Weaver, "Isis announces Islamic caliphate in area straddling Iraq and Syria," *The Guardian,* June 20, 2014, accessed June 31, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/30/isis-announces-islamic-caliphate-iraq-syria.

[50] "The End of Sykes-Picot." Youtube video, posted by "Al Hayat Media Center," June 29, 2014., accessed September 14, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i357G1HuFcI.

[51] "Major militant factions reject the succession of Baghdadi as caliph." *All4Syria,* July 1, 2014, accessed August 8, 2014, http://www.all4syria.info/Archive/154919.

"spread the truth."[52] Baghdadi's sermon gained international attention as thousands of

fighters from around the world flocked to Syria and Iraq to support Baghdadi.[53]

[52] "Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi Appears in Video, Delivers Sermon in Mosul," *Site Intelligence Group,* July 5, 2014, accessed July 7, 2014, https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-appears-in-video-delivers-sermon-in-mosul.html.

[53] Smith, "The Rise of ISIS."

4. The Islamic Caliphate:
An Appeal to History

In order to gauge the magnitude of Baghdadi's establishment of the Islamic State, it is important to understand the significance of the Caliphate in Islamic tradition. Despite the many different schisms that exist in Islam, most Muslim scholars agree on the necessary unity of the Muslim community.[1] According to the 14th century Islamic scholar Ibn Khaldun, the best type of political community is a caliphate defined by the authority of Islamic law and the social unity of all Muslims.[2] Given the many political and social divisions that exist in the Muslim community today, the concept of unity is a powerful and appealing image to many.

Many perceive the Caliphate to be an archaic and naturally barbaric institution rooted solely in the seventh century. But, the nature of the Caliphate and the application of Islamic law have actually proven flexible and open to many interpretations and degrees of adaptability. Baghdadi appears to reject such flexibility. As a traditional Salafi Muslim, Baghdadi rejects *bid'ah,* or religious innovation that emerged after the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the early caliphs. ISIS is thus modeled after a Sunni

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[1] Mohamed Ghilan, "Baghdadi's misconstrued caliphate project," July 4, 2014, accessed December 19, 2014, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/07/baghadadi-misconstrued-caliphate-20147410522330520.html.

[2] Khaldun and Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, (2nd ed. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967).

understanding of the Caliphate ruled initially by the *Rashidun,* or the first four caliphs of the Muslim Empire. ISIS is thereby reverting to a seventh century style of governance.

THE CALIPHATE AND ITS CALIPHS

What was the purpose and nature of the seventh century Caliphate? Answering this question is critical to understanding ISIS's current style of governance. From the beginning, the Islamic Caliphate has been more than just a political entity in the way that we often think about modern states. In the Quran, the primary obligation of the *khalifa,* or Caliphate, is to implement *sharia,* or Islamic law, in order to promote virtue and prevent vice. The Caliphate is thus a legal and spiritual institution that dictates both the political and moral lives of its subjects. Contrary to popular belief, the original Islamic Caliphate was not tied to the Arab identity. Rather, "the Islamic caliphate was a polity that developed into a multi-ethnic transnational empire in which the bond of faith and the rule of *shari'a* constituted the basis for centralized government."[3]

The Caliphate could thus be described as an institution that transcends ethnic, linguistic, and tribal identities. On July 1st, Baghdadi released an audio message to his fellow Muslims justifying the restoration of the Caliphate. He appealed to the transnational nature of the Caliphate, describing the Islamic State as:

> a state where the Arab and non-Arab, the white man and black man, the easterner and westerner are all brothers…Syria is not for Syrians, and Iraq

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[3] Madawi al-Rasheed and Marat Shterin, "Introduction," In *Demystifying the Caliphate: Historical Memory and Contemporary Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 1.

is not for Iraqis. The east is Allah's…The State is a state for all Muslims. The land is for the Muslims, all the Muslims.[4]

The Caliphate thus includes the entire Muslim world, which can be divided into smaller provinces called *wilayat.* Each province is governed by a local ruler who has pledged his allegiance to the caliph, or central leader of the Caliphate.

The title of caliph holds great historical significance. The world "caliph" comes from the Arabic *khalifat Allah,* meaning "deputy of God." After the Prophet Muhammad died in 632 AD, the Muslim community was suddenly left without a leader. Who would succeed the Prophet and what his role would be was, for a short time, highly uncertain. It was assumed that only those closest to the Prophet were suitable to serve as leaders of the Muslim community. The Prophet's close friend, Abu Bakr as-Saddiq, became the Muslim world's first caliph in June of 632, followed by Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan, and finally by Muhammad's cousin Ali ibn Abi Talib. These first four caliphs came to be known as the Rashidun, or Rightly Guided Caliphs, due to their personal connection to the Prophet Muhammad. Though other caliphs followed the Rashidun, such as the Umayyads, the Abbasids, and the Ottomans, the Rashidun were considered the only "virtuous and pure" rulers.[5] Many notable Islamic scholars have emphasized this idea, such as Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Khaldun, who argue that only the Rashidun Caliphate was truly Islamic in nature. Caliphates following that of the Rightly Guided Caliphs were marked by greed and corruption and evolved into kingships.[6] The time of the Prophet

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[4] Abu Bakr Al-Husayni Al-Qurashi Al-Baghdadi, "A Message to the Mujahidin and the Muslim Ummah in the Month of Ramadan," Al Furqan, July 1, 2014, accessed August 18, 2014, https://www.mnbr.info/vb/archive/index.php/t-53740.html.

Muhammad and the Rightly Guided Caliphs is thus widely considered a "normative" period to be emulated.[7]

Historically, the main responsibility of the caliph was to "maintain the *hudud* (crimes and punishments delineated by the Quran), uphold rights, and re-establish good practices instituted by righteous men."[8] The caliph was thus not only the head of the Muslim community, but provided the means of attaining salvation. He was the "protector and defender of the faith" and was responsible for enforcing God's law and spreading it through geographic expansion.[9] The caliph also had civic responsibilities and complete control over the political, judicial, military, and fiscal affairs of the community. Thus, historically, the caliph was both a political and religious leader. The necessary marriage of politics and religion is something that ISIS has consistently emphasized in its propaganda campaign meant to bolster support for Baghdadi, also known amongst ISIS supporters as "Caliph Ibrahim." For example, an article in ISIS's online magazine *Dabiq* reads:

> The people today have failed to understand that *imamah* [leader of the Muslim community] in religious affairs cannot be properly established unless the people

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[5] Julia McQuaid, "Reviving the Caliphate: Fad, or the Future?" *Center for Naval Analyses,* July, 2014, accessed December 19, 2014, http://www.cna.org/research/2014/reviving-caliphate. 10.

[6] Julia McQuaid, "The Struggle for Unity and Authority in Islam: Reviving the Caliphate?" *Center for Naval Analyses.* September, 2007, accessed December 19, 2014, http://www.cna.org/research/2007/struggle-unity-authority-islam-reviving-caliphate. 4.

[7] John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (4th ed. New YorkL Oxford University Press, 2011), 40.

[8] Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious authority in the first centuries of Islam (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 83.

[9] Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path,* 43.

of truth first achieve comprehensive political imamah over the lands and the people.[10]

How does one become caliph? Even today, there is very little consensus regarding the selection of caliph.[11] Traditionally caliphs are to have some sort of connection to the Prophet Muhammad. After the Rightly Guided Caliphs, all of whom were the Prophet's personal companions, it became traditional to select the caliph from the Quraysh tribe, which is the tribe of Muhammad. By selecting caliphs from the Quraysh tribe, many reason, caliphs will forever maintain a sense of kinship or closeness to the Prophet. Baghdadi is widely believed to be a member of the Quraysh tribe, which greatly strengthens his legitimacy. Once selected, traditionally by an Islamic council, the caliph's position would be solidified by the councilmen's oaths of allegiance, otherwise known as pledges of bay'ah.[12] The early caliphs are known to have lived simple, religious lifestyles, much like the Prophet himself. They were also expected to be "pious, upright, competent, able bodied, and well versed in the law."[13] According to *Dabiq,* Baghdadi is

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[10] Dabiq, "The Concept of Imamah (Leadership) is from the Millah (Path) of Ibrahim," *Dabiq*, no. 1 (Al Hayat Media Center, 2014): 25, accessed December 6, 2014, http://media.clarionproject.org/files/09-2014/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-Issue-1-the-return-of-khilafah.pdf.

[11] "Support for the Caliphate and Radical Mobilization," *National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism* (Maryland)*,* January 2008, accessed December 18, 2014, http://www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/files/publications/research_briefs/20080131_Caliphate_and_Radicalization.pdf. 2.

[12] Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path,* 41.

[13] McQuaid, "Reviving the Caliphate," 6.

qualified to be caliph not only because of his "noble lineage," but also because of his "sound intellect and a prestigious level of knowledge and religious practice."[14]

Though the Rashidun were close companions of the Prophet, and therefore the best examples of how the Prophet lived, they were not prophets themselves. This would suggest that even the Rightly Guided Caliphs, though considered the "deputies" of God on earth, were subject to fault and imperfection. Much like the Rightly Guided Caliphs, Baghdadi has acknowledged his own fallibility. In his July 4st Mosul sermon, Baghdadi announced, "I've been tested by Allah in my election as caliph. It's a heavy burden. I'm no better than you. Advise me when I err and follow me if I succeed. And assist me against the *tawagheet"* [plural of *taghut,* meaning rebel or idolater].[15] Devout Muslims would have recognized this part of Baghdadi's speech as a reference to Caliph Abu Bakr as-Saddiq's inaugural speech. Shortly after the Prophet Muhammad died, the Muslims of Medina gathered inside the Prophet's mosque to pay allegiance to Aby Bakr as-Saddiq, the first caliph of the of the Muslim community. Abu Bakr as-Saddiq addressed those before him by saying, "Now it is beyond doubt the I have been elected your Amir, although I am not better than you. Help me, if I am right; set me right if I am wrong."[16] This subtle parallel between Abu Bakr as-Siddiq's inaugural speech and Baghdadi's

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[14] Dabiq, no. 1, "The Concept of Imamah (Leadership) is from the Millah (Path) of Ibrahim," 27.

[15] Justpaste.it, "Translation of the Khutbah of Commander of the Faithful, Caliph of the Muslims, Abu Bakr al-Husayni al-Quarayshi al-Baghdadi (may Allah protect him) Ramadan 6th 1435 in Mosul, Iraq," *JustPaste.it,* July 4, 2014, accessed August 18, 2014, http://justpaste.it/g40p.

[16] Alim, "Khalifa Abu Bakr- Successor to the Holy Prophet," *Alim,*accessed December 16, 2014, http://www.alim.org/library/biography/khalifa/content/KAB/7/5.

sermon in Mosul strengthens Baghdadi's credibility and his image as a "humble servant of righteousness."[17]

The early caliphal period is not only remembered for its righteous leaders, but also for the dramatic military expansion of the Muslim Empire. Between 632 and 661, under the leadership of the Rashidun, Muslim armies conquered all of the Middle East, North Africa, and the Sasanian Empire of Persia, which stretched from the Mediterranean to the Indus Valley of modern-day Pakistan and northern India. The early Caliphate also encompassed the Byzantine Empire's hold on Sicily, the lands between Syria and Egypt, and much of the Iberian Peninsula.[18] These military victories were significant because they symbolized the "historical validation of the message of Islam."[19] The successful expansion of the newly established Muslim Empire was, in the eyes of many, evidence that God favored the Muslim community. The idea that military victory is evidence of God's favor is prominent in ISIS rhetoric and propaganda. In his July 4th Mosul sermon, for example, Baghdadi said:

> And you brothers the mujahideen, indeed did Allah, blessed and exalted, give them victories and conquests which came after many years of hardship and patience. And they were firm against the enemies of Allah,

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[17] Tom Rogan,"Three observations on the Isis leader's video," *The Telegraph,* July 7, 2014, accessed December 16, 2014, http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/tomrogan/100278930/three-observations-on-the-isis-leaders-video/.

[18] Edward N. Luttwak, "Caliphate Redivivus? Why a Careful Look at the 7th Century Can Predict How the Caliphate Will End," Joscelyn *Institution*, no. 17 (2014), accessed December 16, 2014, http://www.hoover.org/research/caliphate-redivivus-why-careful-look-7th-century-can-predict-how-new-caliphate-will-end.

[19] Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path,* 43.

and He made them powerful in the land until the declaration of the
Caliphate and choice of an imam.[20]

This type of rhetoric resonates with those who believe that the success of the

contemporary Caliphate is confirmation of God's intervention on behalf of the Muslim

community.

*Figure 2. On June 16, 2014 (3:52 p.m.), Twitter user "@Third_Position" posted a "roadmap" depicting
ISIS's plan for military conquest.*

To this day, Muslim scholars continue to debate whether the Caliphate is a

religious obligation. Thirteenth century Islamic scholar Ibn Taymiyyah, for example,

discounts the Caliphate as being required by the Quran, arguing that the Caliphate "came

into being after Muhammad's death in 632."[21] Thus, the Caliphate and imamate are

"simply political traditions, which Ibn Taymiyyah accepts in the name of social order, but

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[20] Justpaste.it, "Translation of the Khutbah of Commander of the Faithful."

[21] Youssef H. Enein, *Militant Islamist Ideology: Understanding the Global Threat* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval
Institute Press, 2010), 110.

are not divinely ordained."[22] The Caliphate, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, is not a Quranic requirement, but a reaction to the death of Muhammad and a "temporal institution to govern Muslims."[23] Ibn Taymiyyah nevertheless considers political rule necessary to improve the religious conditions of society. Thus, many use political and religious connections to argue that the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate is in fact a religious obligation.

Since the seventh century, "the objective of the [Islamic] state was to spread the hegemony of this new religion, Islam…to establish a public order that was dedicated to the recognition of God's oneness and to the observance of what Muslims considered a proper attitude of piety and mindfulness of God." Thus, the expansion of the Islamic State was considered "a legitimate-indeed an obligatory-endeavor."[24] Today, the Caliphate is widely considered a means of protecting the glory days of Islam from modern injustices. Thus, in his July 4th Mosul sermon, Baghdadi asserts, "And this [establishment of a caliphate] is a matter obligatory upon all Muslims. It is *waajib* [highest level of obligation]…the religion cannot be in place unless sharia is established."[25] By seeking to establish a caliphate rather than a state, ISIS is appealing to the traditionalists who feel they have a religious obligation to support the Islamic State and pledge loyalty to its caliph.

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Mustafa Akyol, *Islam without Extremes: A Muslim Case for Liberty* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2011), 251.

[24] Fred McGraw Donner, "Introduction," in *The Articulation of Early Islamic State Structures* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Variorum, 2012), 17.

[25] Justpaste.it, "Translation of the Khutbah of Commander of the Faithful."

CONTEMPORARY DEBATES AND PERCEPTIONS

ISIS's expressed desire to restore the Sunni Caliphate is not new or unique to ISIS. Since the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1924, Islamists and politicians around the world have consistently spoken about the potential restoration of the Caliphate. Although the Caliphate is often associated with religious extremism, the idea of an Islamic state is more often an honest attempt to fit Islam into the political lives of Muslims. Reviving the Caliphate, in other words, is often presented as a solution to modern political crises in the Muslim world. Consensus regarding the actual restoration of the Caliphate is fragmented. Until ISIS gained power, the Caliphate was merely an ideal, one "limited to the boundaries of the imagination."[26] The Caliphate is nevertheless an appeal to a golden age of Islam that many Muslims, both religious and secular, identify with and feel deep nostalgia for. It is also a reminder of "the gap between what Muslims once were and where they now find themselves."[27] This gap ultimately stands at the center of "the anger and humiliation that drive political violence in the Middle East."[28]

According to a 2007 survey conducted by the US Department of Homeland Security, 65% of Muslims across Egypt, Morocco, Indonesia, and Pakistan supported

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[26] McQuaid, "Reviving the Caliphate: Fad, or the Future?" 7.

[27] Shadi Hamid, "The Roots of the Islamic State's Appeal," *The Atlantic,* October 31, 2014, accessed December 14, 2014, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/10/the-roots-of-the-islamic-states-appeal/382175/.

[28] Ibid.

"unifying all Islamic countries into a single state or Caliphate."[29] The same survey

revealed that 71% of Muslims agreed with requiring "strict application of sharia law in

every Islamic country." At the same time, 67% supported democratic systems of

governance, which makes one wonder how the vast majority of Muslims interpret sharia

law and the Caliphate. Nevertheless, the Caliphate is a mobilizing idea, as it tends to

combine "religious discourse with political aspirations, creating in the process powerful

emotional and moral commitments as well as legal responsibilities."[30]

Mention of the Caliphate has thus been present in the rhetoric and ideologies of

various Islamic organizations over the last century. Various political groups, such as the

international pan-Islamic group Hizb ut-Tahrir, have frequently called for the restoration

of the Caliphate. Such groups have never posed a legitimate threat to existing state

borders because they are mostly "deterritorialized," meaning they have little connection

to any one geographic location.[31] AQ has similarly advocated for the restoration of the

Caliphate, though this has not driven the group's agenda. The concept of the Caliphate is

used by AQ primarily as a rhetorical and tactical tool, enabling AQ to "tie the agenda of

disparate local and regional jihadis to its own banner as the leader of global jihad."[32]

Based on AQ's actions over the years, its members are more concerned with

combatting the West than with establishing an Islamic state. In fact, most AQ leaders

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[29] WorldPublicOpinion.org, "Muslim Public Opinion on US Policy, Attacks on Civilians and Al-Qaeda,"
Washington: The Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, 2007, accessed December 8,
2014, http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/apr07/START_Apr07_rpt.pdf.

[30] Al-Rasheed and Shterin, *Demystifying the Caliphate,* 2.

[31] McQuaid, "Reviving the Caliphate: Fad, or the Future?" 9.

[32] Ibid.

believe that the actual establishment of an Islamic state must be left to God. For example, whenever Maqdisi, the spiritual leader of AQI, was asked about the Islamic state, he simply responded by saying that the rule of idols (*Hakm al-taghut)* must be replaced by the rule of God (*Hakm Allah).*[33] Rather than restoring the Caliphate, "the goals they [AQ] have specified repeatedly are the liberation of occupied land, the eradication of corruption and dictatorial rule imposed from abroad, and political independence free from outside interference."[34] ISIS's primary aim to establish a real and legitimate caliphate thus sets it apart from other jihadist organizations that have a merely conceptual understanding of the Caliphate. For ISIS leaders, the Caliphate is not just a mobilizing idea, but is an actual institution that ought to be built and sustained.

It is no wonder that ISIS has established such a large following in recent months. Unlike other jihadist organizations, which only talk about establishing a caliphate, ISIS has not only formally announced the restoration of the Caliphate, but has successfully established control over about as much territory as Abu Bakr as-Saddiq had during his reign as caliph in the seventh century.[35] ISIS is not merely looking to control territory, but also to establish a legal system modeled after that of the seventh century Caliphate. Baghdadi's "*dhimmi* pact" serves as one example of this. In some of the earliest days of

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[33] McQuaid, "The Struggle for Unity and Authority in Islam: Reviving the Caliphate?" 10.

[34] Reza Pankhurst, "The Caliphate, and the Changing Strategy of the Public Statements of al-Qaeda's Leaders," *Political Theology* 11, no. 4 (2010): 530.

[35] Graeme Wood, "What ISIS's Leader Really Wants," *New Republic,* September 1, 2014, accessed November 28, 2014, http://www.newrepublic.com/article/119259/isis-history-islamic-states-new-caliphate-syria-and-iraq.

Islam, the caliph was responsible for imposing *dhimmi* status. A dhimmi was a non-Muslim citizen of the Islamic state, usually a Christian or a Jew.

In exchange for paying *jizya* (a poll tax reserved for second-class citizens), and by agreeing to live under the rules of the Islamic state, non-Muslims would be granted some legal protections. This arrangement is not only considered traditional of the first Islamic state, but is also mandated by the Quranic verse 9:29.[36] Thus, unsurprisingly, Baghdadi issued a document imposing dhimmi status on Christians in Raqqa of northern Syria in February of 2014. The document bears Baghdadi's signature as *amir al-mu'mineen,* which means "Commander of the Faithful." This is a title traditionally reserved for caliphs, so even before Baghdadi's June declaration of the Caliphate, Baghdadi was already projecting himself as leader of the world's Muslims.[37]

From the perspective of many traditionalist Muslims, Baghdadi's July 4th Mosul sermon only confirmed his legitimacy as a caliph comparable to the Rashidun. Baghdadi entered the Great Mosque wearing a black robe and turban, which is what the Prophet is believed to have worn when he conquered Mecca. The black turban has since come to symbolize one's lineage to the Prophet.[38] Baghdadi then climbed the pulpit slowly and calmly before facing his audience. It is often said that the Prophet and the Rashidun acted

[36] Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, "The Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham's dhimmi pact for the Christians in Raqqa province," *Syria Comment,* February 26, 2014, accessed December 19, 2014, http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/islamic-state-iraq-ash-shams-dhimmi-pact-christians-raqqa-province/.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ed Husain, "How 'Caliph' Baghdadi aimed his sermon at the Muslim devout," *The Telegraph,* July 18, 2014, accessed December 19, 2014, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/10975807/How-Caliph-Baghdadi-aimed-his-sermon-at-the-Muslim-devout.html#disqus_thread.

with a similar sense of composure and serenity.[39] Before delivering his sermon, Baghdadi cleaned his mouth with a *miswak,* or a small piece of wood that the Prophet is known to have used to clean his teeth. Finally, Baghdadi began his sermon, speaking in perfect classical Arabic, which is not only the form of Arabic used by the early caliphs, but is also considered the language of Islam and of religious scholarship. All of these small details, while largely overlooked by western media, greatly bolstered Baghdadi's image as a legitimate caliph in the eyes of many traditionalists.

[39] Ibid.

5. From Forums to Twitter:
How ISIS Spreads Its Message

There is a certain irony in the way that ISIS operates. ISIS is a fundamentalist organization that seeks to establish a seventh century style of Islamic statehood, yet it is remarkably modern in its use of pop-cultural technology. ISIS, like other jihadist organizations before it, has found the Internet to be one of its greatest weapons. Since the late 1990s and early 2000s, radical jihadist groups have used the Internet as a way of spreading their message and communicating with fellow jihadists and sympathizers. Throughout the early part of the 21st century, jihadi websites, blogs, and web forums (or message boards) were the primary means of media dissemination.[1] AQ and AQ-affiliated organizations in particular are well-established users of web forums, as web forums allow for a certain degree of anonymity and provide a space for multimedia and interactivity amongst many users.

Jihadi media on the Internet range from news stories to training manuals to high-quality propaganda, often linking to external sites such as Youtube or archive.org. Unlike blogs or websites, media content on web forums is not published by the site itself, but is contained within the users' posts.[2] This makes the spread of information swift and widespread. Users are often required to obtain special permission to post on forums. Thus, jihadi forums usually contain content that is strictly favorable or sympathetic

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[1] Akil N. Awan, "Virtual jihadist media," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10, no. (2007): 390.
[2] Ibid, 393.

towards the associated organization. Researchers have also noted a certain "hierarchy" within jihadi forums as well, whereby some users are more active than others, and certain sub-forums are only accessible to senior members.[3] Due to the nature of forums, therefore, AQ's media campaign is known to be fairly controlled and centralized.

ISIS's media campaign differs from its predecessors. Unlike AQ, ISIS does not use forums as a primary means of spreading information, marking a significant break in radical jihadi tradition. While ISIS sympathizers are active on web forums, such as *Platform Media*, most ISIS media is disseminated through more conventional social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube. Twitter in particular has become one of ISIS's most effective propaganda tools. According to the researchers at Jihadica, Twitter emerged as a prominent platform for radical jihadists between 2010 and 2012, following the outbreak of violence in Syria.[4] In 2011, members of jihadi forums began posting advisories and training manuals advertising the importance of Twitter. These posts were quickly copy-and-pasted to "*al-Shamukh*," a well-known web forum dominated by AQ members and sympathizers.[5]

While other Islamist groups, including AQ, maintain Twitter accounts, ISIS is by far the most active social media user.[6] For a short time, most of ISIS's official media

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[3] Ibid, 394.

[4] Nico Prucha, "Jihadi Twitter activism – Introduction," *Jihadica,* April 27, 2013, accessed February 24, 2015, http://www.jihadica.com/jihadi-twitter-activism-introduction/.

[5] At this time, ISIS was still affiliated with AQ central.

[6] Anti-Defamation League, "Hashtag Terror: How ISIS Manipulates Social Media," *Anti-Defamation League,* August 21, 2014, accessed February 1, 2015, http://www.adl.org/combating-hate/international-extremism-terrorism/c/isis-islamic-state-social-media.html.

centers had their own associated Twitter accounts controlled by ISIS leadership.[7] Al-I'tisam, for example, had more than 50,000 Twitter followers before its account was suspended in June of 2014.[8] The Twitter account associated with the ISIS media company, Ajnad, had about 36,500 followers and tweeted mostly religious citations.[9] Another one of ISIS's official media wings, al-Furqan, had a number of associated Twitter pages that circulated the office's multimedia, including written posts and reports, images, and videos. Al-Hayat, an ISIS media center that focuses on recruiting westerners, maintained several Twitter accounts that distributed ISIS's English-language publications such as *Dabiq*. By late 2014 and early 2015, however, these "official" accounts had mostly been suspended by Twitter. According to Cole Bunzel, an expert in jihadi media and a researcher for Jihadica, each ISIS province also had an official Twitter handle associated with its media office, but these accounts were also shut down in recent months.[10] Consequently, ISIS has had to resort to unofficial Twitter accounts and networks of users to spread information. The result is a highly decentralized, though well-coordinated, media campaign.

The decentralized nature of ISIS media distribution, which involves hundreds of social media users located all over the world, makes ISIS's strategy unique. According to

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[7] Rita Katz, "Follow ISIS on Twitter: A Special Report on the Use of Social Media by Jihadists," *InSITE Blog on Terrorism and Extremism,* June 26, 2014, accessed January 29, 2015, http://news.siteintelgroup.com/blog/index.php/entry/192-follow-isis-on-twitter-a-special-report-on-the-use-of-social-media-by-jihadists.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Cole Bunzel, e-mail message to the author, January 30, 2015.

analysts at The Brookings Institution, there were at least 45,000 Twitter accounts being used by ISIS supporters in the fall of 2014.[11] Saudi-born Abu Amr al Shami reportedly oversees ISIS's overall media effort.[12] Al Shami is responsible for controlling a large army of bloggers and social media enthusiasts whose job is be to constantly online and disseminate ISIS media material. Social media poses a certain challenge for ISIS, as platforms such as Twitter make the rapid spread of misinformation easy and highly likely. Thus, according to the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, ISIS imposed strict media regulations in eastern Syria, demanding that all videos, photographs, and written reports be reviewed by ISIS's "Information Office" prior to distribution.[13] Once approved, messages and links to publications are sent out by ISIS's media centers and affiliated Twitter accounts, which are re-tweeted by thousands of other ISIS supporters active on social media. Within hours, a single social media post will have reached millions of people all over the world. This method of media dissemination is highly strategic. ISIS appears to be sacrificing strict control over the delivery of its message in exchange for widespread circulation and rapid distribution.

  The decentralized nature of ISIS's media campaign also makes it hard to shut down. While web forums, such as those used by AQ, require a lot of work to maintain

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[11] J.M. Berger, "The Evolution of Terrorist Propaganda: The Paris Attack and Social Media," *The Brookings Institution,* January 27, 2015, accessed February 26, 2015, http://www.brookings.edu/research/testimony/2015/01/27-terrorist-propaganda-social-media-berger.

[12] The Soufan Group, "The Islamic State: A Monopoly on Messaging," *The Soufan Group,* October 30, 2014, accessed January 29, 2015, http://soufangroup.com/tsg-intelbrief-the-islamic-state-a-monopoly-on-messaging/.

[13] Syrian Observatory for Human Rights' *Facebook* page, accessed March 17, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/syriahroe/posts/562733090501700.

and are relatively easy to block from the Internet, the same cannot be said for more public

social media platforms. Though social media companies, such as Twitter and Youtube,

frequently suspend accounts they recognize as being linked to ISIS, suspended users can

immediately create new accounts simply by changing their Twitter handles or usernames.

These new accounts are then advertised by other pro-ISIS accounts. Thus, the suspension

of Twitter accounts might make ISIS's outreach more difficult, but it does not quash the

effort altogether. Social media companies have also found it difficult to identify those

accounts that are worth shutting down in the first place. It is nearly impossible, for

example, to discern those accounts managed by mere ISIS sympathizers or reckless

teenagers from those managed by ISIS militants spread across Iraq and Syria.

Consequently, it has become nearly impossible to control the speed and ease with which

ISIS spreads its message.

Though there are thousands of Twitter accounts supporting ISIS, some are more

authentic that others, indicated by the number of followers an account has or how often

the user posts.[14] One pro-ISIS Twitter account, for example, which can be identified by

the handle @mohamed_khames, has over twenty thousand followers and contains

between 50 and 100 new posts every day, making it appear as if the user is posting in real

time. As with other pro-ISIS accounts, these posts include official and unofficial photos

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[14] Due to the frequency with which ISIS Twitter accounts are shut down, many of the Twitter accounts used
as research for this report may no longer be available online.

and videos[15] depicting ISIS activity in a number of different provinces under ISIS control. Some accounts release timely military updates by posting photos and videos of battles soon after they occur. Other accounts post Quranic citations, photos of life under ISIS rule, or mere expressions of praise for Baghdadi and the Islamic State. Most posts, however, are re-tweets, or tweets picked up from other accounts and re-posted.

ISIS also uses Twitter to infiltrate unrelated social movements and activist groups present online by using the same hashtags and similar rhetoric.[16] Through what is known as "hashtag hijacking," ISIS is virtually able to align other non-jihadi movements occurring around the world with its own militant struggle. After the race riots in Ferguson, Missouri in November of 2014, ISIS Twitter users started using the hashtags "#FergusonUnderISIS" and "From #IS to Ferguson" to display support for the Ferguson protestors and to portray the American government as violent and oppressive.[17] For example, one Twitter user, identified by the handle @abudujana56, posted on November 25th, "For how long will you let these govts[sic] oppress u[sic]. Draw ur[sic] knives and show them a response!!"

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[15] By "official" photos and videos, I am referring to media released by one of ISIS's formal media centers. These publications can be identified by the existence of an ISIS's media logo usually found in the corner of the publication.

[16] Prucha, "Jihadi Twitter Activism."

[17] John Hall, "ISIS supports Ferguson protestors: Islamic militants pledge to send over 'soldiers that don't sleep, whose drink is blood, and their play is carnage,'" *Daily Mail*, November 26, 2014, accessed February 24, 2015, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2850442/We-hear-help-ISIS-tweets-support-Ferguson-protesters-reject-corrupt-man-laws-like-democracy.html.

Figure 3. Twitter post by user Abu Dajana (@abudujana56) on
November 25, 2014 at 9:26 p.m.

Pro-ISIS Twitter users frequently mentioned the names of black civil rights leaders in

their posts as well, thus aligning ISIS's cause with the Civil Rights Movement.[18] This is

only one of many instances in which ISIS supporters have used Twitter to infiltrate

unrelated conversations in hopes of gaining sympathy and new recruits.

By analyzing the most active Twitter accounts and the connections between those

accounts[19] researchers have been able to map information sharing networks or virtual

"ecosystems" in which ISIS Twitter users interact.[20] Research concerning networks dates

back to the 18th century, when Leonhard Euler developed a new form of mathematics

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[18] Hall, "ISIS supports Ferguson protestors."

[19] We can confirm a "connection" between two accounts if the two accounts frequently share information by re-tweeting, or if two users simply mention the username of the other in his or her post.

[20] Nico Purcha, "Jihadi Twitter Activism part 2: Jabhat al-Nusra on the Twittersphere," *Jihadica,* May 13, 2013, accessed February 24, 2015, http://www.jihadica.com/jihadi-twitter-activism-part-2-jabhat-al-nusra-on-the-twittersphere/.

called graph theory. Graph theory can be used to analyze relationships between objects or people, referred to by scientists as "nodes." Interest in graph theory increased in the latter half of the 20th century, and by the 1990s, the study of networks had developed into a full-fledged field of science.[21] Early researchers in this new field of science found that clusters of people naturally organized themselves into networks. Networks expanded as two unrelated people met through a common friend, and as networks got bigger, "communication among the people in the network got much more efficient."[22]

This type of network analysis is being used more and more by intelligence communities, and has proven very useful in analyzing terrorist networks. By analyzing the communication records of suspected terrorists, intelligence officials have been able to map well-organized networks of information flow. This is precisely what makes Twitter such a powerful tool in understanding how ISIS spreads its message. ISIS Twitter accounts form networks that allow users to coordinate their tweets and post similar links or hashtags within a particular time frame. As a result, these accounts end up at the top of Twitter search results, further amplifying the users' message.

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[21] Digital Tonto, "How the NSA Uses Social Network Analysis to Map Terrorist Networks," *Digital Tonto*, June 12, 2013, accessed March 9, 2015, http://www.digitaltonto.com/2013/how-the-nsa-uses-social-network-analysis-to-map-terrorist-networks/.

[22] Ibid.
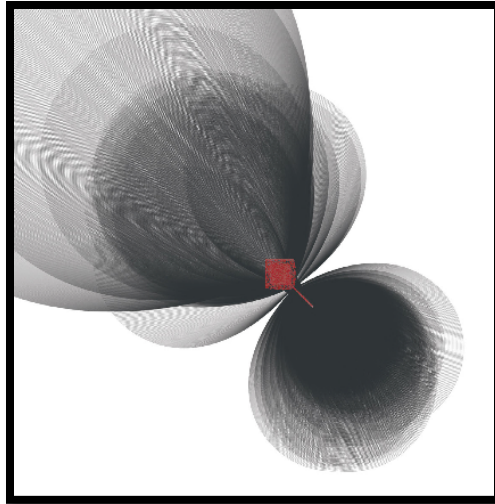
Figure 4. This network graph, produced by the Brookings Institution, shows interactions between pro-ISIS Twitter users in the month of February 2015. The darkly shaded areas of the graph suggest a high level of interaction between the most connected users of the Twitter network; the lightly shaded areas suggest a lower level of interaction among peripheral members of the network.[23]

Some Twitter users are more active than others and certain accounts considered more reliable depending on how far removed the user is from ISIS central. Thus, we can see virtual hierarchies developing within ISIS Twitter networks, similar to the user hierarchy researchers have observed on jihadi web forums.

Twitter networks pose a challenge for governments working to combat ISIS messages and prevent online recruitment. In 2011, the Obama Administration established the United States Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, which aims to provide counter messages on social media and deter potential ISIS sympathizers from

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[23] J.M. Berger and Jonathan Morgan, "The ISIS Twitter Census," *The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World,* no. 20 (March, 2015): 57, accessed March 2, 2015, http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2015/03/isis-twitter-census-berger-morgan/isis_twitter_census_berger_morgan.pdf.

joining the ranks of AQ or ISIS.[24] In what has become known as the "Think again, Turn away" campaign, the Center harnesses and amplifies counter messaging by large federal intelligence agencies, such as the Pentagon and Department of Homeland Security, as well as messaging by nongovernment agencies, academics, and Muslim leaders.[25] The Center also employs foreign language specialists who post in a number of languages including Arabic, Urdu, and Punjabi.

Despite its sophistication, however, the Center remains fairly small and is unable to match the outstanding volume of pro-ISIS messages that are posted to the Internet each day. It is also important to note that those who are sympathetic towards ISIS's cause and vulnerable to its propaganda usually share feelings of hostility towards the US government. Thus, the mere fact that the Center is affiliated with the US government is in itself detrimental to the Center's mission. The biggest challenge to the Center's counter messaging effort, however, is the nature of ISIS's Twitter campaign. As previously explained, pro-ISIS Twitter accounts are organized into cyber clusters or networks. As of yet, counter messages have not sufficiently penetrated these networks and remain fairly

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[24] Hayes Brown, "Meet the State Department Team Trying to Troll ISIS Into Oblivion," *Think Progress,* September 18, 2014, accessed February 12, 2015. http://thinkprogress.org/world/2014/09/18/3568366/think-again-turn-away/.

[25] Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Intensifies Effort to Blunt ISIS' Message," February 16, 2014, accessed February 22, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/17/world/middleeast/us-intensifies-effort-to-blunt-isis-message.html?_r=0.

isolated. Tweets coming from the Center thus constitute "less a counter message and more a separate conversation."[26]

Efforts to blunt ISIS's message became infinitely more difficult in April of 2014 when ISIS launched an app called "The Dawn of Glad Tidings," or simply, "The Dawn." Between April and June of 2014, an estimated 5,000 to 10,000 people downloaded the app, which allows users to follow ISIS's progress and receive news updates.[27] Once downloaded, the app automatically posts to one's personal Twitter account, and to the accounts of everyone else who has signed up for the app. As a result, a single tweet, often a link, photo, or hashtag, gets posted and circulated in incredible volume. For example, according to *The Atlantic,* approximately 40,000 tweets were sent out through the app on the day ISIS captured Mosul.[28] This app has not only allowed ISIS propaganda to reach a large audience with the single click of a button, but it has also made it more difficult for Twitter to identify accounts worth suspending.

Social media platforms are not ISIS's sole means of communication, however. Websites such as Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube are highly public, so when seeking a more private means of spreading information, ISIS-affiliated users often use phone apps

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[26] Nico Prucha, "Turning the volume up to 11 is not enough: Why counter-strategies have to target extremist clusters," *Jihadica,* February 9, 2015, accessed February 12, 2015, http://www.jihadica.com/turning-the-volume-up-to-11-is-not-enough-why-counter-strategies-have-to-target-extremist-clusters/.

[27] Andrew Brauni, "The Islamic State online: ISIL's many accounts," *IDG Connect,* January 15, 2015, accessed February 1, 2015, http://www.idgconnect.com/abstract/9341/the-islamic-state-online-isil-accounts.

[28] J.M. Berger, "How ISIS Games Twitter," *The Atlantic,* June 16, 2014, accessed February 1, 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/06/isis-iraq-twitter-social-media-strategy/372856/.

such as Whatsapp or Kik. Whatsapp and Kik are mobile messengers that operate much like texting plans, allowing users to send messages, pictures, and videos to other users or groups. Unlike text messages, however, Whatsapp and Kik messages are sent over Internet connection and are therefore free of domestic and international charge. Kik is a particularly important media tool for ISIS supporters.[29] Unlike Whatsapp, Kik does not require users' phone numbers, but rather allows users to create usernames as their only identifier. When sending out messages, users are not limited to the phone numbers on their contact lists, but can connect with anyone on the Kik network. Therefore, Kik users can easily connect with many people, even those they do not know personally. They can also do so with relative anonymity, since usernames do not reveal personal information such as first and last names, phone numbers, or email addresses. All of these qualities make Kik a particularly powerful weapon in ISIS's communication network and media dissemination.

For those without mobile phones or access to social media, ISIS has a radio channel that broadcasts "Islamic State news" and propaganda. The radio station, called *Al-Bayan*, is reportedly broadcasted daily from Mosul, Iraq.[30] Once a radio segment is released, it is quickly uploaded onto Youtube by social media users and circulated through Twitter.

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[29] Laura Sydell, "Pro-ISIS Messages Create Dilemma For Social Media Companies," *NPR,* January 29, 2015, accessed February 1, 2015, http://www.npr.org/blogs/alltechconsidered/2015/01/29/382435536/pro-isis-messages-create-dilemma-for-social-media-companies.

[30] Gilad Shiloach, "The Islamic State is Starting a TV Channel," *Vocativ,* November 9, 2014, accessed February 4, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/nov/09/nasheed-how-isis-got-its-anthem.

Figure 5. This graphic shows a Twitter post by user "@lance64" on February 5, 2015 at 5:16 a.m. Embedded in the post is a link to the ISIS radio segment for that day.

Each radio segment, which is about 8 to 10 minutes long and recorded in clean Modern Standard Arabic, provides news of military and political developments in the Caliphate's many provinces. Each segment opens with a pro-ISIS *nasheed,* or Islamic vocal song, that continues to play throughout the duration of the news broadcast.

According to western media sources, ISIS is also preparing to launch a TV channel that will provide continuous stream of ISIS propaganda.[31] The purpose of establishing a radio station and TV channel is, firstly, to attract new recruits by providing constant information regarding the success of the Islamic State. More importantly, ISIS radio and TV bolster ISIS's image as a well-established and high-functioning political entity. The existence of daily radio and television programs suggest that ISIS has the necessary management structures and proper funding to support such programs. The use

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[31] Shiloach, "The Islamic State is Starting a TV Channel."

of state-run media as a source of power is certainly not unique to ISIS or to jihadist organizations in general. Many powerful modern governments, including those in China and Russia for example, are finding "surprising (and alarmingly effective) ways to use media to help themselves stay in power."[32] Official, state-run media, evidently, is a necessary political weapon of any authoritarian regime, which ISIS leadership undoubtedly recognizes.

Taken as a whole, ISIS's media campaign is anything but arbitrary and undisciplined. It is complex and chaotic, but it is also well planned and remarkably sophisticated. ISIS, like other organizations around the world, uses social media to promote "brand awareness," or to sell its image as a legitimate and sustainable organization.[33] Unlike previous jihadist organizations, however, ISIS combines traditional forms of media dissemination, such as radio and web forums, with pop-cultural mediums, such as Twitter, Youtube, and Kik, to launch one of the largest media campaigns in the history of jihadi communications. Recognizing how ISIS spreads its message is a critical first step towards understanding how ISIS operates intellectually.

What is the message that ISIS is spreading? Through all of the re-tweets and hashtags, what is ISIS trying to communicate? It is tempting to dismiss ISIS media as mere propaganda, but this would not be an entirely fair characterization. In order to take ISIS seriously, we must recognize that its media campaign is not geared solely towards

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[32] Christopher Walker and Robert W. Orttung, "Breaking the News: The Role of State-Run Media," *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 1 (2014): 71.

[33] Stafan, "ISIS Jumping from Account to Account, Twitter Trying to Keep Up," *Recorded Future,* September 3, 2014, accessed February 26, 2015, https://www.recordedfuture.com/isis-twitter-activity/.

recruiting foreigners or invoking terror, although this is one of its objectives. More

interestingly, and perhaps more importantly, ISIS media aims to project ISIS's self-image

as a legitimate political and religious institution. Thus, reports of military victories spread

through ISIS publications and social media are often interlaced with Quranic citations or

photo evidence of services being offered by ISIS members. All of this indicates ISIS's

desire to portray itself as "an organization capable of leading a state."[34]

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[34] Azmat Khan, "What ISIL's English-language propaganda tells us about its goals," *Al Jazeera America,* June 20, 2014, accessed January 29, 2015, http://america.aljazeera.com/watch/shows/america-tonight/articles/2014/6/19/how-isil-is-remakingitsbrandontheinternet.html.

6. Obtaining Religious Legitimacy: Theological Themes in Dabiq

How Islamic is the Islamic State? Since the summer of 2014, this question has dominated the international discussion about ISIS. Western media in particular is replete with debates concerning the authenticity and genuineness of ISIS's religious beliefs. President Obama himself has refused to describe ISIS as Islamic, instead referring to the group as a band of terrorists who have betrayed Islam.[1] Western political rhetoric reflects a degree of confusion about ISIS's ideological identity. Such confusion, according to Graeme Wood, writer for *The Atlantic,* has led to a "well-intentioned but dishonest campaign to deny the Islamic State's medieval religious nature."[2] "The Islamic State," Graeme argues, "is no mere collection of psychopaths. It is a religious group with carefully considered beliefs…."

While it is tempting to accuse ISIS of being un-Islamic, it is important to remember that religious doctrine is susceptible to a myriad of different, and sometimes conflicting, interpretations. Thus, despite international efforts to discredit ISIS's religious authority, ISIS continuous to draw support from religious zealots around the world. This is not to say that the majority of Muslims in the Middle East and elsewhere support

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[1] Doyle McManus, "'Islamic' extremism or 'violent' extremism? The president is mincing words and there's a reason for that," *LA Times,* February 20, 2015, accessed March 12, 2015, http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-mcmanus-obama-islamic-state-terminology-20150222-column.html.

[2] Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic,* March, 2015, accessed March 12, 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2015/02/what-isis-really-wants/384980/.

radical interpretations of Islam. In fact, credible survey reports suggest the opposite is true.[3] Nevertheless, ISIS's claim to religious superiority is highly significant. It is thus important to recognize the theological themes present in ISIS media to fully understand whence ISIS derives its legitimacy.

There is perhaps no better window through which we can determine ISIS's self-image than *Dabiq,* ISIS's English-language magazine. As of March 2015, ISIS has published a total of 7 issues, each about 40 to 50 pages long and disseminated mainly through social media. When scrolling through *Dabiq,* one is immediately struck by its aesthetic appeal and sophistication. Each issue is filled with colorful, high definition photographs of burly militants and theatrical battles. These photos are usually surrounded by poetic text detailing military victories. In almost every issue, there is a story depicting life under the Islamic State, supported by images of smiling children or bright landscapes. *Dabiq* is undeniably attractive, leading analysts to believe that ISIS employs well-trained media experts equipped with expensive technology to design its publications.

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[3] Pew Research Center, "Muslim Publics Share Concerns about Extremist Groups," *Pew Research Center,* September 10, 2013, accessed March 2, 2015, http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/09/10/muslim-publics-share-concerns-about-extremist-groups/.
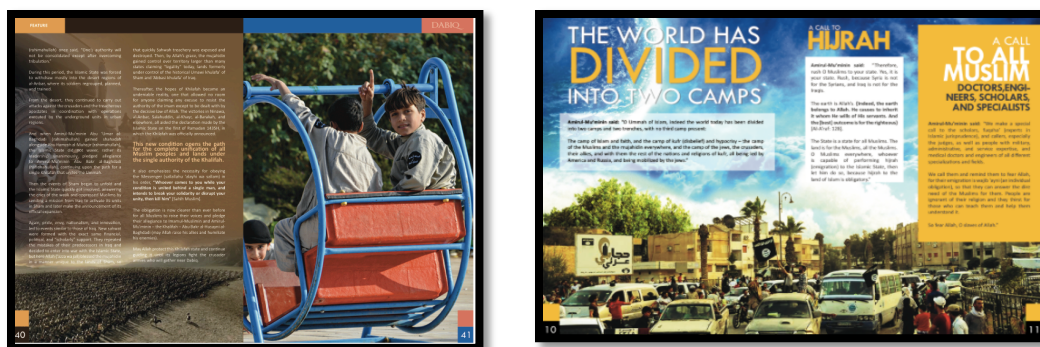
Figure 6. Photographs of pages contained in the first issue of Dabiq.[4]

Though *Dabiq* is published in English, it has been translated into French, German, Russian, and Arabic, thus making it accessible to a wider audience. The first issue of *Dabiq,* released in the summer of 2014, describes the magazine as "a personal magazine focusing on the issues of tawhid [monotheism], manhaj [the process of finding religious truth], hijrah [migration], and jama'ah [gathering or community]." It also contains "photo reports, current events, and informative articles on matters related to the Islamic State."[5] These "informative articles" are usually reports of military advances, stories of groups or individuals pledging loyalty to Baghdadi, or excerpts of theological texts.

Every issue also contains an extensive explanation of a theological concept ISIS deems important to its mission and style of governance. ISIS maximizes its religious legitimacy by quoting extensively from the Quran and the most trusted hadiths. Though

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[4] Dabiq*, "*The Return of the Khalifah," *Dabiq* no. 1 (Al Hayat Media, 2014): 11-40, accessed December 6, 2014, http://media.clarionproject.org/files/09-2014/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-Issue-1-the-return-of-khilafah.pdf.

[5] Dabiq, no. 1*, "*The Return of the Khalifah," 3.

hadiths vary in credibility and authenticity, ISIS quotes almost exclusively from the

sahihain, or body of works written by two of the most highly trusted authors, Imam

Bakhari and Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj.[6] *Dabiq* thus serves a number of purposes. First, it aims

to recruit westerners by detailing, and likely exaggerating, ISIS's military successes.

Second, it serves to portray the Islamic State as a stable political entity and a safe haven

for Muslims around the world. Most importantly, *Dabiq* justifies the Caliphate through

constant reference to Islamic texts and broad religious concepts, bolstering ISIS's

legitimacy. In order to grasp fully the power and allure of ISIS publications such as

Dabiq, it is important to understand the various theological themes contained within

them.

One of the most powerful and prominent themes in ISIS media concerns salvation

and the Final Hour. Based on careful analysis of *Dabiq* and related publications, it is

clear that ISIS's apocalyptic vision is one of the driving forces behind ISIS's struggle.

The title "Dabiq" is in itself a symbol of Armageddon, or the end of times. ISIS's

magazine is named after the town of Dabiq located in the northern countryside of Aleppo,

northern Syria. According to the third issue of *Dabiq,* this town is the site of the

Malhamah al-Kubra, or "Grand Battle," against "the Crusaders."[7] The same article

continues, "Abu Hurayah reported that Allah's Messenger said, 'The Hour will not be

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[6] Harleen K. Gambhir, "The Strategic Messaging of the Islamic State," *Institute for the Study of War* (2015): 6, accessed January 28, 2015, http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/dabiq-strategic-messaging-islamic-state.

[7] Dabiq, "The Liberation of Dabiq," *Dabiq,* no. 3 (Al Hayat Media Center, 2014): 15, accessed January 6, 2015, http://media.clarionproject.org/files/09-2014/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-Issue-3-the-call-to-hijrah.pdf.

established until the Romans land at A'maq or Dabiq…'" This battle, expected to take

place in Dabiq, can be traced to a widely known hadith frequently quoted by Zarqawi.[8]

Upon the Final Hour, the Muslims will be expected to battle the Romans and conquer

Constantinople (Istanbul) and Rome. The battle in Dabiq is thus the first step towards the

re-establishment of a global Islamic empire. This helps to explain the powerful

symbolism contained in the cover of the fourth issue of *Dabiq,* which depicts the ISIS

flag flying above St. Peter's Square in Rome. This picture symbolizes ISIS's plan to

spread its empire throughout the world, and particularly into Rome, the home of the
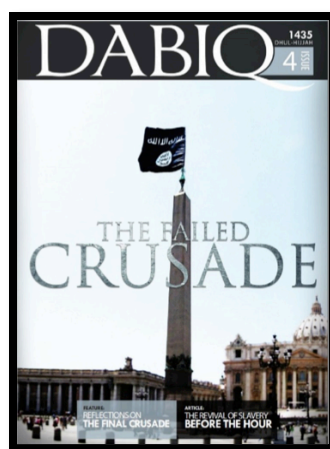
Crusaders.

Figure 7. Cover of the fourth issue of Dabiq, which depicts the ISIS flag
flying above St. Peter's square in Rome.[9]

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[8] Michael S. Ryan, "Dabiq: What Islamic State's New Magazine Tells Us about Their Strategic Direction, Recruitment Patterns, and Guerilla Doctrine," *The Jamestown Foundation,* August 1, 2014, accessed January 22, 2015, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42702&cHash=0efbd71af77fb92c064b9403dc8ea838#.VMEt52TF-gM.

[9] Dabiq, "The Failed Crusade," *Dabiq,* no. 4 (Al Hayat Media Center, 2014), accessed January 7, 2015, at http://media.clarionproject.org/files/islamic-state/islamic-state-isis-magazine-Issue-4-the-failed-crusade.pdf.

As the prophetic tale continues, Issa ibn Maryam, or Jesus in the New Testament, is expected to descend near Damascus to lead the Muslim army, along with the *Mahdi,* (the Islamic messiah), to battle the Antichrist, known in Islam as *Dajjal.*[10] Following this final battle, only those deemed to be true believers would be saved. The third issue of *Dabiq* thus reads, "We ask Allah to place us in the camp of believers on the day of al-Malhamah and keep us firm until he grants us either victory or Shahada [declaration of faith]."[11] The town of Dabiq is of symbolic importance in the Islamic tradition and resonates particularly with those who share ISIS's prophetic vision.

It is no coincidence that American aid worker Peter Kassig was publicly executed in Dabiq, Syria. In a disturbing execution video released by ISIS, the British executioner Mohammad Emwazi, after referring to President Obama as "the dog of Rome," explains, "Here we are burying the first American crusader in Dabiq, eagerly waiting for the remainder of your armies to arrive."[12] Given what we know about ISIS's apocalyptic vision, the beheading of Peter Kassig was likely an attempt to draw American troops to Dabiq, facilitating the fulfillment of a prophecy. Assuming that ISIS members share this prophetic vision, it is unlikely that US military action in Syria will discourage ISIS.

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[10] Ryan Mauro, "The Islamic State Seeks the Battle of the Apocalypse," *The Clarion Project,* November 18, 2014, accessed January 22, 2015, http://www.clarionproject.org/analysis/dabiq-islamic-state-wants-battle-end-days.

[11] Dabiq, no. 3, "The Liberation of Dabiq," 15.

[12] Hannah Allam, "Peter Kassig's friends hope unusual Islamic State video means he fought his beheading," *McClatchy DC,* November 14, 2014, accessed January 22, 2015, http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2014/11/16/247033/islamic-state-video-claims-beheading.html.

Rather ISIS supporters "will actually be encouraged by it because they believe it will ultimately bring victory."[13]

Publications such as *Dabiq* send a clear message: the ISIS struggle is not just about establishing an Islamic state here and now, but about saving Islam come the Final Hour. The use of apocalyptic rhetoric is not unique to ISIS; mention of the end of times can be seen in AQ propaganda as well. The end of times plays a more significant role in ISIS's rhetorical strategy, however, because ISIS has control over the town of Dabiq. ISIS is thus more effectively able to convince fellow Muslims that the Final Hour is coming, and that the Islamic State will be the means of salvation when it comes. The successful establishment of the Islamic State is, in itself, indicative of the Final Hour, according to well-known hadiths.[14] By providing accounts of apocalyptic battles prevalent in classic jihadi literature and religious texts, ISIS intends to associate the Islamic State with a higher cosmic purpose, enabling it to "capture the imagination of young warriors and inspire them to come and fight for the Islamic State."[15] Exploiting the allure of apocalyptic doctrine is one of the ways ISIS is able to maximize its political and religious authority.

ISIS also uses apocalyptic doctrine to discredit western values such as freedom of religion. According to the second issue of *Dabiq*, the freedom to choose between right

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[13] Mauro, "The Islamic State Seeks the Battle of the Apocalypse."

[14] Guy Taylor, "Apocalypse prophecies drive the Islamic State strategy, recruiting efforts," *The Washington Times*, January 15, 2015, accessed February 4, 2015, http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/jan/5/apocalypse-prophecies-drive-islamic-state-strategy/.

[15] Ryan, "Dabiq: What Islamic State's New Magazine Tells Us about Their Strategic Direction."

and wrong is a "polluted ideology" chosen only by those who regularly betray Islam.[16] Force is needed to keep the religion pure. This stringent dichotomy between right and wrong is highly characteristic of religious extremism. Interestingly, one writer in the second issue of *Dabiq* uses the example of the Prophet Nuh, or Noah in the Old Testament, to justify this black and white mentality. The author begins by explaining Noah's choice between building an ark (thereby remaining faithful to God), and deviating from the truth, which would result in punishment (drowning in the flood and facing Hellfire on the Day of Judgment).

The author then continues, "Had the proponents of choice contemplated all this, they would have realized that the flood was a clear sign of the falseness of giving choice…the flood was the result and consequence of opposing the truth…"[17] As an entity of religious purity, the author explains, the Islamic State is a means of attaining salvation. It is, in other words, akin to Noah's Ark, hence the title of the article, "It's Either the Islamic State or the Flood." Opposing the Islamic State, consequently, qualifies one as a perpetrator of "crimes against Islam and the Muslims."[18]

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[16] Dabiq, "It's Either the Islamic State or the Flood," *Dabiq,* no. 2 (Al Hayat Media Center, 2014): 5, accessed January 5, 2015, http://media.clarionproject.org/files/09-2014/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-Issue-2-the-flood.pdf.

[17] Ibid, 9.

[18] Dabiq, "The Punishing of the Shhu'aytat for Treachery," *Dabiq* no. 5 (Al Hayat Media Center, 2014): 13, accessed January 5, 2015, http://media.clarionproject.org/files/09-2014/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-Issue-2-the-flood.pdf.

Figure 8. Cover of the second issue of Dabiq, *which features an article titled "It's Either the Islamic State or the Flood."*[19]

This line of reasoning justifies ISIS's brutal takfiri ideology. *Takfir* is the practice of one Muslim declaring another an apostate or infidel. Most Muslims view takfir conservatively, believing that only God can determine whether one is a true believer. ISIS followers, however, consider themselves the only true Muslims and the rest unbelievers. They thus have a very narrow understanding of what it means to be Muslim: you either support the Islamic State, the only true manifestation of Islam, or you have defied God and opposed Islam, thereby making you an apostate. This line of thinking is how ISIS justifies its killing of other Sunni Muslims, an act that is otherwise strictly forbidden by the Quran and the Sunnah. Based on social media posts coming from ISIS-held territories, so-called apostates appear to be the most common victims of execution.

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[19] Dabiq, "The Flood," *Dabiq* no. 2 (Al Hayat Media Center, 2014), accessed January 5, 2015, , http://media.clarionproject.org/files/09-2014/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-Issue-2-the-flood.pdf.

In the fourth issue of *Dabiq,* ISIS combines takfiri ideology with its prophetic vision to justify its enslavement of Yazidis[20] in Iraq. Based on the explanation presented in *Dabiq,* it is clear that ISIS takes seriously the grounds on which it declares one an apostate. According to an article titled "The Revival of Slavery Before the Final Hour," students of Islamic law in the Islamic State were ordered to research the history of Yazidis in Iraq in order to determine whether Yazidis constitute apostates or *mushrik* (those guilty of *shirk,* or polytheism). These students determined that "this group [Yazidis] is one that existed since the pre-Islamic *jahiliyyah* [ignorance], but became 'Islamized' by the surrounding Muslims population…although they never accepted Islam or claimed to have adopted it."[21] This is the basis on which ISIS determines Yazidis guilty of polytheism. The article claims to deal with them according to what "the majority of *fuqqha* [experts in Islamic jurisprudence]"[22] have indicated.

"Unlike the Jews and Christians," the author continues, "there was no room for jizyah[23] payment."[24] Yazidis, the author explains, cannot be killed since they are not apostates, but as mushrikin, they must be punished. The author then explains ISIS's decision to enslave the Yazidis, outlining a certain rules governing the proper treatment of slaves. A Yazidi mother, for example, cannot be separated from her child, and those who choose to convert to Islam must be accepted into the community. Finally, the author

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[20] The Yazidis are a religious community based in northern Iraq. Their ancient religion, Yazidism, contains many elements of both Christianity and Islam.

[21] Dabiq, no. 4, "The Revival of Slavery Before the Final Hour," 15.

[22] Ibid.

[23] See chapter "The Islamic Caliphate: An Appeal to History" for an explanation of the jizyah tax.

[24] Dabiq, no. 4, "The Revival of Slavery Before the Final Hour," 15.

mentions the revival of slavery as a sign of the Final Hour and as one of the conditions

leading to the Final Battle. Thus, while the revival of slavery sounds backwards and

barbaric to the modern ear, it nevertheless factors nicely into the prophetic narrative

Dabiq seeks to promote.

Interestingly, while the authors of *Dabiq* paint the Islamic State as a vehicle for

salvation come the end of time, it nevertheless admits that the state, in its current form, is

not perfect. In the third issue of *Dabiq* one author writes, "Keep in mind that the Khalifah

(caliphate) is a state whose inhabitants and soldiers are human beings. They are not

infallible angels…you may find mistakes that need fixing. You may find some of your

brothers with traits that need mending…this is something that requires the allotment of

many resources. So be patient."[25] Owning up to the fallibility of ISIS soldiers serves a

number of purposes. First, by portraying the Islamic State as a work in progress, it

suggests to potential ISIS sympathizers that they too can play a part in shaping and

improving the state. Second, it prevents ISIS followers from associating ISIS militants

with perfection, a trait that, according to Islamic tradition, is reserved for God alone. ISIS

may also be using *Dabiq* to respond to criticism of ISIS found in mainstream media.

In light of this fallibility of the Islamic State, *Dabiq* offers practical advice for

Islamic State militants on how best to behave in accordance with Islam. In an article titled

"Advice for the Soldiers of the Islamic State," the author encourages soldiers to

participate in their five daily prayers, avoid injustice, dishonesty, and temptation, and

remain sincere to Allah in their actions and intentions. The author also demands that

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[25] Dabiq, no. 3, "Hijrah from Hypocrisy to Sincerity," 33-34.

soldiers consult with Islamic scholars if they feel unsure of why they are engaging in jihad and warns against declaring takfir without absolute certainty and complete information.[26]

One of the most striking features of *Dabiq,* and what sets ISIS's ideology apart from other Islamic extremist groups, is its emphasis on *hijrah* (migration). Every since ISIS seized control of Mosul in the summer of 2014, ISIS's media campaign has centered on encouraging Muslims around the world to migrate to the Islamic State. This suggests ISIS's intention to establish a state with a sizeable and sustainable population. The word "hijrah" carries religious connotations that are worth noting. In Islamic tradition, "hijrah" refers to the migration of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE, after which the first Islamic state was established. Thus, by encouraging its followers to "make hijrah," ISIS is linking its cause to the example of the Prophet Muhammad.

The third issue of *Dabiq,* titled "A Call to Hijrah," contains an article devoted to explaining the religious necessity of migrating to the Islamic State. The author explains:

> So abandoning hijrah – the path to jihad – is a dangerous matter. In effect, one is thereby deserting jihad and willingly accepting his tragic condition of being a hypocritical spectator…but now there is a Khalifah (caliphate) prepared to accept every Muslim and Muslimah into its land and do all it can within its power to protect them while relying on Allah alone.[27]

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[26] Dabiq, "Advice for the Soldiers of the Islamic State," *Dabiq,* no. 6 (Al Hayat Media, 2014): 6-10, accessed January 6, 2015, http://media.clarionproject.org/files/islamic-state/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-issue-6-al-qaeda-of-waziristan.pdf.

[27] Dabiq, no. 3, "Hijrah from Hypocrisy to Sincerity," 27.

Thus, the author claims, thousands of Muslims from all over the world and of all different

backgrounds and ethnicities have flocked to Iraq and Syria in support of the Islamic

State. The author even gives practical advice to those performing hijrah and comforts

them by saying:

> Do not say to yourself, 'I might get arrested.' That fear is unsure and the
> obligation of hijrah is certain…do not worry about money or
> accommodations for yourself and your family. There are plenty of homes
> and resources to cover you and your family.[28]

By presenting hijrah as a religious obligation and addressing the logistics of migration,

ISIS is attempting to form a state with a permanent population of citizens. Migration,

according to state formation literature, is one of the necessary requirements of early and

modern statehood.
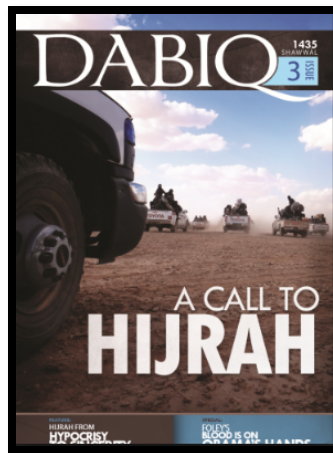
Figure 9. Cover of the third issue of Dabiq, *which demands the migration of Muslims
to the Islamic State.*[29]

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[28] Ibid, 33.

[29] Dabiq, "A Call to Hijrah," *Dabiq,* no. 3 (Al Hayat Media Center, 2014), accessed January 6, 2015, ,
http://media.clarionproject.org/files/09-2014/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-Issue-3-the-call-to-hijrah.pdf.

ISIS's media campaign is packed with blatant references to powerful religious narratives and themes, recognizable even to most non-Muslims. ISIS also uses quiet symbolism in its media campaign, however, representing a more subtle strategy aimed at capturing the attention of devout Muslims. The first issue of *Dabiq,* for example, contains an article titled "The Concept of *Immah* (Leadership) is from the *Millah* (Path) of Ibrahim." "Millah Ibrahim" translated literally means the path of the patriarch Ibrahim (Abraham). *Millah Ibrahim* is also the title of a popular book written by Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, a prominent Jordanian ideologue and spiritual leader of AQ. Though Maqdisi is little known to the average American, he is one of the most influential Islamic thinkers in the Jihadi-Salafi community.[30] Due to his clarity of writing and deep knowledge of early Islamic texts, Maqdisi gained a massive following from among Jihadi-Salafi Muslims throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s. In July of 2014, however, Maqdisi publicly condemned ISIS and the newly established caliphate, accusing ISIS of deviating from the principles of Islam and Islamic law.[31] Thus, by referencing Maqdisi's book in its first issue of *Dabiq*, ISIS is likely trying to gain the favor of "al-Maqdisi's followers and admirers over the head of al-Maqdisi himself."[32]

ISIS's rhetorical strategy is not the only thing that has drawn so many to the Caliphate. Music has contributed greatly to ISIS's lure and romantic aura. ISIS's

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[30] Jonas Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): vii.

[31] Elisa Oddone, "Jordanian jihadist leader condemns ISIS caliphate," *Al Monitor,* July 7, 2014, accessed November 6, 2015, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/07/jordan-maqdisi-jihad-iraq-isis-caliphate-qaeda.html#.

[32] Ryan, "Dabiq: What Islamic State's New Magazine Tells Us about Their Strategic Direction."

unofficial anthem, a nasheed called "My Ummah, Dawn Has Appeared," has received a lot of attention, becoming one of the most popular anthems in the Islamic State and the soundtrack to most of ISIS's propaganda videos. Regardless of whether one supports ISIS or is familiar with Islamic music, ISIS's nasheeds are undeniably beautiful and catchy. Unlike other jihadist groups in the past, which tended to "recycle" old nasheeds, ISIS's Ajnad Media Foundation consistently produces original songs.[33] ISIS nasheeds are also unique in the sense of hope, pride, and confidence they inspire in young ISIS sympathizers. For example, "My Ummah, Dawn Has Appeared" begins, in Arabic, "The Islamic State has arisen by the blood of the righteous, The Islamic State has arisen by the jihad of the pious…My Ummah, accept the good news, and don't despair: victory is near."[34]

Just as ISIS nasheeds can be heard in the background of almost every ISIS propaganda video, the ISIS flag can be seen waving in the corner of almost every frame. The ISIS flag is recognizable to anyone who follows the news. Though similar in appearance to the flag of other Islamic extremist groups, the ISIS flag in particular is indicative of how ISIS views itself and how it wants to portray the Islamic State to the rest of the world. One of the most symbolically significant characteristics of the flag is its color. The flag's solid black background is reminiscent of the Prophet Muhammad's war

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[33] Alex Marshall, "How ISIS got its anthem," *The Guardian,* November 9, 2014, accessed February 4, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/nov/09/nasheed-how-isis-got-its-anthem.

[34] "نشيد جهادي قد لاح فجرٌ"", Youtube video, 4:14, posted by "AnsarudDeen," December 28, 2013, https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=lxttv54VTTQ.

banner. Thus, the flags of many other Muslim countries, such as Egypt, Jordan, and Kuwait, for example, contain the color black to reference the Prophet Muhammad.

The black standard, as it is commonly referred to in Islam, can also be associated with the Abbasid Caliphate, which flew a black flag during its overthrow of the Ummayad Caliphate in 750 CE. The black standard is thus symbolic of the early Islamic period, a period that ISIS claims to mimic. The black banner also supports ISIS's apocalyptic vision. According to widely read hadiths, the raising of "black standards" is a sign of the final battle and of the return of the Mahdi.[35] Magnus Ranstorp, Research Director at the Centre for Asymmetric Threat Studies and Swedish National Defense College, explains that the color black "is not just the color of jihad and of the caliphate, but it represents the coming of what some believers see as the final battle and the day of resurrection."[36]

The writing on the ISIS flag is just as important as the flag's color. At the top of the flag, in rugged Arabic script (which in itself is suggestive of an earlier time), are the words "*La 'ilaha 'ill-llah,*" which translates "There is not God but Allah." This is the first part of the Shahada, or the Islamic declaration of faith. Just below this phrase, one would expect to find the second part of the Shahada, which translates "And Muhammad is the messenger of Allah." Instead, there is a white circle with the phrase, "Muhammad, messenger of Allah" written in it. This symbolizes the seal that Muhammad is said to

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[35] Ali Abbas,, "The Signs of the Reappearance of the Twelfth Imam (ajtf), *Al-Islam,* accessed February 5, 2015, http://www.al-islam.org/articles/signs-reappearance-twelfth-imam-ajtf.

[36] Ilene Prusher, "What the ISIS Flag Says About the Militant Group," *Time Magazine,* September 9, 2014, accessed February 5, 2015, http://time.com/3311665/isis-flag-iraq-syria/.

have used on official documents and correspondence.[37] Both the Shahada and the Seal of

Muhammad are common symbols in Islam, and are not indicative of Islamic extremism.

They do carry special weight on the ISIS flag, however, because they bolster ISIS's

religious legitimacy and add a "veneer of historical authenticity to its mission."[38] The

ISIS flag thus symbolizes what ISIS believes to be the sacredness of its actions.

Figure 10. The ISIS flag

The secret appeal of ISIS stems largely from the theological themes present in

ISIS publications and propaganda. From blatant religious references to subtle symbolism,

ISIS is tapping into what psychologists call "cognitive closure," or "the eschewal of

ambiguity."[39] In other words, ISIS is able to dispel skepticism or uncertainty about the

future by using religious rhetoric to justify its actions. By bolstering its credibility as an

authentic Islamic state, ISIS is assuring its followers and potential supporters that the

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Arie W. Kruglanski, "Psychology Not Theology: Overcoming ISIS' Secret Appeal," *E-International Relations,* October 28, 2014, accessed March 13, 2015, http://www.e-ir.info/2014/10/28/psychology-not-theology-overcoming-isis-secret-appeal/.

Islamic State is a means of attaining stability, truth, and salvation. Publications such as

Dabiq play a critical role in strengthening this message. ISIS publications, images, and

symbols are thus highly valuable because they allow us not only to see how ISIS views

its own actions, but also how ISIS wants to portray itself to the rest of the world.

7. *The Use of Violence*

It is difficult to hold a serious discussion about ISIS without addressing its use of brutality and relentless violence. ISIS has attacked, tortured, and killed civilians in nearly every province it controls, amounting to massive war crimes and human rights atrocities. Unlike most perpetrators of violence, however, ISIS does not try to cover up its crimes, but rather promotes them through its media campaign. ISIS's use of violence is to some extent connected to the legacy of Zarqawi, who was known for his horrifying use of violence and came to be known as "the Sheikh of the Slaughterers" amongst fellow jihadists.[1] It is also important to recognize how the public display of violence factors into ISIS's state building strategy. ISIS is diligent about justifying brutal acts with religious texts and stories of how Muslim leaders acted in the earliest days of Islam. ISIS is not acting based on religious concepts or theories as most Muslims do, but is attempting to "match its practices with the 'practical' history of Islam," mimicking the often brutal actions of early Muslim leaders.[2] Though ISIS frequently refers to Islamic texts to justify its use of violence, there is nothing exclusively Islamic about the brutal and graphic

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[1] Hassan Hassan, "ISIS has reached new depths of depravity. But there is a brutal logic behind it," *The Guardian,* February 7, 2015, accessed February 10, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/08/isis-islamic-state-ideology-sharia-syria-iraq-jordan-pilot.

[2] Hassan, "ISIS has reached new depths of depravity."

means with which ISIS kills. As Kalyvas points out, many different types of insurgent groups throughout history have used ISIS's violent tactics.[3]

Nevertheless, violence plays a very important role in ISIS's military strategy, particularly in its effort to gain control over new territory. A careful analysis of ISIS's military strategy laid out in the first issue of *Dabiq* reveals that ISIS's use of violence is inspired, at least in part, by a book called *Idarat al-Tawahush,* or *Management of Savagery,* by jihadi ideologue Abu Bakr Naji. This book is reportedly a part of ISIS's ideological curriculum and is widely read amongst ISIS leaders.[4] In his book, Naji outlines a strategy for establishing a Sunni caliphate. He encourages jihadists to strategically inflict chaos by striking the country's crucial infrastructure and industries, such as oil fields and tourist sites. This will draw the country's security forces in and around such sites, thereby opening up security vacuums in other parts of the country. Insurgents can then move into these ungoverned areas and establish their own governments.

In this first issue of *Dabiq,* ISIS outlines similar plans to weaken central governments through *nikayah* (terrorist tactics). Through acts of terrorism, ISIS will be able to inflict *tawahhush* (mayhem or chaos), the second stage of ISIS's strategy. By inflicting chaos, ISIS is able to consolidate its power in unstable regions and establish

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[3] Stathis N. Kalyvas, "The logic of violence in the Islamic State's war," *The Washington Post,* July 7, 2014, accessed February 3, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/07/07/the-logic-of-violence-in-islamic-states-war/.

[4] Hassan, "ISIS has reached new depths of depravity."

new state-like structures. This final stage is referred to in Dabiq as *tamkin*.[5] Thus, "what ISIS gains from violence, it calculates, trumps any losses in popularity."[6]

The public display of brutal acts, often intended for foreign governments, serves other purposes as well. Public brutality, firstly, can be attributed to ISIS's desire to receive ransom. By circulating video footage of beheadings, ISIS is assuring foreign governments that it will carry out its threats unless governments pay up. Secondly, and more importantly, ISIS's public use of violence "takes on a media significance that distorts our sense of ISIS's power. In turn, we become more willing to accept their territorial claims, even ones that don't stand up to serious analysis."[7] In other words, public brutality is a way for the Islamic State to flex its muscles and to prove to its sympathizers abroad that, despite international efforts to defeat it, ISIS is still "winning."

Thus, in an audio statement published by al-Furqan media, al-Adnani, the official ISIS spokesman, said,

> Everyone is watching, wondering in confusion and astonishment. They say, 'Does this make sense?! Is the Caliphate rising in the midst of our armies? Is Allah's law being implemented despite our legions, arsenals, planes, tanks, missiles, aircraft carriers, and weapons of mass destruction...The Caliphate will remain, by Allah's permission, until the Day of Judgment, for we are the followers of Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him), and his followers will never be defeated."[8]

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[5] Dabiq, "From Hjrah to Khalifah."

[6] Hassan, "ISIS has reached new depths of depravity."

[7] Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, "The Truth About ISIS…They're Better at Twitter Than War," *Foundations for Defense for Democracies,* January 8, 2015, accessed February 26, 2015, http://www.defenddemocracy.org/media-hit/gartenstein-ross-daveed-the-truth-about-isis-theyre-better-at-twitter-than-war/.

[8] Pietervanostaeyen, "So They Kill and Are Killed" (audio statement by al-Adnani as-Shami), March 12, 2015, accessed March 17, 2015, https://pietervanostaeyen.wordpress.com/category/isis/.

This statement supports ISIS's overall message that God is on the side of the Islamic State, and that despite airstrikes and ground troop invasions, the Islamic State will remain. Thus, regardless of ISIS's actual military capabilities, the media plays an extremely important role in promoting ISIS's purported or real military prowess and allows ISIS to more easily consolidate control over its territories. Public displays of brutality against westerners help to reinforce this message.

8. ISIS Governance Structures and and Functions

"LEND ME YOUR EARS"

Despite its use of violence and emphasis on the end of days, ISIS does have other worldly concerns that center on the day-to-day governance of the territories it controls. Looking at how ISIS governs is extremely important. Western media and politicians tend to focus primarily on ISIS's military campaign, brutality, and the threat posed to the West. Ultimately, however, combatting the West is not ISIS's main concern. Careful analysis of ISIS propaganda suggests that ISIS is preoccupied with establishing systems of governance as a foundation for state building. The ability to establish governance structures in an otherwise chaotic and unstable region adds yet another layer to ISIS's legitimacy and appeal.

ISIS recognizes that "managing and governing territory requires a different skill set than conquering it."[1] Through its media campaign, ISIS is able to convince its followers that it is capable of running a state and gaining the trust of its residents. One video series called "Lend Me Your Ears"[2] plays a particularly important role in ISIS's public relations strategy. Distributed by the ISIS media companies al-Hayat and al-Furqan, "Lend Me Your Ears" acts as tourism series comparable to those shown on the

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[1] Ryan, "Hot Issue: Dabiq: What Islamic State's New Magazine Tells Us about Their Strategic Direction."

[2] The title "Lend Me Your Ears" is a reference to a speech given by Mark Antony in the play *Julius Caesar,* by William Shakespeare. The speech is a well known for its use of emotionally charged rhetoric and has been a model for propagandists throughout history.

Discovery Channel. British journalist John Cantlie, who was captured by ISIS in Syria in November of 2012, serves as the host in all of the videos. In the first video of the series, which was released in September of 2014, Cantlie is featured in an orange jumpsuit sitting behind a desk in a dark room. He looks calmly into the camera and admits right from the beginning that he is a prisoner and that he is speaking under duress. "But," Cantlie continues, "seeing as how I've been abandoned by my government and my fate now lies in the hands of the Islamic State, I have nothing to lose." He later explains his intention to "show you [the viewer] the truth behind the systems and the motivation of the Islamic State, and how western media, the very organization I [Cantlie] used to work for, can twist and manipulate that truth for the public back home. There are two sides to every story. Think you're getting the whole picture?"[3]

This powerful opening statement sets the tone for the rest of the video series, which portrays the Islamic State as somewhat of a utopia. The fact that a western journalist hosts "Lend Me Your Ears" is incredibly significant. In all of the videos following the first one, Cantlie appears to be in good health and spirits, walking comfortably through the streets of the Islamic State wearing western clothing and greeting friendly, and seemingly familiar, passersby. All of these details are intended to capture the attention of the West in particular, and to convince westerners that what they read in American or British newspapers regarding the Islamic State is biased and

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[3] "John Cantlie Lend Me Your Ears," Youtube video, 3:21, posted by "Times of Lebanon," September 18, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vcew3qmidRI.

misleading. According to Cantlie's opening remarks in the first video of the series, "Lend Me Your Ears" aims to reveal the "truth" behind the Islamic State.

One episode in the series, released shortly after the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris, shows Cantlie in Aleppo. Cantlie takes us through bustling street markets filled with colorful fruits and vegetables, into a mosque where children are learning to read and recite the Quran, and by large grain silos where employees are bagging wheat and selling it "at bottom low prices."[4] As Cantlie walks down one of the main streets in town, we see in the background children playing, families walking hand-in-hand, and ISIS residents building beautiful new homes and apartment buildings. Half way through the video, Cantlie brings us into the waiting room of a sharia court. He then proceeds to describe the meaning of sharia law, explaining, "It is the rule of God, the rule of Allah, and therefore it cannot be changed." Unlike democratic laws, Cantlie continues, which are unpredictable and can change "every week," Islamic laws are stable and "fairly simple." For example, if one is convicted of robbery, he can expect that his hand will be cut off. "Sounds harsh," Cantlie states, "but you're not going to commit the same crime again, and it will dissuade others from doing the same."[5] Near the end of the video, Cantlie points out a small booth on the side of the road that disseminates "ISIS news." These media stations, Cantlie explains, are meant to counter the distorted or outright false news coming from the West.[6]

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[4] "Islamic State Aleppo (British journalist John Cantlie)," Youtube video, 12:01, posted by "Today Islam," March 12, 2015, accessed March 15, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ru_ICj5l0NM.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

Figure 11. John Cantlie hosting an episode of "Lend Me Your Ears" in Aleppo.[7]

The "Lend Me Your Ears" videos, like most ISIS media, are provocative and

contain all the elements of classic propaganda. They should not be dismissed as unworthy

of critical analysis, however. Videos such as "Lend Me Your Ears" reveal ISIS's

intention to maintain positive public relations. They also suggest that ISIS is a well-

organized state complete with administrative departments, religious offices, legal courts,

and educational institutions. Thus, through its media campaign, ISIS is trying to convey

to its viewers that the Islamic State is a permanent economic, political, and religious

entity as opposed to a fanatical terrorist organization. Though ISIS's governance strategy

differs from one province to the next, in general, ISIS does appear to have established

organized government structures. According to media analysis conducted by the Institute

for the Study of War, the ISIS "government" is organized into administrative departments

(including religious outreach and proselytization, education, local and religious police,

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[7] Ibid..

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and public relations), and Islamic services (which include everything from large

infrastructure projects to humanitarian aid).[8]

PUBLIC SERVICES

Through its publications such as *Dabiq,* ISIS has demonstrated its ability to

provide basic and complex services to those living under its control. In an article titled "A

Window into the Islamic State" in the fourth issue of *Dabiq,* the author writes, "The

soldiers of Allah do not liberate a village, town, or city, only to abandon its residents and

ignore their needs."[9] Evidently, while the soldiers of the Islamic State are "sacrificing

their lives and spilling their blood for His sake," there is also an understanding amongst

ISIS leaders that establishing a state requires its citizens be cared for.[10] The article thus

depicts many of the services the Islamic State provides for its members, including street

cleaning services, a cancer treatment facility for children in Ninewa, and a "care home"

for the elderly.[11]

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[8] Charles C. Caris and Samuel Reynolds, "ISIS Governance in Syria," *Institute for the Study of War* (2014): 15-23.

[9] Dabiq, "A Window into the Islamic State," no. 4, 27.

[10] I have not found any evidence indicating how ISIS selects those it cares for, though it is unlikely that ISIS provides services to non-Muslims.

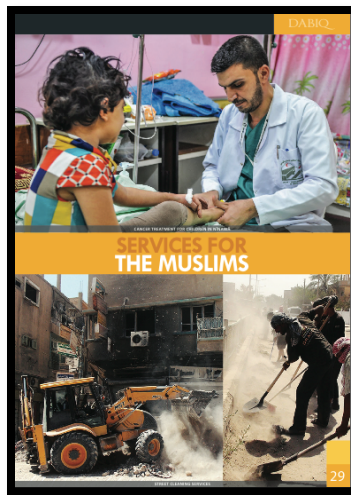[11] Dabiq, "A Window into the Islamic State," no. 4, 28-29.

Figure 12. Page from the fourth issue of Dabiq, *which describes public services offered by the Islamic State*[12]

Careful analysis of ISIS media suggests that ISIS participates in a wide range of public works projects, and has offices mandated to oversee these projects. One example can be found in "The Islamic State Report," an ISIS journal published by al-Hayat every couple of months. The first issue of "The Islamic State Report" contains an informative article about ISIS's "Office of Consumer Protection." In the article, Abu Salih Al-Ansari, head of the Consumer Protection Office, explains that the Consumer Protection office is:

> An office that's concerned with protecting shoppers by inspecting the goods being sold in shops, markets, shopping centers and whole- sale [sic] outlets, discovering goods that are spoiled or not suitable for sale and taking those responsible to account. Likewise, we inspect restaurants and sweet- shops, and monitor slaughterhouses, so we can keep people from getting sick and guard against harmful substances."[13]

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[12] Dabiq, "A Window into the Islamic State," no. 4, 29.

[13] Islamic State Report, "On Patrol with the Office of Consumer Protection," no.1 (Al Hayat Media, 2014): 5, accessed August 9, 2014, http://jihadology.net/category/islamic-state-report/.

ISIS also has offices mandated to maintain the safety and cleanliness of its roads, as indicated by a video released by ISIS's Aleppo media office. In this video, titled "Work Service in the City of al-Bab and its Surroundings," ISIS workers can be seen removing rubble and brush from the side of the road and sweeping dirt off of the streets.[14]

ISIS has also demonstrated an interest in providing humanitarian aid and basic medical services. A photograph distributed through social media, for example, shows an ISIS fighter passing out winter clothing to children in Mosul.[15] On January 2, 2015, Twitter user "@metesohtaoglu" posted a photograph of an advertisement for an ISIS medical school in Raqqa. That same month, ISIS's media center in Aleppo released a video called "Medical Services in the town of Jarablus." In the video, Islamic State doctors offer of tour of a hospital in Jarablus, showing off the facility's operating rooms and stock of advanced medical equipment.[16] Another photo report released from the ISIS media center in Raqqa shows ISIS fighters distributing *zakat,* or almsgiving, to the

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[14] Jihadology, "New video message from the Islamic State: 'Work Service in the City of al-Bab and its Surroundings - Wilayat Halab'" (video), January 20, 2015, accessed February 8, 2015, http://jihadology.net/2015/01/20/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-work-service-in-the-city-of-al-bab-and-its-surroundings-wilayat-%E1%B8%A5alab/.

[15] Jihadology, Instagram post, January 2015, accessed February 6, 2015, https://instagram.com/p/xuEI7ZMAO9/.)

[16] Jihadology, "New video message from the Islamic State: 'Medical Services in the City of Jarabulus - Wilayat Halab'" (video), January 16, 2015, accessed February 8, 2015, http://jihadology.net/2015/01/16/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-medical-services-in-the-city-of-jarabulus-wilayat-%E1%B8%A5alab/.

needy[17] while an ISIS report from Aleppo depicts ISIS employees distributing gas cylinders to residents throughout the town.[18]

Aside from medical and humanitarian aid, ISIS appears to partake in more complex infrastructure projects as well. For example, photographs and videos released by the Islamic State show ISIS members setting up electrical lines[19] and digging for sewage pipes.[20]

Figure 13. Video clip showing ISIS employees digging for sewage pipes in a Syrian neighborhood.[21]

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[17] Al Platform Media, "The distribution of Zakat in Raqqa," February 3, 2015, accessed February 4, 2015, https://www.alplatformmedia.com/vb/showthread.php?t=77337.

[18] Al Platform Media, "The distribution of gas cylinders in Wilayat Halab," February 3, 2015, accessed February 4, 2015, https://alplatformmedia.com/vb/showthread.php?t=81195.

[19] Aymenn J Al-Tamimi, Twitter post, January 21, 2014, accessed November 16, 2014, https://twitter.com/ajaltamimi/status/425656210595909632.

[20] "Switching the main sewer pipes in the Salhin neighborhood," Youtube video, 2:45, posted by "Islamic Management of Public Services," November 20, 2013, accessed March 18, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=9U7546JfpUQ#t=94.

[21] Ibid.

These types of projects presumably require expensive equipment and a high level of expertise, indicating that ISIS has invested heavily into building and maintaining necessary infrastructure. Since 2013, ISIS has also maintained control over the Tabqa Dam in Raqqa, which has allowed ISIS to provide a large amount of water and electricity to its residents. ISIS manages a thermal power plant complex in Aleppo as well, which allows ISIS to generate industrial amounts of electricity. This complex represents "one of ISIS's largest governance undertakings, as operating the plant requires dozens of dedicated employees and a high level of technical expertise."[22] A photo report released by ISIS in June of 2014 shows the plant to be operational and in good condition.[23]

ISIS's dedication to providing basic and complex services is all part of its campaign to win the trust of local residents and sympathizers abroad. We might compare this strategy to that of Ansar al-Sharia (AAS) in Yemen, which exploited the Yemeni government's inability to provide basic services to its citizens. Analyzing AAS's "hearts and minds" campaign in Yemen might in turn shed some light on what ISIS is hoping to accomplish through its media campaign. AAS is an organization comprised of militant Islamic groups, including al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). In 2011, AAS seized control of several cities in southern Yemen and established emirates, or principalities, governed by Islamic law. In an online interview with senior AQAP cleric Abu Zubayr al-Abab, Abab described AAS's goals in Yemen as populist-oriented, stating

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[22] Caris and Reynolds, "ISIS Governance in Syria, 22-23.

[23] Justpaste.it, "The history, situation, borders, statistics, and fighting fronts," June 25, 2014, accessed March 18, 2015, https://justpaste.it/HalabReport.

the group's intention to find "solutions" to the biggest problems facing southern Yemen, including "the lack of public services such as sewage and water."[24]

Soon after AAS took control, residents reported that that AAS was in fact providing services such as "food, gas, and fresh water to the local populations under its control."[25] There is evidence that AAS provided basic legal services and established an Islamic court system,[26] and propaganda videos distributed through jihadi web forums even show AAS providing electricity and building basic infrastructure.[27] AAS soon came to be viewed as a stabilizing and relatively legitimate form of governance. As a result, residents living under AAS grew receptive of AAS's harsh message and brutal, even violent, methods of control.

According to journalist Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, who spoke to AQ militants in the region, AAS learned from the failures of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) in the early 2000s. Though AQI had an effective military campaign, it failed to win the trust of local Iraqis through public services and basic governance structures, undermining AQI's ability to maintain control over territory. This, according to Ghaith, influenced AAS's political

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[24] Robin Simox, "Ansar al-Sharia and Governance in Southern Yemen," *Hudson Institute,* December 27, 2012, accessed March 16, 2015, http://www.hudson.org/research/9779-ansar-al-sharia-and-governance-in-southern-yemen.

[25] Simox, "Ansar al-Sharia and Governance in Southern Yemen."

[26] Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, "Al-Qaida's wretched utopia and the battle for hearts and minds," *The Guardian,* April 30, 2012, accessed March 16, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/30/alqaida-yemen-jihadis-sharia-law.

[27] Jihadology, "Madad News Agency presents a new video message from Ansar al-Shari'ah in Yemen: "Eyes on the Event #10" (video), April 22, 2012, accessed March 16, 2015, http://jihadology.net/2012/04/22/madad-news-agency-presents-a-new-video-message-from-an%E1%B9%A3ar-al-shariah-in-yemen-eyes-on-the-event-10%E2%80%B3/.

strategy in Yemen. The similarities between AAS's "hearts and minds" campaign and ISIS's own propaganda campaign would suggest that ISIS also learned from the failures of AQI and is, to some extent, mimicking the example of AAS in Yemen. By providing its residents with a range of services, ISIS is attempting to gain the trust of its followers and present itself as a competent and legitimate government.

SECURITY SERVICES

ISIS moves far beyond providing basic services, however. In its media campaign, ISIS advertises its well-established security and intelligence units, which are vital features of any modern state. An article in the sixth issue of Dabiq, for example, suggests that ISIS has a very strong intelligence wing. The article begins by describing the dismantling of the Khariki Cell, which, according to the article, was comprised of ISIS residents who were planning to attack ISIS fighters and the "Sunni masses, whom they consider *mushrikin* (idolaters)."[28] The author explains that the cell was promptly identified, infiltrated by ISIS's security apparatus, and dismantled. This article not only points to internal tension within ISIS, particularly between ISIS followers and ISIS leadership, but it also suggests that ISIS has a skilled intelligence wing capable of identifying those uncommitted to ISIS's cause.

We also learn from ISIS publications that ISIS has a both a local police force and a special police force known as *al-Hisba*, or religious police. Al-Hisba, according to an

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[28] Dabiq, "Dismantling of the Khariki Cell," no. 6, 31.

ISIS report released on June 25, 2014, aim to "promote virtue and prevent vice to dry up sources of evil, prevent the manifestation of disobedience, and urge Muslims towards well-being."[29] ISIS frequently releases videos and photographs of al-Hisba taking action against those activities believed to be "sources of evil." For example, in early 2015, ISIS's Raqqa media office released footage of al-Hisba confiscating "sinful" material such as cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs and setting them on fire.[30] On April 1, 2015 (2:44 p.m.), Twitter user Charles Lister (@Charles_Lister) posted photographs of al-Hisba setting fire to boxes of American-produced chicken that had been "slaughtered unlawfully."[31] Such media suggest that ISIS takes the Islamic code of ethics very seriously.

Figure 14. On April 1, 2015 at 2:44 p.m. Twitter user "@Charles_Lister" posted photographs of ISIS militants setting fire to America-produced chicken in Aleppo.

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[29] Justpaste.it, "The history, situation, borders, statistics, and fighting fronts," June 25, 2014, accessed March 18, 2015, https://justpaste.it/HalabReport.

[30] Internet Archive, "Men of the Hisbah" (video), accessed March 21, 2015, https://archive.org/details/rejalhosba1.

[31] Elias Groll, "Death to the Infidel Chicken! The Islamic State Destroys U.S. Chickens Amid Food Crisis," *Foreign Policy,* April 1, 2015, accessed April 2, 2015, http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/01/death_to_the_infidel_chicken_the_islamic_state_destroys_us_chickens_amid_food_crisis/.

The second issue of "The Islamic State Report," released in the summer of 2014, concludes with an interview with Abdul-Abbas Ash-Shami, head of the Islamic Police. In the interview, Ash-Shami explains that the work of al-Hisba "specifically deals with breaking up disputes…Most cases involve disputes and quarrels over property, ownership records, theft, threats, provocation, etc. Many of the cases we deal with are resolved without needing to refer them to the court."[32] The author of the journal explains further, "They [al-Hisba] break up disputes and return the rights of the people back to them…they view everyone equally, like the teeth of a comb, with no difference between rich and poor, strong and weak. Everyone will have their rights returned to them…"[33]

The author's emphasis on "rights" and "equality" is consistent with rhetoric used throughout ISIS media. The first issue of *Dabiq,* for example, promises a new era of "honor" and "dignity" for the Muslims.[34] These slogans are remarkably similar to slogans used in the Arab Spring, which centered on themes such as freedom, dignity, and social justice. It is no coincidence that ISIS alludes to similar themes, thus appealing to those caught up in the Arab Spring. ISIS's emphasis on al-Hisba as arbitrators is also worth noting. Arbitration plays an extremely important role in Islamic tradition. In fact, the Prophet Muhammad's ability to settle disputes in a just and fair manner is one of the

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[32] Islamic State Report, "ISR Examines How the Islamic Police Safeguards Ar-Raqqa and their Importance in State Building," no. 1 (Al Hayat Media Center, 2014): 6, accessed February 10, 2015, http://jihadology.net/category/islamic-state-report/.

[33] Islamic State Report, "ISR Examines How the Islamic Police Safeguards Ar-Raqqa and their Importance in State Building," 5.

[34] Dabiq, "Khailifah Declared," no. 1, 9.

reasons he was so highly revered.[35] Thus, the ability of al-Hisba to resolve conflict is particularly significant. The apparent size and diligence of al-Hisba "show how deeply ISIS is concerned about establishing and maintaining religious legitimacy."[36]

According to its publications, ISIS also has local police forces that maintain day-to-day security in their designated provinces. In a report released by ISIS's Aleppo media center, the local police forces serve as "the executive body for the court."[37] ISIS police, according to well-known Twitter account "@MuntherJazrawi," wear special uniforms and regularly patrol towns in issued police cars as a means of maintaining internal security.[38] ISIS's apparent ability to provide a baseline sense of security in the territories under its control contributes heavily to ISIS's legitimacy.

EDUCATION

Education may be one of the most important tools in state building, as it helps to establish a certain civic culture. ISIS publications and social media posts suggest that ISIS has invested heavily in education. For example, one photo report distributed through jihadi web forums shows children in the northern city of Kirkuk attending a school established by ISIS. Photographs show smiling children carrying backpacks, sitting at

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[35] George Sayen, "Arbitration, Conciliation, and the Islamic Legal Tradition in Saudi Arabic," *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Economic Law* 24, no. 4 (2003): 924.

[36] Caris and Reynolds, "ISIS Governance in Syria," 16.

[37] Justpaste.it, "The history, situation, borders, statistics, and fighting fronts," June 25, 2014, accessed March 18, 2015, https://justpaste.it/HalabReport.

[38] Caris and Reynolds, "ISIS Governance in Syria," 19.

desks in front of books, and playing in the school courtyard.[39] Perhaps unsurprisingly, all

of the children depicted in the photo report are male. According to *al-Monitor,* however,

girls are able to attend school under the Islamic State, though schools are gender

segregated.[40] ISIS's emphasis on education reveals the group's intention to establish a

permanent population of loyal citizens who will grow up to become the next generation

of ISIS leaders. Thus, "ISIS sees itself not as a terrorist organization indoctrinating

children, but as a sovereign state educating its citizens."[41]

       Media reports suggest that ISIS has developed its own curriculum, which is

overseen by ISIS's Bureau of Education. In August of 2014, the British-based Syrian

Observatory for Human Rights reported that ISIS had called a meeting with teachers in

Raqqa to discuss a standardized Islamic curriculum, to be overseen by experts from the

ISIS Bureau of Education. The Observatory also reported that "some IS sheiks" banned

the teaching of any subject considered hostile to Islam, such as chemistry and

philosophy.[42] Later that fall, the Observatory reported that ISIS had shut down a number

of schools in eastern Syria pending revisions to the curriculum and religious training for

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[39] Manbar, "The Academic Year Under the Islamic State," November 28, 2104, accessed December 6, 2015, http://manbar.me/dirasa.

[40] Ali Mamouri, "IS imposes new rules on education in Syria, Iraq," *al-Monitor,* October 21, 2014, accessed November 2, 2015, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/10/islamic-state-impose-education-program-iraq-syria.html.

[41] Caris and Reynolds, "ISIS Governance in Syria."

[42] Syrian Observatory for Human Rights' *Facebook* page, accessed September 6, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/syriahroe/posts/569689536472722.

the teachers.[43] In February of 2015, photographs advertising ISIS's alleged curriculum appeared on the Internet. Based on these photographs, the subjects comprising the curriculum include Arabic language, teachings on monotheism, mathematics, "natural sciences," and, interestingly, English language.[44]

Figure 15. Photograph of one part of the ISIS curriculum[45]

It is surprising that ISIS would choose to include non-Islamic subjects such as math, science, and English in its curriculum. However, given degree of control ISIS

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[43] Rashsa Elass, "Islamic State shuts down schools in eastern Syria," *Reuters,* November 7, 2014, accessed March 15, 2015, http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/11/07/uk-mideast-crisis-education-idUKKBN0IR1L920141107.

[44] Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, "Photos of the new curriculum, which the Islamic State distributed to each school in the field" (photographs), February 19, 2015, accessed March 7, 2015, http://www.syriahr.com/2015/02/%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B0%D9%8A-%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%B9-%D8%AA%D9%86/.

[45] Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, "Photos of the new curriculum, which the Islamic State distributed to each school in the field" (photographs).

appears to maintain over all aspects of its state, it is likely that even non-Islamic subjects of study are taught in line with Islamic principles. The ISIS curriculum also suggests ISIS's desire to equip residents with a well-rounded set of skills that are necessary to maintaining a high functioning state. In footage obtained by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an Islamic State teacher explains, "We are not, as the West claims, an ignorant nation, but we are a people of knowledge. But we just teach the true science which is the Quran and the prophet encourage us to learn it[sic]."[46]

ISIS has, nevertheless, proven itself resistant to modern and foreign intellectual influences. In late January 2015, according to western media sources, ISIS militants invaded the Central Library in Mosul and removed between 2,000 and 3,000 books pertaining to poetry, philosophy, sports, health, culture, and science, leaving only Islamic texts behind.[47] Based on how ISIS has treated ancient artifacts over the last several months, it is likely that ISIS either destroyed the stolen books or sold them on the black market. By looting libraries and destroying ancient artifacts, ISIS is excluding "outside" influences and ideas, thereby dominating territory ideologically as well as militarily. The exclusion of foreign influences is consistent with Salafi tradition, which rejects *bid'ah,* or innovations, that conflict with precedents laid out in the Quran and Sunnah.

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[46] Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, "About 3000 students study IS curriculum in the State of Homs," *Syrian Observatory for Human Rights,* February 20, 2015, accessed March 15, 2015, http://syriahr.com/en/2015/02/13119/.

[47] Sinan Salaheddin, "ISIS ransacks libraries, destroys books in Iraqi city," *The Boston Globe,* February 1, 2015, accessed March 17, 2015, http://www.bostonglobe.com/news/world/2015/02/01/iraqi-libraries-ransacked-islamic-state-group-mosul/g5YDl4dV8kMDK01HGrQMHJ/story.html.

According to ISIS self-reporting, it has invested heavily in establishing Sharia institutes, which educate Islamic State residents on matters of religion. An official June 2014 ISIS report on "Wilayat Halab" (Aleppo) states that ISIS had established 22 Sharia institutes in Aleppo alone.[48] One can expect that number has since increased. ISIS Sharia institutes emphasize the importance of *da'wah*, or proselytization, under the Islamic State. The importance of *da'wah* is explained in the third issue of *Dabiq*. In an article titled "Da'wah and Hidbah in the Islamic State," the author explains, "For what good is there in liberating a city only to leave its inhabitants steeped in misguidance and misery, suffering from ignorance and disunity, and disconnected from the Book of Allah and the Sunnah and His Messenger."[49] Ideological and religious uniformity is just as important to the Islamic State as military domination. In an attempt to spread this message, ISIS posts many photographs of *da'wah* events on social media. For example, in January of 2015, ISIS released a photo collage depicting Islamic State fighters hosting a *da'wah* event in Tabqa, Raqqa. The photos show Islamic State fighters seen waving the ISIS flag, speaking into microphones, and marching alongside groups of children who appear captivated by their Islamic State teachers. Another photo report released by ISIS's media office in Kirkuk shows a smiling Islamic State fighter distributing leaflets that advertise a *da'wah* event to passing cars.[50]

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[48] Justpaste.it, "The history, situation, borders, statistics, and fighting fronts," June 25, 2014, accessed March 18, 2015, https://justpaste.it/HalabReport.

[49] Dabiq, "Da'wah and Hisbah," no. 3, 17.

[50] Justpaste.it, "Iraq - Wilayat Kirkuk: Pictures from Wiliayat Kirkuk/next to the distribution of da'wah leaflets upon the Muslims," January 28, 2015, accessed March 17, 2015, https://justpaste.it/j4p6.

Figure 16. Photograph of an ISIS fighter distributing da'wah advertisements in Kirkuk.[51]

ISIS WOMEN

In addition to education, women play an important role in building a lasting

caliphate. ISIS has thus made a significant effort to recruit women to the Islamic State.

This reveals ISIS's intent to establish a permanent citizenry comprised of family units. A

recent study conducted by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue concludes that over 500 of

the 3,000 western Europeans believed to have migrated to the Islamic State are women.[52]

Among the reasons that western women join the Islamic State, according to the report,

and most widely cited amongst female social media users, is the desire to establish a

caliphate, coupled with feelings of religious obligation. Thus, "ISIS's territorial gains and

state-building project are crucial in attracting women, who can see they have an

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[51] Justpaste.it, "Iraq - Wilayat Kirkuk: Pictures from Wiliayat Kirkuk/next to the distribution of da'wah leaflets upon the Muslims."

[52] Carolyn Hoyle, Alexandra Bradford, Ross Frenett, "Becoming Mulan? Female Western Migrants to ISIS," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue* (2015): 8, accessed March 4, 2015, http://www.strategicdialogue.org/ISDJ2969_Becoming_Mulan_01.15_WEB.PDF.

important role to play in the new society."[53] Evidence of women's motivation to join the Islamic State can be seen on social media, which acts as tight-knit virtual community through which women can communicate.

For example, on September 24, 2014, Tumblr[54] user "Umm Ubaydah" responded to an anonymous user by saying, "We don't resort to violence because of the wrong America has done. We are trying to build an Islamic state that lives and abides by the law of Allah, which is Musat [obligatory] upon all Muslims." On December 6, 2014, Twitter user "@bintlad3n" posted, "the most important reasons the mujahideen came here was to reestablish the khalifah & be part of bringing back the honor to this ummah."[55] It is clear that ISIS women are primarily responsible for recruiting other women to the Islamic State. Careful analysis of pro-ISIS social media reveals that the most active female ISIS recruiters are "Umm Ubaydah," Twitter user "@bintlad3n," and "Umm Layth," whose Twitter and Tumblr accounts have mostly been suspended.

ISIS women also distribute semi-official publications intended for women through social media. The media wing of the al-Khansaa Brigade, the all female ISIS militia responsible for spreading pro-ISIS propaganda and recruiting Western women, releases most of these publications. Official and semi-official ISIS publications suggest that women have a practical role to play in the Islamic State. In late 2014 and early 2015, for example, the al-Khansaa Brigade's media wing distributed a number of semi-official

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[53] Hoyle, Bradford, and Frenett, "Becoming Mulan?," 12.

[54] Tumblr is a microblogging platform that allows is a social networking site that allows users to post content to microblogs. It also allows users to follow and post comments to other users' microblogs.

[55] Hoyle, Bradford, and Frenett, "Becoming Mulan?," 12.

manifestos targeting women. These manifestos act as training manuals designed to inform women of their role in the Islamic State.

According to the manifesto "Women in the Islamic State," the fundamental function for women in the Islamic State is "in the house with her husband and children." Exceptions to this include women's participation in "jihad (by appointment)" and "studying the sciences of religion." The manifesto also clarifies that "female doctors and teachers may leave [the home], but they must keep strictly to the Shariah guideline."[56] The manifesto also demands that women be educated, explaining:

> Yes, we say 'stay in your houses,' but this does not mean, in any way, that we support illiteracy, backwardness or ignorance. Rather, we just support the distinction between working - that which involves a woman leaving the house - and studying, as it was ordained she should do."[57]

Accompanying photographs show young girls and women attending ISIS schools.

In January of 2014, ISIS social media users also distributed a "handbook" that contains additional guidance for ISIS women. The manual places special emphasis on "raising mujahid children," asking that women "raise their children to be brave and loving, courageous and sensitive, and fearing no one but Allah." Additionally, women should "tell children bedtime stories of Shuhadaa and Mujahideen…get young children

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[56] Quillam Founation, "Women in the Islamic State," translation by Charlie Winter (2014): 22, accessed March 13, 2015, http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/women-of-the-islamic-state3.pdf.

[57] Quillam Foundation, "Women in the Islamic State," 23.

interested in Jihad…" and familiarize them with "basic military training."[58] Based on social media posts and ISIS documents distributed through social media, women are portrayed as having an important and active role to play in the Islamic State as wives and mothers. They are encouraged to move beyond the limits of social media and to contribute to the actual construction and implementation of the Islamic State. This weakens the image of ISIS as merely a group of male militants. Rather, through social media, ISIS is revealing its intent to establish a permanent citizenry comprised of close family units, including women and children, that subscribe to Islamic State ideology.

LEGAL STRUCTURES

When Baghdadi declared the restoration of the Caliphate in the summer of 2014, he placed heavy emphasis on encouraging judges and experts in Islamic law to join the Islamic State.[59] Political scientists and legal experts have long understood that "law is an effective tool for legitimizing and maintaining political power in modern states…"[60] Thus, unsurprisingly, social media posts and propaganda suggest that ISIS governs according to legally binding rules.

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[58] TRAC, "Islamic State Handbook: A Sister's Role in Jihad," January 3, 2015, accessed January 6, 2015, http://www.trackingterrorism.org.proxy.bc.edu/chatter/islamic-state-handbook-sisters-role-jihad?ip_login_no_cache=d0fc79779ccbe3eb39137aae5ffed525.

[59] SITE Intelligence Group, "Islamic State Leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi Enourages Emigration, Wolrdwide Action," *SITE Intelligence Group,* July 1, 2014, accessed September 3, 2014, https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/islamic-state-leader-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-encourages-emigration-worldwide-action.html.

[60] Mara Revkin, "The Legal Foundations of the Islamic State," *Syria Comment,* December 17, 2014, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/legal-foundations-islamic-state-mara-revkin/.

In late January 2015, the ISIS media office in Kirkuk released a video that presents a tour of the main Islamic court in Kirkuk. The host of the video, an Islamic scholar of the court, explains the various activities of the court and introduces the viewer to a number of different offices responsible for implementing Islamic law. These offices include the "office of the judicial investigator," the "office of the judge," and the office that deals with those "under prosecution."[61] This video not only emphasizes ISIS's strict adherence to "God's law," but it also suggests that ISIS has established the necessary legal structures to operate under such law with credibility and legitimacy. In December of 2014, ISIS posted a legal document on the Internet listing crimes and associated punishments in the Islamic State. In this document, crimes range from "insulting Allah," which is punishable by death, to the drinking of alcohol, which earns 80 flogs.[62]

Most recently, the Twitter user "@_umBack_" posted photos of 32 official ISIS fatwas, or religious judgments, that pertain to a range of subjects, including taxation, the treatment of prisoners, proper dress, organ transplantation, games, and recreational activities.[63] Taken altogether, these fatwas cover a wide scope of affairs, addressing nearly every aspect of daily political and social life. They are therefore not intended as propaganda, but rather "provide a unique glimpse into life and politics in the Islamic

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[61] Jihadica, New message from the Islamic State: 'Verily, Only the Rule of God - Wilayat Kirkuk" (video), January 23, 2015, accessed March 17, 2015, http://jihadology.net/2015/01/23/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-verily-only-the-rule-of-god-wilayat-kirkuk/.

[62] Pietervanostaeyen, "An Official Islamic statement on Shar'I punishments" (photograph and translation), December 16, 2014, accessed January 12, 2015, https://pietervanostaeyen.wordpress.com/category/isis/page/4/.

[63] Cole Bunzel, "32 Islamic State Fatwas," *Jihadica,* March 2, 2015, accessed March 5, 2015, http://www.jihadica.com/32-islamic-state-fatwas/.

State."[64] These fatwas also emphasize the fact that ISIS does not govern arbitrarily, but has an organized legal body (the Islamic State Sharia Council) developing the Islamic State's legal framework.

Though reports of harsh punishment and torture in ISIS courts have leaked through social media, many civilians living under ISIS still consider ISIS courts more legitimate than the "corrupt courts" of the Assad regime.[65] It is important to recognize the extent to which "residents of war torn areas may see the imposition of any law and order, even ISIS's particularly strict brand of sharia, as an improvement from a lawless, chaotic state."[66] ISIS has used its court system to legitimize, and therefore monopolize, the use of violence. Whenever ISIS commits a violent act, a fatwa always follows soon after. For example, after ISIS claimed responsibility for the immolation of captured Jordanian pilot Moath al-Kaseasbeh, ISIS distributed a fatwa on the Internet that stated, "the Hanafis and Shafi'is [two of Sunni Islam's four schools or jurisprudence] permit burning."[67] The Internet thus allows ISIS to remind its followers that its actions have legal backing.

Violence and brutality during wartime is nothing new or surprising, but ISIS claims that even its militants are legally bound to the Islamic code of ethics. For example, ISIS reportedly sends legal jurists known as "shari'is" alongside its militants to ensure performance according to Islamic law while in battle.[68] Social media posts also suggest

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[64] Bunzel, "32 Islamic Fatwas."

[65] Revkin, "The Legal Foundations of the Islamic State."

[66] Caris and Reynolds, "ISIS Governance in Syria," 18.

[67] Lufi Mohammed Salman, "Daash published a fatwa on burning Kaseasbeh*," El Watan*, February 2, 2015, accessed February 5, 2015, http://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/654891.

[68] Revkin, "The Legal Foundations of the Islamic State."

that ISIS combatants and scholars are held accountable for their "unjust" actions. In

December of 2014, for example, photographs of a document released by ISIS in Aleppo

circulated on social media to show that the Islamic State "does not accept any injustice"

and that its Muslim civilians have the right to "raise their grievances through the court" if

they feel they have been "subjected to injustice" by "the Islamic State soldiers and

scholars alike."[69] In a widely circulated Youtube video, a man standing in what appears

to be a court hall explains how he successfully brought charges against an ISIS emir for

violating Islamic law.[70] Then, in January of 2015, the British-based Syrian Observatory

for Human Rights reported that ISIS had beheaded one of its own religious police

officials for smoking, a practice deemed un-Islamic and therefore strictly banned by the

Islamic State.[71] Based on reports such as these, ISIS seems to hold even its own senior

members accountable to the rule of Islamic law. ISIS likely has learned from Islamist

groups in the past, many of which failed to gain local support following their use of

indiscriminate violence and harsh illegal punishment. Political scientist Mara Revkin

asserts that, "Insurgencies are more successful when they develop internal regulatory

mechanisms to ensure that violence - however extreme and brutal it may be - is only used

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[69] Islamic News Agency, "The Islamic State calls for its people to proceed to the Board of Grievances in any complaint against soldiers of scholars," *Islamic News Agency,* December, 2014, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.dawaalhaq.com/?p=21065.

[70] Youtube video, 1:52, posted by "مواطن كبير في السن بيشتكي على أمير في الدولة الاسلامية ويحبسه" "OmmahJareeha6," September 21, 2014, accessed March 15, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGRPekil7Yk.

[71] Reuters, "Islamic State 'Police' Official Beheaded," *Newsweek,* January 6, 2015, accessed March 16, 2015, http://www.newsweek.com/islamic-state-police-official-beheaded-296904.

according to well-defined rules and principles…"[72] Through its media campaign, ISIS has revealed its intent to establish permanent judicial institutions and rulings, and has proven its ability to adjudicate disputes. This in turn helps ISIS gain political legitimacy and consolidate its power.

ISIS ECONOMY

Economic affairs factor heavily into ISIS's state building strategy. Recent reports concerning ISIS's sources of income suggest that ISIS is extremely wealthy. ISIS receives some funds from private foreign donors, but the majority of ISIS's revenue comes from internal sources, such as oil sales, plunder, and ransoms. Estimates projected by the Unites States Treasury Department in the fall of 2014 states that ISIS earns about 1 million dollars per day on black market oil sales.[73] Kidnap for ransom also constitutes a significant source of income for ISIS. The U.S. Treasury estimated that ISIS made about 20 million dollars in ransoms in 2014 alone.[74] Analysts also suspect that ISIS earns a significant amount of money by collecting taxes, selling local resources such as wheat and fish, and engaging in criminal activities such as looting and bank robberies.[75] All of

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[72] Revkin, "The Legal Foundations of the Islamic State."

[73] David S. Cohen, "Remarks Of Under Secretary For Terrorism And Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen At The Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, 'Attacking ISIL'S Financial Foundation,'" *U.S. Department of the Treasury*, October 23, 2014, accessed December 2, 2015, http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2672.aspx.

[74] Cohen, "Remarks Of Under Secretary For Terrorism And Financial Intelligence."

[75] al-Shishani, Murad Batal, "The Political Economy of the Islamic State," *Jamestown Foundation* 12, no. 24 (December, 2014),

this information suggests that ISIS is able to fund itself and does not rely solely, or even primarily, on outside donors.

It is especially interesting to note how ISIS flaunts its wealth as a means of obtaining state legitimacy and support from local residents. In one propaganda video that focuses on life in the city of Raqqa, Islamic State residents are interviewed. One man says that since the Islamic State came to Raqqa, nothing has been in short supply. He explains in Arabic, "Everything is present, thanks to God. Security, safety, electricity, water, work…all thanks to the coming of the Islamic State."[76] Another video circulated through social media shows Islamic State residents in "Wilayat Halab," or Aleppo, selling fresh fruits in a crowded market, suggesting a booming agricultural sector.[77] ISIS has also distributed a number of job advertisements through Twitter and web forums. For example, on January 31, 2015, Twitter user "Abu 3antar Britani" posted an advertisement for an English teaching position in the Islamic State. The post contains a photograph of the job description and the message, "Apply for full time or part time teaching in English. Enquire for your children too."[78] In November of 2014, ISIS posted a job advertisement

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43221&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=faec7ce36e19c93bdfa974086df603ce#.VJh0EYA0 (Accessed December 11, 2015).

[76] Jihadology, "New video message from The Islamic State: 'The Return of Life in the City of 'Ayn 'Isa#1 - Wilayat al-Raqqah" (video), January 4, 2015, accessed March 15, 2015, http://jihadology.net/2015/01/04/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-the-return-of-life-in-the-city-of-ayn-isa-1-wilayat-al-raqqah/.

[77] ("Living in the Shadow of the Caliphate," Internet Archive video, 6:22, posted by "saheem_aljazerh," January 24, 2015, accessed March 16, 2015, https://archive.org/details/ALHAYAH_FI_DL_ALKELAFH.

[78] SITE Intelligence Group, "IS Recruiter Posts Job Listing for English Teachers in ar-Raqqa," February 2, 2015, accessed February 6, 2015, https://news-siteintelgroup-com.proxy.bc.edu/Western-Jihadist-Forum-

seeking an "ideologically suitable" expert in oil operation, reportedly offering a salary of $225,000 to anyone capable of managing an oil refinery.[79] On April 1, 2015, ISIS Twitter user "Abu Sa'eed Al-Britani" posted an essay, titled "Ten Jobs You Can Do In Dawlah," which contains a list of job opportunities for non-fighters living under the Islamic State. Possible jobs include medical assistants, mechanics, Islamic police, chefs, and fitness trainers.[80] Al-Britani's essay suggests a shortage of working professionals in the Islamic State. The opportunity for employment is thus one contributing factor to ISIS's overall appeal.

In the fall of 2014, ISIS announced in its fifth issue of *Dabiq* that it would begin minting its own currency. In an article titled "The Currency of the Khilafah," ISIS claims that its new currency, minted in gold, silver, and copper, is intended as "a significant step towards shifting the Ummah away from the usage of currencies that are no longer backed by any precious metals, and whose values are constantly manipulated by the central banks of their respective nations."[81] The author goes on to explain that during the time of

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Digest/is-recruiter-posts-job-listing-for-english-teachers-in-ar-raqqa.htmlhttps://news-siteintelgroup-com.proxy.bc.edu/Western-Jihadist-Forum-Digest/is-recruiter-posts-job-listing-for-english-teachers-in-ar-raqqa.html.

[79] Dominic Gover, "ISIS Job Advert: Islamic State Seeks 'Ideologically Suitable' Oil Refinery Manager for £140k Role," *International Business Times,* November 3, 2014, accessed November 10, 2015, http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-job-advert-islamic-state-seeks-ideologically-suitable-oil-refinery-manager-140k-role-1472839.

[80] SITE Intelligence Group, "IS Fighter's Essays Make Plea for Muslim Doctors, Highlight Other Job Opportunities," *SITE Intelligence Group,* April 1, 2015, accessed April 2, 2015, https://news-siteintelgroup-com.proxy.bc.edu/Western-Jihadist-Forum-Digest/is-fighter-s-essays-make-plea-for-muslim-doctors-highlight-other-job-opportunities.html.

[81] Dabiq, "The Currency of the Khilafah," no. 5, 18.

the Prophet Muhammad and the Rashidun, the Caliphate minted its own currency, which was separate from that of the Persian and Roman Empires. Such currency contained Islamic images free from "*shirki* (relating to polytheism) connotations."[82] Based on photographs contained in *Dabiq,* coins minted by the current Islamic State are inscribed with the Islamic declaration of faith and important Quranic verses. Other images inscribed into ISIS currency include stalks of wheat, a spear and shield, and date palm trees. These images symbolize, respectively, the "blessings of the *sadaqah* (voluntary charity)*,* the Muslim's provisions from jihad, and Muslim's deep-rooted faith, firm patience, and fruitful deeds."[83] ISIS currency carries significant theological weight.
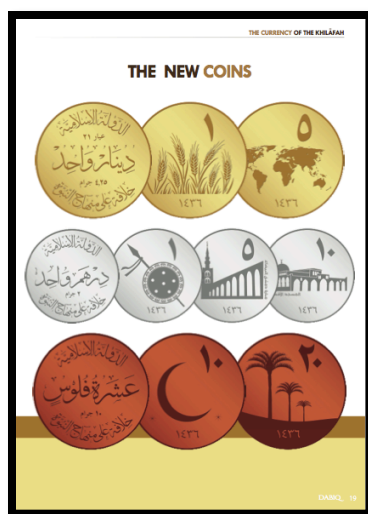

Figure 17. Image contained in the fifth issue of Dabiq, *which depicts ISIS currency*[84]

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[82] Dabiq, "The Currency of the Khilafah," no. 5, 18.

[83] Dabiq, "The Currency of the Khilafah," no. 5, 18-19.

[84] Dabiq, "The Currency of the Khilafah," no. 5, 18-

ISIS also mentions practical reasons for minting its own currency. The sixth issue of *Dabiq,* for example, features an article reportedly written by captive British journalist John Cantlie. In the article, Cantlie predicts a global financial meltdown and the demise of the U.S. dollar in the near future. Cantlie then explains ISIS's decision to mint currency backed by gold, stating, "At such times, the world looks to something with a little more than paper to prop up its finances. That thing has to have intrinsic value, a value that does not climb or descend wildly at the pressing of a few buttons in a central bank."[85] Because ISIS's currency is backed by gold, however, "There is a finite amount, so it will never lose its value, banks can't just print more of it when they choose, and it's worth what the market says it is, not what the banks dictate…" "Now that's real money," Cantlie concludes.[86]

By minting its own currency, ISIS is attempting to put itself ahead of the allegedly looming financial meltdown. Propaganda pieces advertising Islamic State currency also serve to portray ISIS as possessing a legitimate, and even divinely inspired, financial system. Meanwhile, the current world baking system, as argued by Cantlie in *Dabiq,* is "nothing but a scam designed to feed itself and governments."[87] ISIS's decision to mint its own currency is also significant because it reveals ISIS's intent to govern over the long term. Through its media campaign, therefore, ISIS is able to convince its followers that the Islamic State is economically successful and sustainable, a necessary feature of any modern state.

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[85] Dabiq, "Meltdown," no. 6, 58.

[86] Dabiq, "Meltdown," no. 6, 59.

[87] Dabiq, "Meltdown," no. 6, 62.

9. Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that so much of ISIS's appeal and subsequent strength stems from its claims to religious and political legitimacy. The Islamic State is viewed amongst its supporters not as a terrorist group, but as a sustainable and religiously ordained state. This view is perpetuated largely through pro-ISIS media. In the first month or two of researching this paper, ISIS was a mysterious figure. As ISIS became the center of western media's attention, however, we came to learn a lot more about ISIS, such as where it came from, how it is organized, and how it behaves. Many aspects of ISIS's state building strategy remain secret, but not its media campaign. ISIS media is intended to made public, to be heard and discussed. Thus, my decision to focus on ISIS's media campaign as one aspect of state formation was both an exciting and rational one.

What role does ISIS's media campaign play in ISIS's current state building strategy? What do pro-ISIS media tell us about ISIS's long-term goals? These questions guided the majority of my research. Never at any point in the process of writing this paper did I feel sympathy towards ISIS. ISIS is responsible for countless human rights atrocities, and the violence with which ISIS carries out its mission is undeniably repugnant. My investigation of ISIS's media campaign, therefore, is not intended to justify ISIS's actions, but rather to reach a deeper understanding of ISIS's state building ambitions. The research presented in this paper allows us to draw a number of conclusions regarding how ISIS spreads its message, what that message entails, and how that message relates to ISIS's overall state building strategy.

METHODS OF MEDIA DISSEMINATION

ISIS is unique in the way that it combines traditional modes of media dissemination, including television, radio, and jihadi web forums, with pop cultural mediums, such as Twitter, Youtube, and Kik, to amplify its message. ISIS's use of Twitter is particularly interesting. ISIS is using Twitter as a primary means of media dissemination, making its distribution strategy decentralized, efficient, and highly public. Twitter makes it very easy for ISIS to reach an international audience in a relatively small period of time. As such, ISIS supporters all over the world can feel as though they are following ISIS closely and in real time. They can also actively promote ISIS simply by re-tweeting official or semi-official ISIS media posts. All of this gives pro-ISIS social media users the impression that they are participating in the development of the Islamic State, making them vulnerable to ISIS propaganda that demands their physical migration.

The decentralized nature of ISIS's media campaign also makes it hard to suppress. While social media companies such as Twitter and Youtube have been diligent in suspending social media accounts they identify as being linked with ISIS, pro-ISIS social media users are able to create new accounts with relative ease. Thus, efforts to suspend pro-ISIS social media accounts have failed to slow ISIS's media campaign in any significant way. The decentralized nature of ISIS's media campaign also poses a potential threat to ISIS, since social media platforms such as Twitter make it relatively easy to spread false information. And yet, ISIS maintains a high degree of control over the flow of information. Pro-ISIS social media users appear to have formed hierarchical networks through which social media users disseminate ISIS publications and coordinate posts and

hashtags. These networks are well organized and methodical. ISIS is thus able to spread its message with ease, efficiency, and relative control.

Thus, Anholt's theory concerning media and statecraft does not hold in the case of ISIS. According to Anholt, global media limits the ability of states to control the flow of propaganda and, therefore, to use it for political purposes.[1] In the case of ISIS, however, global media has allowed ISIS to adopt a decentralized, though highly organized, media campaign. ISIS can thus spread its propaganda to a global audience with efficiency and relative control. This, in turn, fuels ISIS's political strategy.

RELIGIOUS APPEALS

There is much debate among scholars over where ISIS came from and why it behaves the way it does. Despite the diversity of their opinions, most political scientists view ISIS as a consequence of war, politics, or other material factors. While this view have some truth, it can often "obscure the independent power of ideas that seem, to much of the Western world, quaint and archaic…"[2] Thus, a significant portion of this paper is devoted to analyzing the religious and ideological roots of ISIS. Much of the confusion concerning ISIS's ideological appeal stems, in large part, from a lack of appreciation for the seventh century Caliphate and all that it represents. The Caliphate was, and still is, considered by many to have been ordained by God as a protector of the faith. Memory of

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[1] Simon Anholt, "Nation 'Branding': Propaganda or Statecraft," *Public Diplomacy Magazine,* no. 2 (2009).

[2] Sahdi Hamid, "The Roots of the Islamic State's Appeal," *The Atlantic,* October 31, 2014, accessed November 5, 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/10/the-roots-of-the-islamic-states-appeal/382175/.

the seventh century Caliphate is thus deeply embedded in Islamic culture and tradition.

This memory would suggest that the Islamic State is not merely a reaction to geopolitical

turmoil or a means of combatting the West. The Islamic State, and the historic notion of

the Caliphate is, on some level, a desired end in itself. ISIS's appeal to the Caliphate in its

media campaign, therefore, should not be taken lightly, as it is a major source of ISIS's

legitimacy.

ISIS is unique in that it is not just advocating the restoration of the Caliphate in

rhetoric, as other Islamist groups have in the past, but is actually taking steps to revive the

Caliphate in practice. Sovereign territory is a necessary requirement of any state or

caliphate. By seizing and maintaining control over physical territory, ISIS is

demonstrating that it is serious about re-establishing a caliphate and that God wills it to

do so. Flaunting military victories and territorial gains in its media campaign emphasizes

this message and reinforces ISIS's credibility. Territorial gains also strengthen ISIS' s

argument for the religious necessity of *hijrah*, or migration. Now that the Caliphate has

been sufficiently restored, as ISIS suggests in its media, it is the religious duty of every

Muslim to migrate to the Islamic State and contribute to its construction and well-being.

ISIS has dedicated much of its media campaign to explaining religious narratives

and concepts that reach beyond the Caliphate itself. One of the most striking themes in

ISIS's religious messaging concerns the end of days. Analyzing ISIS media leads to the

conclusion that ISIS's apocalyptic vision plays an incredibly significant role in the way

that ISIS behaves. Through its media campaign, ISIS is suggesting that the Islamic State

is not only a means of governing worldly matters; it is also a means of attaining salvation

come the Final Hour. By convincing its followers that the Final Hour is near, and that the

Islamic State is a means of being saved, ISIS is strengthening its argument regarding the

immediate necessity of re-building the Caliphate. Actions taken on the part of ISIS, such

as the revival of slavery or the seizure of Dabiq in northern Syria, for example, further

play into the prophetic narrative conveyed in ISIS media. This, in turn, empowers ISIS to

a degree that should not be underestimated. As Charles Kimball, professor of religious

studies at the University of Oklahoma, notes:

> When a cataclysmic end is near, what else really matters? Everything
> about normal daily life pales by comparison. Public criticism of the group
> and family interventions simply reinforce the view that the evil world is
> hostile to the truth and the end is near.[3]

The image of the Final Hour, consequently, is a powerful recruiting tool. Through its

prophetic narrative and additional use of religious rhetoric, symbolism, and imagery, ISIS

is able to justify its actions and strengthen its legitimacy.

ISIS has undoubtedly carved out a state by force, supporting the conquest theory

of state formation. However, the above findings suggest that ISIS is not motivated by

purely material gains as conquest theorists such as Gumplowicz and Oppenherimer

suggest.[4] According to state formation theorist William Lilly, successful state formation

requires both physical force and a widely accepted body of ideas.[5] In other words,

ideology is an important factor in state formation by force. Based on analyses of ISIS

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[3] Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil: Five Warning Signs* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002), 96.

[4] Franz Oppenheimer, *The State*, (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1975), 8, quoted in Sicker, 70.

[5] Samuel William Lilly, Lilly, *First Principles in Politics* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), 19.

media, it is clear that ideology is a powerful driver behind ISIS's state building strategy. Ideology, when coupled with its military campaign, helps to explain ISIS's success in carving out a state.

The culture theory of state formation may also help to explain ISIS's success to an extent. According to theorists such as Anderson and Barkey, states form around a certain historical narrative or cultural identity.[6] ISIS undoubtedly appeals to the Sunni Muslim identity and a historical narrative concerning the seventh century Caliphate as a means of drawing fellow Muslims to the Islamic State. According to ISIS, however, the Caliphate is more than just a protector of identity; it is a religious requirement. While the Caliphate appeals to a common identity and historical narrative, driving ISIS's state formation strategy, ISIS does not advocate voluntary construction of the Caliphate. Rather, ISIS portrays the Caliphate as being a religious obligation and an entity that all Muslims are required to participate in restoring. People traveling to the Islamic State must choose to submit to an entity that they view as having a higher cosmic purpose. Service's understanding of voluntary state formation, which implies that states form when people voluntarily submit to a person or entity they see as being an agent of the divine,[7] thus holds true in the case of ISIS.

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[6] Malcom Anderson, *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1996), 31.

[7] Elman R. Service, *Origins of the State and Civilization* (New York: Norton, 1975), 294.

WORLDLY GOVERNANCE

Through its media campaign, ISIS has demonstrated a post-war mentality. It is not only concerned with fighting, but also with establishing an Islamic state and finding ways to sustain that state for generations to come. ISIS's military campaign, therefore, only scratches the surface of the group's overall strategy. ISIS publications and social media posts suggest that its primary objective is to restore the Caliphate and to fulfill its self declared cosmic purpose. ISIS appears less concerned with combatting the West or engaging in grand sectarian war than with establishing a long-lasting state. Its use of brutality and gruesome killings, many of which occur along national and sectarian lines, are viewed by ISIS as a necessary means of reaching a desired end, namely, the restoration of the Caliphate. Through its media campaign, therefore, ISIS portrays itself as possessing many features of sustainable statehood.

For example, ISIS has demonstrated its ability to provide public services, including humanitarian aid and complex infrastructure projects. Carneiro's theory of environmental circumscription thus supports the case of ISIS. According the Carneiro, states form when populations voluntarily submit to a certain authority in exchange for the preservation and distribution of otherwise limited resources.[8] ISIS's monopoly on public services including water, electricity, and medical aid makes its residents dependent on ISIS for otherwise constrained resources. Carneiro's theory of state formation helps to explain some people's willingness to submit to the authority of the Islamic State.

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[8] R. L. Carneiro, "A Theory of the Origin of the State," *Science* 169, no. 3947 (1970), http://www.jstor.org/stable/1729765?seq=1., 734.

Through its media campaign, ISIS has also demonstrated its ability to maintain order by providing local and religious security services, and by establishing a sophisticated legal system complete with sharia courts, experts in Islamic jurisprudence, and written rules of law. Thus, ISIS does not exist solely for the purpose of waging war as Tilly's war theory of state formation suggests.[9] Anslo's understanding of war theory is more applicable to the case of ISIS. According to Anslo, states form as a means of fighting chaos (which is often caused by war) and imposing order.[10] ISIS's apparent interest in establishing a legal system and the rule of law demonstrates its intention to provide a sense of security and stability in an otherwise chaotic region of the world.

ISIS media suggests that the Islamic State is economically stable and strong enough to withstand the post-war era. ISIS also appears to have taken an interest in educating children, having established schools and an "Islamic State curriculum." Women, according to pro-ISIS social media, are also important in educating the next generation of ISIS citizens, and thereby assume an active role in constructing and ensuring the sustainability of the Islamic State. ISIS's emphasis on Islamic education and on recruiting women demonstrates its aim to establish a permanent citizenry for the future.

In the midst of fighting and chaos, ISIS portrays itself as methodically and effectively establishing a system of governance. But, it is difficult to verify the extent to

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[9] Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990* (Cambridge, MA: B. Blackwell, 1990), 14.

[10] Christian Krohn-Hansen and Nunstad G. Knut, "Introduction," in *State Formation: Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 20.

which ISIS actually functions in the way that is portrayed in its propaganda. According to

political scientist Kai Hafez, states often use media to create a virtual reality that

encourages people to interpret material reality in a certain way.[11] Hafez's theory

concerning media and modern statecraft applies to the case of ISIS to some extent. Both

the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Congressional Research Service have dismissed

ISIS propaganda as false, noting enormous shortages in food, water, and medical services

in ISIS-controlled territories.[12] Nevertheless, media allows ISIS to convince its

sympathizers that it not only has a post-war vision, but also a means of making that

vision a reality. Perhaps more threatening than ISIS's military capabilities, then, is its

ability to posture itself as a legitimate and sustainable state.

IMPLICATIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings explained above amount to a single overarching conclusion: Media

bolsters ISIS's political and religious legitimacy that, in turn, gives ISIS the fuel it needs

to establish a lasting state. ISIS media acts as a vital instrument in ISIS's state building

strategy. In order to combat ISIS, we must embrace ISIS propaganda as worthy of critical

analysis. ISIS may be the biggest modern threat to world peace today, so trying to

understand ISIS messaging on a deeper level is inevitably uncomfortable. It is

nevertheless important that we take seriously ISIS's political and religious arguments, as

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[11] Kai Hafez, "Introduction," in *Arab Media: Power and Weakness* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 2008), 2.

[12] Congressional Research Service, *The "Islamic State" Crisis and U.S. Policy,* by Kenneth Katzman, Christopher M. Blanchard, Carla E. Humud, Rhoda Margesson, Matthew C. Weed, R43612 7-5700 (February 11, 2015), 23-24, accessed March 21, 2015, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R43612.pdf.

failure to do so has very real practical consequences, such as preventing us from effectively combatting ISIS's recruitment strategy. In December 2014, the US Department of Homeland Security estimated that 2,700 westerners, including 100 Americans, have travelled or attempted travel to the Islamic State.[13] As of February 2015, according to a government testimony cited by the *Associated Press,* about 20,000 foreigners from 90 different countries have travelled to Iraq and Syria to fight alongside ISIS.[14] ISIS's ability to convince its sympathizers that it is more than just a terrorist organization, that it is a religiously ordained state capable of governing, continues to draw many to the Islamic State and strengthens ISIS's hold on the region.

The ISIS dilemma is incredibly complex and cannot be sufficiently tackled by any one authority. Nevertheless, there are small steps that can be taken to begin mitigating the threat posed by ISIS. This paper demonstrates the necessity of combatting ISIS's media campaign. So far, social media companies have taken a reactionary approach to combatting ISIS media by suspending accounts linked to ISIS as the appear on the Internet. One might describe this strategy as a game of Whac-A-Mole, suspending one pro-ISIS account only to have another appear minutes later. Social media companies ought to focus on infiltrating and eliminating the driving forces behind ISIS's media

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[13] *ISIS and the Threat from Foreign Fighters: Written testimony of DHS Deputy Assistant Secretary for Counterterrorism Policy Tom Warrick for a House Committee on Foreign Affairs Joint Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa,* December 2, 2014, Department of Homeland Security, accessed March 25, 2015, https://www.dhs.gov/news/2014/12/02/written-testimony-dhs-deputy-assistant-secretary-counterterrorism-policy-house.

[14] (Ken Dilanian, "US Intel: IS militants drawing steady stream of recruits," *Associated Press,* February 11, 2015, accessed March 25, 2015, http://bigstory.ap.org/article/8e9e6e24319543c39677c4266d09435a/ap-exclusive-militants-drawing-steady-stream-recruits.

campaign, namely, ISIS's social media networks. By identifying and targeting individual Twitter accounts, for example, that act as lead recruiters within these virtual networks, media companies might be able to begin dismantling ISIS's larger social media campaign. This is not an easy approach to combatting ISIS's media campaign, but it is one that should be further considered by social media analysts and ISIS foes.

In the meantime, western governments ought to reconsider their counter messaging strategies. The US government's current counter messaging campaign, led by the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, has proven largely ineffective. Counter messaging efforts will continue to fail so long as they overlook or belittle the historic and religious appeal of the Islamic State. Simply stating that ISIS is barbaric and immoral will not sufficiently turn people away from the Islamic State. In order to appeal to those who are vulnerable to ISIS propaganda, we must find a way to counter ISIS messaging with greater understanding of and sensitivity towards ISIS's religious arguments. We cannot, and should not, undermine the significance of the Caliphate in Islamic tradition. Furthermore, western politicians and governments are in no position to define, interpret, or reform Islam. In forming a policy that deals with ISIS, we must consult with Muslim leaders and include Muslims in the decision-making process. Muslims have a unique perspective on the religious, historical, and cultural nuances of the Middle East that help to explain why ISIS has been so successful. They will be able to help governments develop a more informed approach to ISIS.

Along these lines, western media ought to amplify the voices of Muslims leaders around the world who can offer honest and credible counter arguments to those presented

by ISIS. Muslim opposition to ISIS seldom makes headlines, but this does not mean that Muslims around the world are not speaking out. For example, on July 6, 2014, only days after Baghdadi announced the restoration of the Caliphate, the Syrian Islamic Council released a statement in which its members condemned ISIS as misguided and damaging to the reputation of Islam. They argued that ISIS bears no resemblance to the Rightly Guided Caliphs, and encouraged Muslims to seek guidance from qualified religious figures rather than from "those that merely inflame the theories of impressionable youths."[15] Even Abu Muhammad al-Maqddisi, a well-known Salafist preacher and spiritual leader of AQ, denounced ISIS for its extreme use of violence and its haste in establishing a caliphate. In his public letter addressing the Islamic State, Maqdisi asked, "Is this caliphate going to be a safe haven for all the vulnerable people and a shelter for every Muslim? Or will this name become a hanging sword over Muslims who disagree with them?"[16]

Some of the most highly respected religious leaders in the Muslim world have also spoken out against ISIS. For example, Al-Azhar's Grand Mufti, Egypt's highest religious authority, denounced the Islamic State as "corrupt" and "a danger to Islam."[17] Abdulaziz al-Sheikh, Saudi Arabia's highest religious authority, labeled ISIS as the

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[15] Syrian Islamic Council's *Facebook* page, July 6, 2014, accessed August 30, 2014, https://www.facebook.com/syrian.islamic.council/posts/828228567197079.

[16] Elisa Oddone, "Jordanian jihadist leader condemns ISIS caliphate," *Al Monitor,* July 2, 2014, accessed October 12, 2014, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/07/jordan-maqdisi-jihad-iraq-isis-caliphate-qaeda.html.

[17] The Daily Star. "Al-Azhar condemns ISIS as corrupt and a danger to Islam," *The Daily Star,* August 13, 2014, accessed February 9, 2015, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Aug-13/267022-al-azhar-condemns-isis-as-corrupt-and-a-danger-to-islam.ashx#axzz3B1ymBb5P.

"number one enemy of Islam."[18] Western Muslims have denounced ISIS as well. Muslim leaders in Britain, for example, publicly condemned the Islamic State, emphasizing that violence has no place in religion.[19] The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the largest Muslim advocacy group in the US, condemned ISIS as "morally repugnant" and a perpetrator of gross human rights violations.[20]

These voices ought to stand at the forefront of counter messaging campaigns against ISIS. At the same time, Muslim leaders and scholars ought to unite in forming a cohesive religious argument aimed at discrediting ISIS. The Muslim community must exploit *ijtihad,* an Islamic legal principle that requires independent reasoning in the process of forming Islamic law. As one of the four sources of Islamic law in Sunni Islam (the others being the Quran, the Sunnah, and *ijma,* or the consensus of the Muslim community), Muslims scholars have an obligation to use reason when interpreting Islamic law. Muslim leaders ought to treat ijtihad as an opportunity to re-interpret Islamic principles that ISIS exploits to justify its actions. In this way, the Muslim community can begin to chip away at ISIS's political and religious legitimacy.

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[18] Al Jazeera, "Islamic State is our top enemy: Saudi mufti," *Al Jazeera,* August 19, 2014, accessed February 9, 2015, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/islamic-state-our-top-enemy-saudi-mufti-2014819165435845901.html.

[19] Aine Fox, "ISIS concern: British Mulsim leaders condemn extremist group," *Independent,* July 11, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/isis-concern-british-muslim-leaders-condemn-extremist-group-9599273.html.

[20] CAIR, "CAIR Condemns ISIS Violence and Rejects Calls to Join Extremists Fighting Abroad," *Council on American-Islamic Relations,* July 7, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, http://www.cair.com/press-center/press-releases/12551-cair-condemns-isis-violence-and-rejects-calls-to-join-extremists-fighting-abroad.html.

ISIS should not be viewed as an isolated issue that can be combatted in one fell swoop. ISIS is only part of a much larger set of issues concerning religious extremism and the conditions that fuel religious extremism. This research, therefore, represents the tip of the iceberg, addressing only one aspect of a complex issue that warrants further exploration. ISIS is a formidable force that is unlikely to disappear any time soon. Despite coalition airstrikes targeting ISIS-held areas, ISIS continues to hold onto key territory. Based on a map produced by the Coalition for Democratic Syria (CDS) on January 10, 2015, ISIS continues to maintain control of nearly one third of Syria, or double the amount of territory it controlled in August of 2014.[21] Perhaps of more concern is the number of people that ISIS now governs. According to CDS, in the two months following coalition airstrikes alone, thousands of Syrians who had previously lived under moderate opposition are now living in territories controlled by ISIS.[22] ISIS has proven itself a skilled military organization during wartime. Its ability to govern, to establish a political and religious entity strong enough to endure the post-war era, will be the real challenge for the future.

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[21] See Appendix II.

[22] Tim Mak and Nancy A. Youssef, "Exclusive: ISIS Gaining Ground in Syria, Despite U.S. Strikes," *The Daily Beast,* January 15, 2015, accessed March 28, 2015, http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/01/14/exclusive-isis-gaining-ground-in-syria-despite-u-s-strikes.html.
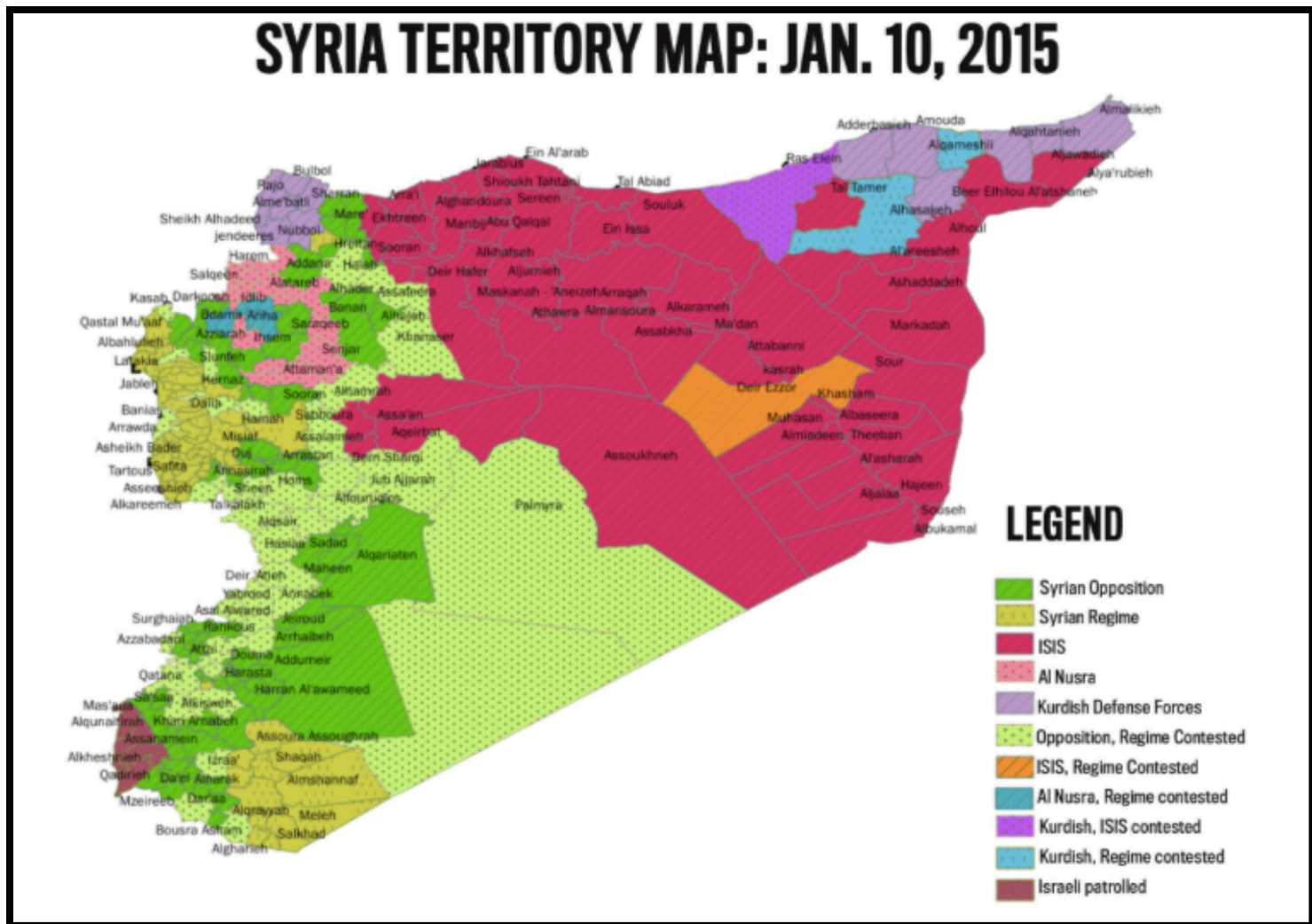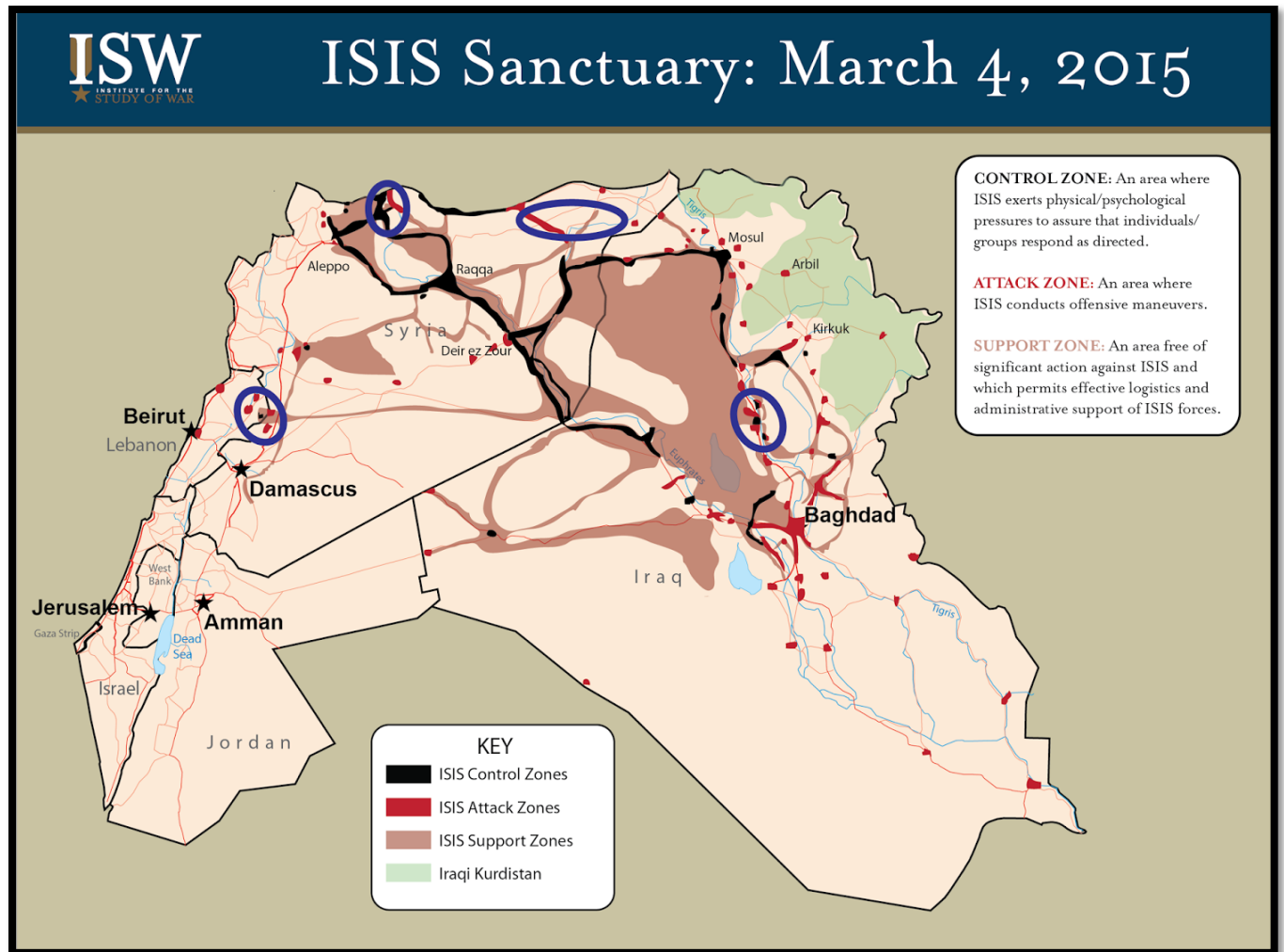.

Appendix I:
Map of Iraq and Syria

Source: http://www.mapsofworld.com/asia/iraq-syria-map.html

Appendix II:
Map of ISIS Presence in Syria

Appendix III:
ISIS Sanctuary Zones in Iraq and Syria

Source: http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/03/isis-sanctuary-march-4-2015.html

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