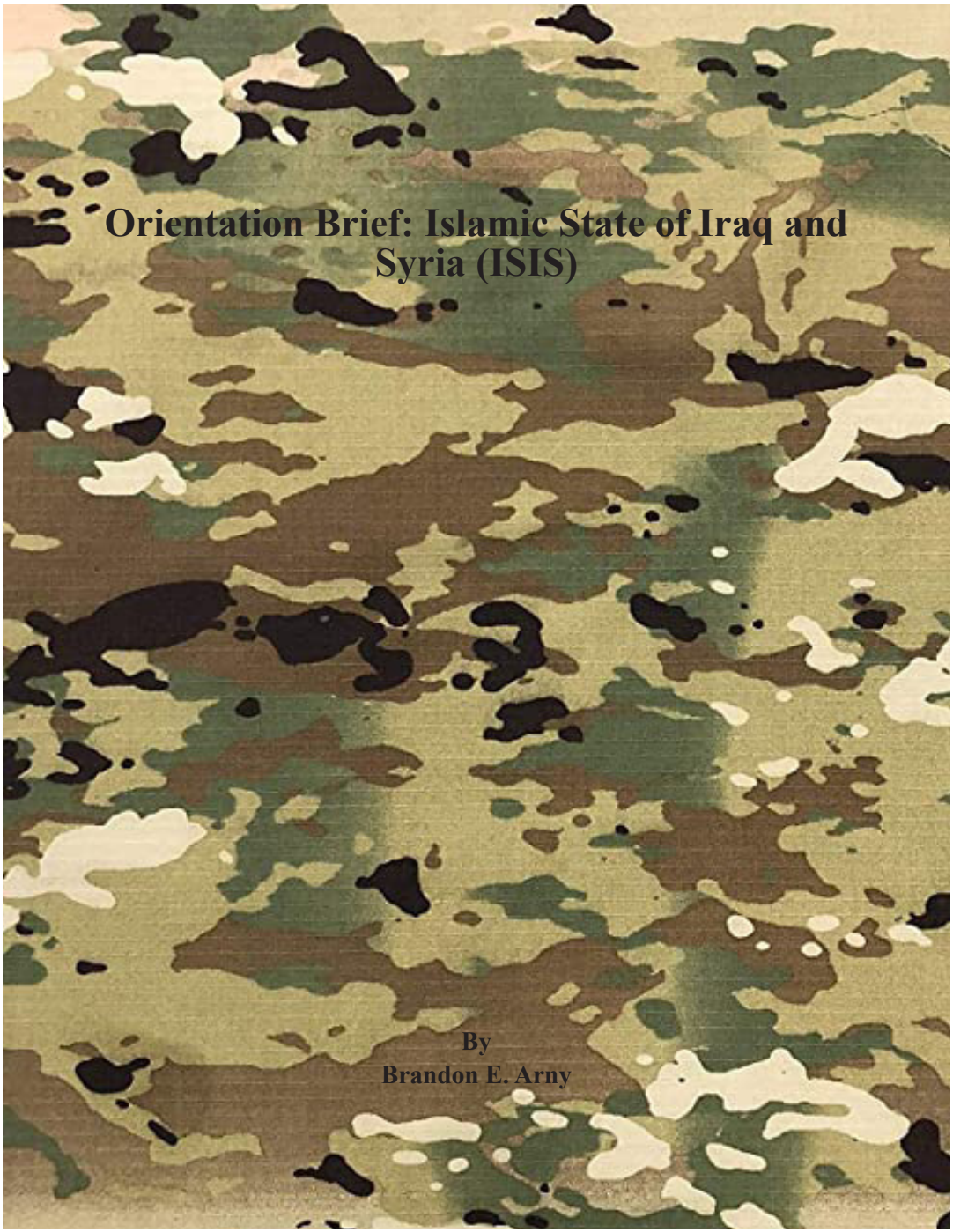

Orientation Brief: Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)

By
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This is dedicate to my spouse, Siboney, and my children for their support and love.

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Introduction

The information collected for the development of a Commander's brief was created by a review of the literature concerning Islam and ISIS. The information provided in this booklet is specifically designed to assist chaplains in advising commanders on how the religious ideology of ISIS affects the tactical environment. The method of developing the brief on ISIS is based on the Religious Estimate questions from Appendix A of Joint Guide 1-05 for Religious Affairs in Joint Operations (JG 1-05). The religious estimate template in JG 1-05, Appendix A, is the template used to advise commanders and staffs on the potential effects that religion and religious practices could have on current and future operations.[1]

Traditionally a religious estimate is developed and compiled by the chaplain from assessments and inputs of different subject matter experts consistent with their noncombatant status. The answers to the following questions from JG 1-05 comprise the main content presented in the end-product brief template:[2]

1. How does the commander's intent for this situation relate to the religious sensibilities of the host nation concerned and the local communities in the OA?
2. How is the host nation affected by the religious preferences of regional neighbors or global religious perceptions and pressures?
3. What host nation cultural religious perceptions or practices conflict with US positions on democracy, personal dignity, religious tolerance/pluralism, and separation of religion/state?
4. How is the host nation's political and diplomatic process influenced by religious persuasion?
5. Are there potential religious, moral, and ethical challenges to local rules of engagement?
6. How can US military policies in the host nation support or offend religious preferences?
7. How do branches/sequels address religious liaison?
8. What religious practices (or religions) directly affect the host na-

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Religious Affairs in Joint Operations*, JP 1-05 (Washington D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018), II-2.

2. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Religious Affairs in Joint Operations, A-1.

tion decision-making process?

9. How do regional religions affect the principles of law and justice?
10. How do regional religions affect the use of force, civilian and military?
11. How do regional religions affect reconciliation, treaties, and a sustainable peace?
12. What host nation religious principles and practices are available?
13. How do regional religions affect economic prosperity, distribution of income, and religiously factored concepts of economic justice?
14. How do regional religions affect social structures: class, caste, tribe, region, and occupation?
15. What is the relationship between regional religions and freedom of communication? Access to media? Restrictions?
16. What is the relationship between the state and education? Does the state sponsor religious schools? To what extent is there control of access to education, success based on religious bias, teaching materials, licensure of teachers, and other religiously factored elements?
17. How does the state use mass media to regulate or promote religious access and content (television, radio, and Internet)?
18. What religious entities or organizations are formally and informally recognized by the state?
19. What is the role of religious leadership? What is the extent of their influence?
20. What is the impact of US and global media coverage of religious issues in the host nation and the region?
21. What are the ongoing religiously factored conflicts in the host nation? What is the level of repression of minority religious groups?
22. What is the impact of a US/multinational presence on the religious life of the area?
23. Does it support religious freedom and values? Incite violence?

The research conducted for this work tailors the answers to the above-mentioned questions to address matters specific to ISIS. The current and relevant literature concerning ISIS answers the religious assessment requirements. Categories identified within the estimate include, but are not limited to, religions in the area, beliefs, worship, relationships, and so-

cio-economic influences. Knowledge of ancient and contemporary history surrounding Islam is a necessary foundational part of the assessment and brief to differentiate between peaceful Muslims and extremists; old and new issues of conflict; and individuals of influence and extremist leaders. A progressive timeline of key events and leaders will be developed to shape the understanding of relationships that exist.

Audience

The information provided in this booklet is to be used by chaplains so that they can prepare a brief for military commanders. The audience is commanders, staffs, and chaplains. Due to the nature of conflict and a commander's involvement with an area of operation, the information provided in a brief can help the commander assess the impact of religion on the tactical environment and how to make appropriate military decisions.

Instructions

The briefing slides on pages 59–65 were developed from information provided in this work. The desk side brief for the commander presented should not last longer than 15-20 minutes. However, there is ample information to create other training briefs concerning ISIS and other components of this group. Use the information provided in this work for training corresponding to needs and adapt accordingly.

Information for Developing a Commander's Brief about ISIS

The following information addresses three topic areas: (1) religious advisement, (2) Islam, and (3) ISIS. From these three areas, this work provides information for a commander's brief regarding how religion may influence the area of operation. (See the Bibliography for specific source citations.)

Religious Affairs in Joint Operations

Basis for Religious Affairs

Chaplains are maintained within all military services to "accommodate religious needs, provide religious and pastoral care, and advise commanders on the complexities of religion regarding its personnel and mission."[3] As members of the military, chaplains are charged with the unique role to aid military members, families, and others with the difficulties of military service. They are positioned to advocate on behalf of others regarding religion, moral or ethical issues, and spiritual resiliency.

As noncombatants, chaplains cannot engage in combat; cannot engage in any activity that may compromise their position as a noncombatant; cannot collect intelligence or aid in combat targeting; and cannot provide counsel to determine if specific buildings ought to be afforded a form of protection or be targeted. Advisement is restricted to ethical, moral, and religious aspects of the targeting process.[4]

Fundamentals of Religious Affairs

Commanders are responsible for the religious affairs of the unit. Religious affairs are comprised of two parts: religious support, and religious advisement. Chaplains and their enlisted counterparts act together, as protective agents, to ensure that religious discrimination, in any form, does not present itself within the command.

Throughout the planning and execution phases of operations, commanders and their staff assess the likely impact of religion in the AO and AI. Religious beliefs and practices influence enemy combatants and civilians alike within the AO. The cultural and ideological aspects of religion also impact the internal and external workings of government organizations. For commanders to be proficient in the execution of religious affairs they have a responsibility to understand how religion affects military operations.

Religious advisement is the practice of informing the commander on the impact of religion on joint operations to include, but not be limited to, worship, rituals, protected places, customs, and practices of US military

3. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Religious Affairs in Joint Operations*, vii.
4. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Religious Affairs in Joint Operations*, viii.

personnel, international forces, and the indigenous population, as well as the potential impact of military operations on the religious and humanitarian issues in the *AO*.[5]

The Role of Religious Affairs in Joint Operations

Religious affairs in joint military operations requires multiple actions to support the various aspects of the diverse operations that occur simultaneously throughout the conflict continuum. "In many situations, clergy-to-clergy communication is preferred by the indigenous religious leader. Military chaplains with the requisite knowledge, experience, and training/education have religious legitimacy that may directly contribute positively to the [Joint Force Commander's] JFC's mission."[6]

Religious Support and External Advisement

In ATP 1-05.03, advisement is one of two capabilities (provide and advise) that falls under religious support. It is divided into two subcategories external and internal; proficiency in each is required for chaplains. They advise commanders in operational environments (OE) to directly support operations. External advisement focuses on the impact of religious and cultural beliefs and practices of populations external to the unit. Internal advisement is not covered in this information.[7]

Fundamentals of External Advisement

External advisement is a capability executed under the umbrella of the Army Chaplain Corps mission and its three core competencies. Its mission is to "provide religious support (RS) to the Army across the range of military operations by assisting commanders in providing for the free exercise of religion and providing religious, moral, and ethical advisement and leadership." The core competencies are Nurture the living, Care for the wounded, and Honor the dead.[8]

5. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Religious Affairs in Joint Operations*, ix.
6. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Religious Affairs in Joint Operations*, xi.
7. Department of the Army, *Religious Support and External Advisement*, ATP 1-05.03 (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, 2019), v..
8. Department of the Army, *Religious Support and External Advisement*, 1-1.

Chaplains are to advise on how religion impacts the unit's operations throughout its AO. The aim is to help the commander and staff have a clearer grasp on how religion influences the battlefield and impacts the success of the mission. The activity of advisement is one that must be carefully navigated. A chaplain can quickly compromise their noncombatant role if they are not attentive in monitoring what they say, how they say it, and what activities they engage in to further their capability to advise. Advisement activities include an analysis and assessment of the religious environment, recommendations, engagements with the local populace, and unit training to educate soldiers on proper etiquette and religious considerations.[9]

Religion Defined for External Advisement

External advisement for an OE requires the terms "religion" and "religious" to be defined if an analysis is going to be properly briefed and meanings conveyed clearly. A religion is a system of beliefs practiced by individuals or groups of people because its application gives meaning and purpose to their lives. "Religious refers to professing a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs. In its most basic form, religion identifies 'ultimate concerns', those things for which individuals or groups are willing to live or die."[10] The thoughts and behaviors of all individuals, even if they identify themselves as atheist or agnostic, are influenced by religion. As a result of the universal influence of religions, religion always shapes the OE. Since people have an inherent need to make sense of things beyond their existence, they will act according to their values and system of beliefs as they align with their need to survive. Commanders and staff seek to learn and understand those values to assess their impact on the mission. Those values determine potential courses of action for the commander to initiate relationships of trust or partnerships.

A chaplain's advisement to commanders and staff is unique because it comes from the perspective of a religious leader. Chaplains are better pre-

9. Department of the Army, *Religious Support and External Advisement*, 1-2–3.
10. Department of the Army, *Religious Support and External Advisement*, 1-3.

pared to identify religious issues that could motivate military forces; identify future impacts of long-term military operations on the local religious environment; provide relevant religious advisement to sustain mission success; highlight the impact derogatory terms or negative treatment of local people; and how to show respect for religious property and beliefs.[11]

Religion and Worldview

Chaplains need to understand the concept of "worldview" to have a strong framework for accurate external advisement. "A worldview is the lens by which people receive, interpret and process information and events in their lives[;] shaped by the origins, upbringing, education, experience, ideology, religion, and belief system of each individual[;] a perspective which helps determine an individual's reality; and determines how people will behave. . . "[12] Individuals develop their own worldview as they are influenced by culture and the surrounding social economic environment. Worldviews affect attitudes, beliefs, character and ultimately behavior. Chaplains assist in analyzing, educating, and advising others to develop an objective worldview. When analyzing the worldview of others, it is important to consider what core values they are willing to fight for; their perception of truth; and actions they believe are morally right and wrong.

As an advisor, chaplains are responsible for providing accurate and objective information. It is not their place to judge or compare another religion to their own personal beliefs. Chaplains must act unbiased and look objectively at the beliefs and behaviors of others. Objectivity does not suggest religious or ethical relativism, rather it helps others understand how religion shapes the OE. The analysis of local groups in the OE aims to determine how their religion could impact the mission, assists in avoiding the perception that everyone living in the area is the same, and increases understanding of how the indigenous population thinks and behaves.[13]

11. Department of the Army, *Religious Support and External Advisement*, 1-3–7.
12. Department of the Army, *Religious Support and External Advisement*, 1-7.
13. Department of the Army, *Religious Support and External Advisement*, 1-7–8.

Religious Advisement Products

Religious advisement products inform other products, provide courses of action, and outline or identify priorities. These products are running estimates, religious area analysis, religious impact assessments, and may include other products connected to unit operations.[14]

Running Estimate

"A *running estimate* is the continuous assessment of the current situation used to determine if the current operation is proceeding according to the commander's intent and if planned future operations are supportable . . . Because an estimate may be needed at any time, running estimates must be initially developed and continuously revised throughout an operation . . ."[15] The running estimate maintains a reciprocal relationship to the religious area analysis, another product which informs and is informed by the running estimate. Accurate and up-to-date running estimates are critical to developing effective plans and help to ensure the mission is executed successfully.

Religious Area Analysis

The religious area analysis is a comprehensive planning method integrated into the operations process to collect and analyze data (including religious factors) on the religious histories, issues, leaders, attitudes, customs, beliefs, and practices in an AO and their impact on unit operations. It is generally a ten- to twelve-page product which defines the religions in an AO, identifies religious categories, informs the religious impact assessment and running estimate, and is continuously updated.[16]

Religious Impact Assessment

The religious impact assessment establishes how religion impacts a unit's mission by determining how the core values and systems of belief support and influence stability and security or is used to disrupt the government. The one- to two-page religious impact assessment addresses how

14. Department of the Army, *Religious Support and External Advisement*, 1-9.
15. Department of the Army, *Religious Support and External Advisement*, 1-9.
16. Department of the Army, *Religious Support and External Advisement*, 1-10.

the religion of the local population or unified action partners could assist or impede the mission; how much does the religion impact operations; and how do the religious factors impact planning for decisive operations. "A religious impact assessment assesses the strengths and vulnerabilities of religion[;] . . . influence of religion, religious leaders, festivals, symbols, rituals, sites and buildings, and historic events[;] . . . addresses common destabilizing themes . . . including humanitarian crises[,] . . . collections of dislocated civilians, or organized crime including human trafficking."[17]

Religious Factors

Religious factors can be subcategorized as places, people, or ideas. Factors related to influential religious places (local, historic, symbolic) include:

- Grid coordinates of the site
- Name
- Type of structure
- Use
- Significance
- Symbolism to the community
- Religious leader
- Services conducted
- Objects held
- Events held
- Related sacred texts
- Routes to and from the site[18]

Factors related to influential religious leaders (local, historic, symbolic) include:

- Stakeholders
- Advisors
- Teachers

17. Department of the Army, *Religious Support and External Advisement*, 1-10–11.

18. Department of the Army, *Religious Support and External Advisement*, 1-11.

- Financiers[19]

Factors related to religious networks include:
- Names of religious leaders
- Locations
- Rank
- Resources
- Influence
- Lines of connection
- Members of the majority religion
- Members of minority religions
- Levels of education
- Relationships to other leaders
- Numbers of followers
- Central locations of religious leaders and their followers[20]

Factors related to ideologies (local, historic, symbolic) that influence behavior include:

- Religious ideology of majority group
- Religious ideologies of the minority groups
- Religious publications
- Websites
- Key themes and messages
- Values
- Codes
- Practices
- Holy days
- Symbols
- History
- Heroes' or villains' narratives of the religious ideologies[21]

19. Department of the Army, *Religious Support and External Advisement*, 1-12.
20. Department of the Army, *Religious Support and External Advisement*, 1-11–1-12.
21. Department of the Army, *Religious Support and External Advisement*, 1-11–1-12.

Having established the role of a chaplain, the basis for religious advisement, and framework for religious advisement, the following is a historical overview of the origins of Islam and synopsis of common beliefs and practices. This lays the groundwork to understand the historical background and extremist views of ISIS needed to provide religious advisement. The subsequent research covers the religious ideology and organizational history of ISIS to understand the driving elements behind their rationale and actions.

Islam

History of the Prophet Muhammad

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was born around 570 CE[22], in the city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia,[23] as a member of the Hashim clan of the Quraish tribe. He was orphaned at the age of six and raised first by his grandfather Abd al-Muttalib and then by his uncle Abu Talib.[24] At that time most Arabs lived nomadic tribal lives, with very few cities. The city of Mecca would have been recognized as a crucial trading post and the location of the Kaaba, the most significant shrine for containing the Arab idols.[25] The cubed-shaped shrine known as the Kaaba is said to have been originally built by Adam, the first man, and then rebuilt by the Prophet Abraham and his son Ismail, dedicated to the One True God. Leading up to the time of Muhammad (PBUH) the worshipers of Baal gained greater influence and filled the shrine with their own idols. As he grew up he became known as al-Amin (the Trustworthy One) for his honest dealings as a merchant. When he was twenty-five, he married Khadijah, a wealthy widow, and they had six children together.[26]

The Prophet was a devout believer in the One God and sought to be

22. Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, 10.
23. *How to Be a Perfect Stranger: The Essential Religious Etiquette Handbook*, 6th ed., edited by Stuart M. Matlins and Arthur J. Magida (Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2015), loc. 2841 of 9655, Kindle.
24. Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, 15–16.
25. Aslan, *No god but God*, 5.
26. Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, 9; Reza Aslan, *No god but* God, 66; Maqsood, *Islam*, 5–6.

as close to God as possible. Muhammad (PBUH) began to pray alone in a cave named Hira on Mount Jabal al-Nour, near Mecca for several weeks every year. When Muhammad (PBUH) was about forty years old, in the year 610 CE, near the end of Ramadan, a month of fasting, he was visited in the cave of Hira by the angel Gabriel.[27] He was instructed memorize the words revealed to him and then to share them with others. This event is referred to as "the revelation" and, after a break of six months to two-and-a-half-years (tradition dependent), Muhammad (PBUH) received more revelations from Gabriel.[28] The words revealed to him through revelation over a period of twenty-three years were compiled and are the verses that comprise what is now known as the Qur'an.[29] The Prophet spent the rest of his life dedicated to serving God and sharing the messages revealed to him. His nephew Ali and his friend Abu Bakr were among his first converts.[30]

Initially the Prophet did not publicly proselyte but would share the revelations privately.[31] When the manner of Muslim prayer was revealed to him it drew more attention, and then he was directed to preach in public. His teachings greatly alarmed the local traders because it was converting people to the One True God and away from the idols in the Kaaba. The Quraish tribesmen's livelihood was heavily impacted by the Kaaba shrine because they provided supplies to the pilgrims traveling to the shrine to worship the idols. It was during this time that the way of life he taught became known as 'Islam', which means 'submission to the will of Allah', and his followers were known as Muslims, 'those who submit'.[32]

The year 619 CE is known as the "Year of Sorrow" because his wife and uncle, his biggest supporters, passed away.[33] Subsequently, he left Mecca to start afresh in Taif but was rejected there as well.[34] In this same year the Prophet experienced the second most important revelation. This

27. Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the* Prophet, 26–29.
28. Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, 33.
29. Aslan, *No God but God*, 68.
30. Maqsood, *Islam*, 6–7.
31. Aslan, *No God but God*, 75.
32. Maqsood, *Islam*, 8.
33. Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, 67–68.
34. Aslan, *No God but God*, 84.

experience, known as the "Night of Ascent", woke the Prophet from his sleep and he was brought to the site of the old Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. Accompanied by the angel Gabriel he was taken up into heaven before the Throne of God. The rules for Muslim prayer were revealed to him as he conversed with past prophets to include Jesus, Moses, and Abraham, reaffirming to him that Allah had not abandoned him. The rules for prayer became central to the faith of Islam and are the keystone for Muslim life. [35]

With the death of his uncle Abu Talib, who had restrained tribal leaders, the Prophet lost the protection against the persecution from the Quraish tribe. Realizing that they intended to kill him, the Prophet and his fellow Muslims fled Mecca to the town of Yathrib. The local populace of Arabs and Jews welcomed them with open arms and renamed the town Madinat al-Nabi, "the town of the Prophet" or more commonly known today as Medina. This is known as the *Hijra* or migration to Medina.[36]

The Prophet established an agreement with the divided tribes and factions, recognizing him as the leader of the city-state, with authority to make decisions supported by them. "He ruled that all the citizens should be free to practice their own religion in peaceful co-existence, without fear of persecution or ill-favor. He asked only that if there was any aggression or tyranny, they should join together and cooperate in the face of the enemy."[37] The principle of universal justice for all, regardless of status, race or beliefs superseded the previous tribal laws of both Arabs and Jews. Jews were not required to convert to Islam and were considered equal citizens. This unity broke down when a particular Jewish tribe did not help in defending against external attacks on Medina. [38]

Hadith's came about as his followers began to record his words and actions.

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35. Matlins and Magida, *How to Be a Perfect Stranger*, loc. 2966 of 9655; Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, 71–74.
36. Catherine Bell, *Rituals: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 102; Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, 78–84.
37. Maqsood, *Islam*, 11.
38. Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, 88–90.

> [They] reveal him as a man of great gentleness, kindness, humility, good humor and excellent common sense, who had a great love for animals and for all people, especially his family. . . It was taken for granted that the Prophet's life was 'public property'; the origin of the hijab or 'veil' grew out of the habit of the public claiming constant access to him and his hospitality, and the need to allow his family a little privacy. The original veil was a curtain separating their private quarters from the area where people came and went. The Prophet later taught that no one had the right to enter, or even to look into other's houses without permission. . .
>
> He believed strongly in good manners, always greeting people kindly, showing respect to elders, and balancing his serious teachings and reprimands with gentle good humor. He once said: 'The dearest of you to me are those who have good manners; the most offensive to me are the most boring and long-winded. . .
>
> He urged his followers to live kindly and humbly, releasing slaves as far as they were able, and generally showing practical charity, without thinking of reward. He said: 'Feed, for the love of Allah, the destitute, the orphan and the prisoner, saying: We feed you for the sake of Allah alone, desiring no reward from you, or thanks . . .
>
> He did not regard it as right to sit down idly while others were working . . . he regarded all material things as being no more than loans from Allah, to be used in His service . . .[39]

The Prophet was known to prefer peace and reconciliation however the Quraish tribes continued to violently oppose him with war the remainder of his life. The Battle of Badr and the Battle of Uhud were key battles in the infancy of Islam that helped to shape and define jihad for Muslims, the rules of armed conflict and the treatment of prisoners.[40] Jihad was meant to be enacted for defensive purposes against oppressors until peace was established with the enemy.[41]

In 627 CE, Medina was besieged by Abu Sufyan, who had support

39. Maqsood, *Islam*, 12–13.
40. Naseem Akhter and Arshad Munir, "The Battle of Badr: From Challenge to chance," *FWU Journal of Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 157–163.
41. Maqsood, *Islam*, 15; Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, 97–99, 104–110, 122–128.

from one of the Jewish tribes that had pledged loyalty to the Prophet. The besieging army was defeated by the Prophet's smaller numbers. As a result, the traitorous Jewish tribe was harshly dealt with because they were citizens of Medina not because of anti-Semitic views. After refusing to repent of their betrayal before their own appointed judge and to agree to abide by Muslim laws, all men of the tribe were killed.[42]

In 628 CE, the Prophet conducted what is now known today as the Pilgrimage to Mecca, where he traveled from Medina to Mecca with a peaceful group of 1,500 followers all dressed in white clothing. They were refused entry into the city and instead offered their sacrifices outside of the city at Hudaybiyah.[43]

A treaty of peace was established with the Quraish, but it lasted for only a year when the Meccans attacked an allied tribe of the Muslims. The Prophet brought a 10,000-man army down to Mecca. Former enemy Abu Sufyan, now related to the Prophet through the marriage of his daughter, met him as a Meccan ally. All Meccans were promised amnesty and safety if they officially promised to submit.[44] All swore allegiance to the Prophet, less than a dozen lives were lost. The Prophet entered the city and went directly to the Kaaba performing the seven ritual circumambulations. He immediately entered the shrine to cleanse it and destroyed all the idols.[45]

The surrounding lands remained under the responsibility of the current tribes and the Prophet instructed those desiring to return to Mecca from Medina not to lay claim to the previous lands they once held. The key to the Kaaba was returned to Uthman ibn Talha, whose family continues to hold it, even though he had previously persecuted the Prophet and refused him entry.[46]

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42. Maqsood, *Islam*, 15–16; Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, 130–132, 136–146.
43. Maqsood, *Islam*, 16–17; William Muir and T.H. Weir, *The Life of Mohammad from Original Sources* (New York: William S. Hein & Company, 1923), 354–360.
44. Muir and Weir, *The Life of Mohammad from Original Sources*, 400–406.
45. Maqsood, *Islam*, 17: Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, 174–178.
46. Maqsood, *Islam*, 17.

In 632 CE, the Prophet conducted the Farewell Hajj or Pilgrimage, also known as the Hajj al-Wada. This was the only time he conducted a true pilgrimage to the Kaaba and it was when he received through revelation the rules of the hajj. On Mount Arafat the Prophet delivered his Final Sermon to other hajjis,[47] where he declared, "Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My blessing upon you, and chosen as your religion *islam*."[48]

The Four Rightly Guided Caliphs

On June 8, 632 CE, the Prophet died after falling ill with a fever. A new caliph (successor) needed to be chosen. Criteria for a caliph required that they be an individual who had been with Muhammad in Mecca and Medina;[49] they needed to be qualified to accurately testify and instruct others on the life and teachings of the Prophet (hadith) from firsthand experience; and it was necessary that their own life emulate the Prophet's so that it represented the sunnah. Decisions made by the caliph would be considered the same as if Muhammad himself had made them. The first four caliphs met the criteria and as such are known as the 'Rightly Guided' or 'Rashidun' Caliphs.[50]

Abu Bakr (632–634) was in his sixties when he became the Prophet's first adult male convert. Although the Prophet had given several indications that his cousin and son-in-law Ali should have been the next leader, he requested Abu Bakr to take his place in leading the prayers at the mosque when he was too ill.[51] Additionally, there were others who attempted to claim the caliph as Muhammad's successor. After two years

47. David E, Long, *The Hajj Today: A Survey of the Contemporary Pilgrimage to Makkah* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1979), 8–10; Maqsood, *Islam*, 19; Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, 195–197.
48. Qur'an 5 (The Feast): 3; M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, trans., "The Feast," in *The Qur'an*, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/book/islam-9780192831934/islam-9780192831934-chapter-5?astart=3&asize=20.
49. Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 57–58.
50. Maqsood, *Islam*, 21.
51. Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad*, 1, 3–4, 20–21, 28–29.

of constant war, he lay on his deathbed. Ali was again passed over when he nominated Umar to be the next caliph instead of allowing the community an opportunity to elect the next one.

Umar (634–644) also spent much of his time at war but is known for his respect of other people and their religious beliefs despite having conquered their lands. No one was forced to convert to Islam. The Qur'an is clear that there is to be no coercion in religion.[52] He was assassinated by a Persian slave in 644.[53]

As Umar lay dying, an elected a group of six people were chosen to identify the next leader, one of whom was Ali, but Uthman (644–656), who had married two of the Prophet's daughters, was chosen.[54] Under his leadership, the Muslim empire spread west across northern Africa and east to the borders of China. Although, Uthman was a saintly man, he was a wealthy member of the Umayyad clan of the Quraish, and in his rush to provide governors for newly acquired territories, he foolishly favored too many of his own relatives and granted them positions of leadership.[55] Muslims of Kufah (Kufa, Iraq) and Fustat (Cairo, Egypt) were among those who actively protested his rule. It was by those Egyptians that Uthman was killed.[56]

Twenty-four years after the death of the Prophet, Ali (656–661) claimed to be the rightful caliph. He was fiercely opposed by the Prophet's widow Aishah and Uthman's cousin Mu'awiyah, governor of Syria. Ali's forces defeated Aishah's army, where she was captured and subsequently

52. Qur'an 2 (The Cow): 256; M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, trans., "The Cow," in *The Qur'an*, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/book/islam-9780192831934/islam-9780192831934-chapter-2?astart=1&asize=20.
53. Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad*, 68, 73–74; Maqsood, *Islam*, 21–22.
54. Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad*, 70–71, 79.
55. Fred M. Donner, "Muhammad and the Caliphate," in *The Oxford History of Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/book/islam-9780195107999/islam-9780195107999-div1-4; Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad*, 78, 81-87.
56. Maqsood, *Islam*, 22–23.

returned safely to her home in Madinah.[57] Mu'awiyah refused to recognize Ali's claim as caliph because he failed to act in hunting down the assassins and bringing them to justice, implying he was involved.[58] Their armies came to a stalemate at the Battle of Siffin, and Ali consented to an armistice until elections were held. By temporarily abdicating his claim he was acknowledging that he was not the rightful caliph. The most devout of his warriors were stunned by his decision. Outraged, they seceded from his ranks and came to be known as the Kharijites (Seceders). It was a Kharijite assassin that would ultimately cause his death. Elected as the fourth caliph, Ali established his capital in Kufah (modern Iraq).[59]

When Ali was assassinated, Mu'awiyah seized the opportunity to be elected as the next caliph. Ali's son Hasan relinquished his claim and his brother Hussain agreed to withdraw his claim until Mu'awiyah's death. This agreement was betrayed when Mu'awiyah declared his son Yazid as his successor before he died. This action created the first major divide of the Muslim world. Civil war ensued and Hussain was killed at the Battle of Karbala. Kharijites refused to accept Yazid as the caliph and went on to create the Shi'at Ali (Party of Ali and his descendants), and the birth of Shi'ite Islam. The passage of the caliphate from Mu'awiyah to Yazzid became hereditary, creating the Umayyad dynasty, and the birth of Sunni Islam.[60]

The Teachings of Islam and the Qur'an

In the Qur'an, Muhammad (PBUH) receives instruction that he is to be a messenger to warn and proclaim good news to all mankind.[61] Islam is intended to be spread all over the world under the command of God. Mus-

57. Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad*, 18.
58. "Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e1565.
59. Donner, "Muhammad and the Caliphate": Maqsood, *Islam*, 23.
60. Donner, "Muhammad and the Caliphate": Maqsood, *Islam*, 24–25.
61. Qur'an 34 (Sheba): 28; M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, trans., "Sheba," in *The Qur'an*, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/book/islam-9780192831934/islam-9780192831934-chapter-34?astart=28&asize=20

lims believe that God's revealed revelation was given to Muhammad one last time for the people within the Muslim community to live according to God's will and then to teach its message to everyone.[62]

Muslims, Jews, and Christians all believe in the same God. Islam teaches that God made covenants with the Jews under the leadership of Moses, Christians under the leadership of Jesus, and a final covenant with Muslims under the leadership of Muhammad, his final messenger. Just as Muhammad was the final messenger for God, Muslims believe God had sent many prophets to teach the truth of his message throughout history. Each group at one point in time had God's message in its purity. Overtime some of those truths were lost and became distorted by various communities. It is believed that the Gospel was revealed to correct errors introduced to the Torah, and that the Qur'an was meant to correct the errors introduced into both the Gospel and the Torah. Believing that they have the pure form of God's revealed revelation, Muslims are under obligation to spread the message to the world and invite all to worship none other but God.[63]

The Qur'an is only accepted by the Muslim community in its original infallible Arabic form. Muslims believe that the original source for the revelations contained in the Qur'an, the Gospels, and the Torah was written in Arabic on a tablet in heaven. Any forms of the Qur'an that exist in different languages are only considered interpretations of God's revelation. As a result, regardless of their native language, all Muslims recite the Qur'an and pray in Arabic. The memorization and recitation of the Qur'an plays a significant role in the preservation of the faith. Those who have the most knowledge of the Qur'an, and can recite the most from memory, are the

62. John L. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 72; John Renard*, Islamic Theological Themes: A Primary Source Reader* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2014), Quran, Hadith, Ethics, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e025xna&AN=781018&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

63. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know*, 72–73; Gabriel Said Reynolds, "Introduction to Part 2: History and Literature," in *The Emergence of Islam: Classical Traditions in Contemporary Perspective*, 85–92, (1517 Media, 2012), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt22nm7qj.13.

ones chosen to lead within their communities.[64]

> Embedded in the Qur'an is a great deal of information about the worldview and religiosity of its Messenger, his community, and even their opponents, but the text contains few details about Muhammad that one could easily organize into a historical narrative. The Qur'an relates no stories of Muhammad's life, offers no narratives of his Companions or his enemies, and in general takes little interest in directly providing the immediate historical context for its own message. While the Qur'an was divided into chapters called sūrahs at its earliest stage (e.g., see Q. Nūh. 24:1), in its current form it does not present these sūrahs to us in chronological order but, rather, roughly in order of the sūrahs' size, with the longest sūrahs placed closer to the beginning and the shortest towards the end.[65]

The message of the Qur'an contains several major themes. Dominant among the themes are the attributes and oneness of God, the significance and role of the Qur'an, prayer, the Day of Judgement, and the afterlife.[66] On the Day of Judgement, "a great deceiver will appear al-Dajjal, there will be a return of the Mahdi (Muslim messianic figure) and the Second Coming of Jesus. That Jesus will kill al-Dajjal, establish peace and justice for 40 years. On the day of judgement all the dead will be resurrected, body and soul."[67]

The Five Pillars of Islam

Shahada is the first Pillar of Islam. It is a witness or testimony of one's of faith. An individual becomes a Muslim when they recite the *shahada*, "There is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God." This

64. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know*, 10–11.
65. Sean William Anthony, *Muhammad and the Empires of Faith: The Making of the Prophet of Islam* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2020), 12 https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvw1d5tc.6.
66. Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, 39.
67. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know*, 28–29.

declaration of faith must be of their own free will and before witnesses.[68]

Salat (prayer) is the second Pillar of Islam. Muslims pray five times each day. The Qur'an does not go into detail about the times for prayer and the ritual actions; however, hadith informs us how they were defined by Muhammad. The five prayers are named and to be said before sunrise (*Fajr*), noon (*Zuhr*), midafternoon (*Asr*), sunset (*Maghrib*), and after sunset but before midnight (*Isha*).[69]

Zakat or almsgiving is the third Pillar of Islam. It is an expression of worship and gratitude towards God as an individual provides to the poor.[70] Zakat requires an annual contribution of 2.5 percent of an individual's wealth and assets, not merely a percentage of annual income.[71] In Islam, it is an acknowledgement that God owns all things and to withhold from giving is a grievous sin.[72]

Sawm or fasting is the fourth Pillar of Islam. The Fast of Ramadan occurs each year during the month of Ramadan. It is a month-long fast where every Muslim, except under special circumstances, must abstain from food, drink, and sexual activity during daylight hours. During this time Muslims also recite the Qur'an in its entirety. [73]

Hajj or pilgrimage is the fifth Pillar of Islam. It encompasses the pilgrimage to the city of Mecca and the required rituals. At least once in

68. Bell, *Rituals*, 196: Scott Edgar, "The Five Pillars of Islam in the Hadith," *Studia Antiqua* 2 no. 1 (June 2002): 74, https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=studiaantiqua; Reuven Firestone, *An Introduction to Islam for Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008), 157–158.
69. Bell, *Rituals*, 196; Edgar, "The Five Pillars of Islam in the Hadith," 75–76; Firestone, *An Introduction to Islam for Jews*, 158, 160–161.
70. Bell, *Rituals*, 196.
71. Matlins and Magida, *How to Be a Perfect Stranger*, loc. 2948 of 9655.
72. Edgar, "The Five Pillars of Islam in the Hadith," 76–78; Firestone, *An Introduction to Islam for Jews*, 166–167.
73. Bell, *Rituals*, 196; Edgar, "The Five Pillars of Islam in the Hadith," 79–80; Firestone, *An Introduction to Islam for Jews*, 167–170.

a lifetime, every adult Muslim who is physically and financially able is required to carry out it out. It is believed to be a ritual that cleanses one before God. Often the effort requires great sacrifice to save up enough to make the journey. Physically it is very demanding and even dangerous, there are some who die, and it is believed that those who die on the way enter into paradise. Once someone has completed the hajj, they have demonstrated their devotion and sacrifice to God, and given an honorific title, al-Hajj. [74]

Shariah—The Islamic Way of Life

Shariah means a way or a path. After submitting to God, the way of life for a Muslim is the Shariah. "The Shariah is a Divinely ordained system to guide mankind straight to the path of righteousness in this world and the acquisition of bliss in the Hereafter. How a person follows the guidance provided in this world will be judged by Allah depending on whether he acted in sincerity and seeking the other world or was he totally immersed in this world."[75] It is the Islamic legal system based on tradition, interpretation, and theory. Due to interpretation, Muslims cannot come to a consensus on what it means. In general, justice is the dominating spirit of Shariah because one of the main purposes of Islam is to administer a just society. Some of the many controversies include the role and treatment of women, harsh punishments, apostasy, homosexuality, blasphemy, jihad, terrorism, sectarianism, and theocracy. Many logical arguments provide answers for differing positions, which is why it is so difficult to come to an agreement. It is believed that Shariah contains answers for all aspects of human life and society, which is why how it is defined remains a subject of debate and interpretation.[76]

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74. Bell, *Rituals*, 196: Edgar, "The Five Pillars of Islam in the Hadith," 80–82; Matlins and Magida, *How to Be a Perfect Stranger*, loc. 2948 of 9655; Firestone, *An Introduction to Islam for Jews*, 170.
75. Abdur Rashid Siddiqui, "Shariah: A Divine Code of Life" (Leicestershire, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 2018), chap. 1, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1925456&site=eds-live&scope=site.
76. Siddiqui, "Shariah: A Divine Code of Life."

Islamic Extremism and the Historical Background of ISIS

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) came about because of five overlapping factors that created the conditions for its formation. The five synergistic events are:

> (1) the rise and success of salafi-jihadi-takfiri ideology, (2) U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, and (3) the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003, . . . [(4)] the Sunni loss of power and influence in Iraq, and [(5)] the Syrian Civil War. Individually, these events would not have been enough to create the entity known as ISIS but together they formed the foundation of its power and inspiration to fight against all those who oppose it. The evolution of salafi-jihadi-takfiri ideology is the base of the foundation and is critical to know to understand the organization's behavior.[77]

The ideology behind ISIS was not born in 2014 when the world was made aware of this unfamiliar extremist group that had just successfully captured Mosul. It is an ideology that has been in the making for centuries, only to be more recently shaped and refined by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; the attacks on the World Trade Center and The Pentagon; and the invasion of Iraq.[78]

Salafism is the return to the earliest traditions and interpretations of Islam as practiced by the Prophet and the most righteous forefathers during the early leadership of the Rashidun Caliphs. The religious observance of *Salaf al-salih* means to walk in the path of the "pious forefathers."[79] The majority of *Salafis* do not resort to violence, which is more easily understood when viewed through the lens of mainstream Islamic history. To distinguish those who resort to violence the term *Salafi-jihadi* is used. So not only are they seen as revivalists following the pious forefathers but also known to advocate the use of violence to promote and defend their beliefs and practices. *Salafi* ideologies cannot be found in any of the surahs of the Qur'an. Logically that makes sense because it was the Prophet who received the surahs through revelation and there would not have been a

77. Steed, *ISIS*, xxix.
78. Steed, *ISIS*, xxix.
79. Steed, *ISIS*, xxx.

need to preach the return to practicing the early ways of Islam while in its infancy.[80]

Doctrine defining jihad can be found in the Qur'an. Jihad means a struggle or exertion on behalf of God.[81] In addition to the Qur'an, there are hadith that provide examples where the Prophet himself made statements and modeled behaviors of jihad. Contextual readings of the hadith clarify the Prophet's justification and reasoning behind his actions. Nevertheless, because the Prophet was known to perform jihad it is a highly valued demonstration of faithfulness. S*urahs* 2 and 9 are known as the sword verses and provide the most clarifying statements encouraging violent jihad. They instruct believers to kill infidels (unbelievers) and idolaters wherever they are. These verses and other sword verses are the more dominating arguments justifying believers to use violence to promote and defend their faith.[82]

> Kill them wherever you encounter them, and drive them out from where they drove you out, for persecution is more serious than killing.[83]

> When the [four] forbidden months are over, wherever you encounter the idolaters, kill them, seize them, besiege them, wait for them at every lookout post; but if they turn [to God], maintain the prayer, and pay the prescribed alms, let them go on their way, for God is most forgiving and merciful.[84]

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80. Steed, *ISIS*, xxx.
81. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know*, 133.
82. Steed, *ISIS*, xxx.
83. Qur'an 2 (The Cow): 191; M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, trans., "The Cow," in *The Qurʾan*, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/book/islam-9780192831934/islam-9780192831934-chapter-2?astart=191&asize=20.
84. Qur'an 9 (Repentance): 5; M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, trans., "Repentance" in *The Qurʾan*, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/book/islam-9780192831934/islam-9780192831934-chapter-9?astart=5&asize=20.

> Fight those of the People of the Book who do not [truly] believe in God and the Last Day, who do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden, who do not obey the rule of justice, until they pay the tax and agree to submit.[85]

Takfir is related to the Arabic word *kafr*, which means an unbeliever, a person who doesn't believe in the God of Islam, denies God's authority, or rejects the principles of Islam. Takfir is the act of declaring a particular individual to be *kafr* and authorizing the use of violence against them. A *takfiri* is a Muslim who declares another Muslim to be an apostate.[86] A traditional interpretation of Islamic law designates the death penalty as the punishment for apostasy.[87] Great caution should be used because an unsupported *takfir* accusation is an act considered haram (forbidden) in Islamic jurisprudence.[88] One hadith states, if an individual falsely accuses a Muslim of being a *kafr* then they themselves are an apostate.[89] Leaders and members of ISIS think that it is their right and duty to declare individuals and entire populations as *kafr*.[90]

As with almost all interpretations of Islam there is a great debate amongst different scholars on how to interpret these terms and verses.

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85. Qur'an 9 (Repentance): 29; M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, trans., "Repentance" in *The Qur'an*, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/book/islam-9780192831934/islam-9780192831934-chapter-9?astart=29&asize=20.

86. Ibrahim A. Karawan, *"Takfir." In The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World, Oxford Islamic Studies Online,* 2011, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0779 (accessed December 2021).

87. Emin Poljarevic, "Chapter 21 Theology of Violence-oriented Takfirism as a Political Theory: The Case of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)," In *Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements*, by Muhammad Afzal Upal and Carole M. Cusack (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2021), 485.

88. Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Coté Jr, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, Steven E. Miller, ed, *Contending with Terrorism: Roots, Strategies, and Responses* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2012), 89.

89. Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 74–75.

90. Steed, ISIS, xxx.

Even considerations of abrogation, meaning newer surahs take precedence over older revealed surahs, are hardly worth pursuing because most of the surahs concerning jihad were revealed later. Notwithstanding the numerous arguments against violent jihad, ISIS takes the stance that since it was accepted in the time of the Prophet, and he and his early followers provide the ideal models, then they need to mirror their examples.[91]

Salafi-Jihadi-Takfiri Ideology

Salafi-jihadi-takfir ideology is understood when the meanings if its three subparts are understood individually. *Salafi* or *Salafism* refers to someone that believes in the earliest interpretations of Islam. Jihadi or jihad in this definition references condoning violence to promote beliefs. *Takfir* is the ability to declare someone as an unbeliever or an apostate. Combine those individual definitions together into one ideology and you have an individual believing that it is acceptable to use violence to promote the earliest ideas and practices of Islam and if a fellow Muslim or non-Muslim doesn't follow those beliefs, they can declare them an apostate or unbeliever. This ideology is what justifies members of ISIS to commit the violent actions they are known for. An ideology not so much based on anger as it is religious fervor and devotion. The combination of beliefs is what has authorized Sunni-based ISIS to "declare all Shia as worse than non-Muslim and a danger to the community of believers."[92] Sunni are not protected either. If a Sunni is seen as having different beliefs or in opposition to ISIS's operations or infrastructure, they have been declared unbelievers (*kafir*) and killed for meeting the conditions warranting capital punishment. It is this zealous religious belief that infuses individuals with the vision to attack innocent civilians and lay down their own lives as suicide bombers for the revival of their Faith.[93]

Salafi-jihadi-takfir is no different in its characteristics from other ideologies of Islam. There is no single mode of thought agreed upon by all,

91. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxx.
92. Steed, *ISIS*, xxix.
93. Steed, *ISIS*, xxix–xxx.

nor does it remain the same from generation to generation or community to community. Every aspect has its own criticisms based on the diverse schools of Islamic thought. Nonetheless, in a conflict with ISIS it doesn't matter what everyone else thinks about their ideology. It only matters what ISIS thinks and how it evolved into what it is today. Its evolution is their history.[94]

Influencers in the Evolution of Salafi-Jihadi-Takfir Ideology

The following sections address the evolution of *Salafi-jihadi-takfir* with major influencers given in summarized context to identify what led to the different shifts in thought and action.

Kharijites

The first group in the ideological development of *takfir* is the Khawarij or the Kharijites. Khawarij means seceders, those who exit or are "outside the community of believers."[95] They were the first identifiable sect of Islam and the first group to believe they had the authority to declare individuals and entire communities *takfir* based on their interpretation of Islam. This is also the reason why the Khawarij were criticized and shunned from the broader Islamic community and received their name. The division emerged after the death of the Prophet. The entire Muslim population was faced with how to determine the leadership of the state and of how far one could deviate from traditional practices and still be considered Muslim. An extreme position some Kharijites held was that those who committed grievous sins had rejected their faith, become apostates, and should be killed. More moderate Kharijites were not as exclusive and felt that an avowed Muslim could not be declared a *kafr* (unbeliever).[96] Many have attempted to connect ISIS and the Khawarij, but their foundational views are very different. The closest connection between ISIS and the Kharijites is the belief in their authority to declare others *takfir*. The Kharijites gave birth to the ideology of *takfir*.[97]

94. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxxi.

95. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxxi.

96. Justin J. Corfield, "Khārijites," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Islam and Politics*, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t342/e0281.

97. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxxi.

Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali (1058–1111)[98]

Abu Hamid Mohamed al-Ghazali can be identified as the first individual to significantly influence Islamic ideology and philosophy,[99] the concept of jihad being only one of them. He was able to be more influential than others who promoted similar views because of his respected status as a Sufi scholar. His work as a commentator reshaped Islamic thought on faith and philosophy.[100] A main contribution to highlight is his polarization of the understanding that jihad is an external violent struggle to it being an internal personal struggle. Al-Ghazali's influence shifted the Islamic mindset to think that the greater jihad was one's personal struggle within themselves. During his lifetime Islam had such a far reach that many Muslims were not faced with border conflicts and unbelievers. This vacuum left devout Muslims wondering how to engage in martial jihad since it was so essential to the exercise of their faith. Using a less credible hadith, al-Ghazali reinterpreted violent jihad as being minor to the greater jihad of an individual's struggle against their own desires. The hadith, with supplementary commentary, states:

> Some warriors came to the Holy Prophet. He said to them, 'welcome back, you came from minor Jihad to the greater one.' It was asked, 'what is that Oh Prophet of God?' 'One's fight against his mundane wills,' he replied. (Al-Bahaqi Kitab ul Zuhd-al-Kabir)

Al-Ghazali provided further reemphasis on the surah quoted below with paraphrases from the scholar David Cook.

> [Those of the believers who stay at home while suffering from no injury are not equal to] those who fight in the cause of Allah with their

98. Ken Garden, "Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid al-," in *The [Oxford] Encyclopedia of Islam and Law*, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t349/e0091.
99. Mustansir Mir, "Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid Al-," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, ed. John L. Esposito, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236MIW/e0271.
100. Mustansir Mir, "Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid al-," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0271.

> possessions and persons. Allah has raised those who fight with their possessions and persons one degree [over those who stay at home; and to each Allah has promised the fairest good. Yet Allah has granted a great reward to those who fight and not to those who stay behind]. Qur'an 4:95[101]

Al-Ghazali never denied the importance of violent jihad, but simply provided a different way for Muslims to engage in jihad. He stands as an outlier from the remaining individuals because he is the only one in the group to encourage lesser violence whereas the others sought to increase the violence. He transformed the debate about jihad from its origins in violence to a peaceful internal struggle, and the other significant influencers sought to shift it back to its original form and then surpass it in its degree of violence.

Ahmad ibn Taymiyah (1262–1327)

The second influential individual Ahmad ibn Taymiyah lived over a century later, focused on theological criticisms of Jews, Christians, even Muslims like al-Ghazali.[102] He pressed for the violence of jihad's origins and promoted *takfiri* (excommunication) to declare, in his view, those who were wrong in their interpretations of religious devotion and practice. Strongly opposed, he was imprisoned and ostracized by Muslim leadership at the time. His views came because of the Mongol expansion and governance. The ruling Mongols had converted to Islam but were not pure in the employment of Islamic law. External customs accepted into Islamic practice are known as innovations. Sufism is traditionally linked with innovations. Mongol customary law took precedence over sharia. Ibn Taymiyah viewed this as an idolatrous violation of God's divine law. Anyone connected with supporting the Mongols or innovations were designated as *kafr* (unbeliever) subject to punishment. Identified by some to be the first *Salafist*, he called for a return to the original teachings and practices of Islam. Also known as the Sheikh of Islam, ibn Taymiyah is a highly respected scholar, referred to often by later religious figures, and is heavily studied as

101. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxxi–xxxii.

102. Parviz Morewedge, "Theology," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0799.

source material for S*alafi-jihadi-takfir* ideology in the 21st century.[103]

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1791)

The third influential individual, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab came several hundred years later in the eighteenth century, living in modern Saudi Arabia. Ibn al-Wahhab formed a critical alliance in 1744 with ibn Saud for protection and the ability to promulgate his form of Islamic interpretation.[104] This pivotal event in history marks the entrance of what is now recognized as *Salafi-jihadi-takfir*. It was amongst ibn Saud's fanatical warriors that the concept of martyrdom for Islam was held as a good thing. The unification of religion and state became decisive to the progress of everything else. Wahhabism, a form of *Salafism*, becomes the singular dominating ideology as Muslim schools of thought are funded by the wealth of Saudi Arabia. The state is recognized synonymously with *Salafi* ideology, a development unlike anywhere else. Ibn al-Wahhab spread revivalist Islam with the call to return to the ways of the Prophet and the Rightly Guided Caliphs with a focus on the oneness and supremacy of God, known as tawhid.[105] In 1773, jihad is declared on all who oppose Wahhabi teachings.[106] He called for the cessation of honoring shrines of ancestors and prophets, even the Shia devotion to the Prophet's family; such veneration divided one's devotion to God. Those practices were considered idolatrous forms of worship and those who performed such acts were declared *kafr* (non-conforming opinion).[107]

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103. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxxii.
104. Ayman al-Yassini, "Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, Muḥammad," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World, Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0337.
105. Joe Bradford, "Ibnʿ Abd al-Wahhāb, Muḥammad," in *The [Oxford] Encyclopedia of Islam and Law, Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t349/e0052.
106. Ayman al-Yassini, "Ibn ʿAbd Al-wahhāb, Muḥammad," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, ed. John L. Esposito. *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236MIW/e0337.
107. Natana J. Delong-Bas, "Islam and Power in Saudi Arabia," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics, Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t9001/e016; Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxxiii.

Sayyid Qutb (1906 -1966)

The fourth influential individual in the evolution of *Salafi-jihadi-takfir* ideology was Sayyid Qutb. He was born in impoverished Egypt during the time it was under colonial rule. Secularism, materialism, and democratic ideologies from Western Europe had been slowly permeating the Muslim Egyptian culture. A political form of Islamism fusing global *Salafism* with nationalism arose from the converging ideologies. Many prominent figures influenced the creation of this new form of Islamism however, Sayyid Qutb had the greatest impact.

Qutb had two uncles that served as initial role models, they had attended al-Azhar, the great mosque-university in Cairo when they were younger. As a result of their studies, they became people of local prestige. Their example inspired Qutb to seek additional learning that offered social power and scholarly achievement. Qutb attempted to broaden his understanding of Islamic doctrine by attending free lessons on the Qur'an given by students of al-Azhar. The lessons were about debates of formal literary Arabic, in which arguments differed on points of grammar and vocabulary. On one occasion during a session on the Qur'an commentary, Qutb broke with etiquette by questioning the Azhari on a point of grammar. His disrespect earned him a mild rebuke from the scholar. However, it reflected his intellectual ability that set him apart from the other children in the village. This intellectual competence and educational background enabled Qutb to enter the school system in Cairo.[108]

At a young age he developed a deep devotion for Islam and sought to become a highly respected professor and writer at one of the major Madrassas in Cairo. As he grew older, he continued to successfully pursue his dream, but he also became a passionate nationalist. Qutb greatly desired to live in an independent Egypt free from external rule. In this new Egypt he envisioned it celebrating its rich history, culture, and governed by Islamic law. His mentor as a young journalist was a prominent leader in the Muslim Brotherhood. Even though he is frequently associated with the Muslim Brotherhood he did not become a member until much later in his life after he had been imprisoned for over a decade by the Nasser Regime but even then, only reluctantly. Their actions and views did not fully align with his

108. Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb*, 38–39.

own. The actions and plans of other members, independent from his own, are what ultimately led to his final imprisonment and execution.

Sayyid Qutb was a respected professional journalist and scholar that wrote more on the subject of Islamism than anyone else in his time. In his writings he was not the most influential because his ideas were original, but because he was a widely read prolific writer. "It was Sayyid Qutb, however, who fused together the core elements of modern Islamism: the Kharajites' takfir, ibn Taymiyya's fatwa (legal pronouncements) and policy prescriptions, *Salafism*, concepts of the contemporary jahiliya (ignorance, specifically a return to pre-Islamic ignorance), and political activism."[109] Sayyid Qutb has generally been identified, by scholars and journalists alike, for "formulating the theoretical bases of Islamism in the post-colonial Sunni Muslim World. . . No other Islamist ideologue, [except for] the South Asian Abu l-A 'la awdudi (1903–79), exerted a comparable influence on the phenomenon, both in his day and in the generations that followed."[110] His most widely publicized works are *Milestones,* and *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, which is a 30 volume (18 in English) commentary on his interpretation of the Qur'an. His scholarly work of *Salafi-jihadi-takfir* ideology has become the intellectual source material for every Islamist who follows this way of thinking.[111]

Having seen the direct effects of the influence of Western ideologies and also having traveled to the United States and studied there as an academic he thought of the West as imperialistic.[112] Western influence was bringing the Muslim world back to jahiliya, the state of ignorance that existed before the Prophet received the first revelations of the Qur'an. In his own words, "jahiliya does not refer to a particular period or place, nor does it refer to a particular race. Rather, it is the opposite condition to Islam."[113] Instead of relying on God's message and law the people had turned to the idolatrous West for guidance and direction. Allowing anything outside of Islam to influence the people and their governance was a form of idolatry.

109, Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxxiv.
110. Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb*, 1.
111. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxxiv.
112. Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb*, 80, 90–91.
113. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxxiv.

Islamic law, or sharia, should be the ultimate rule of law and governance, and those most qualified to interpret the law should be the ones to lead.

It is true that he did advocate the use of violence to achieve and enforce a pure Islamic state, or a country purely governed by sharia. This is also one of the major ideas that extremists gravitate towards to justify their employment of violence for Islam. However, his teachings are egregiously misrepresented when considered out of context. Qutb was a devout Muslim that desired the peace that he believed a pure Islamic society could have, for Islam is a peaceful religion. For his entire youth he witnessed an oppressive colonial occupation that left his country impoverished and destitute. When the Nasser regime rose to power, he had hopes that the figures in power would turn to their Islamic roots for the governing law. Instead, they were just as oppressive, so he spoke out against them and was imprisoned for it.

His transformational writings regarding Islamism were heavily influenced while in prison. A key influencer was Abu l-A ‘la Mawdudi, a respected writer and acquaintance of Qutb’s. Their relationship started when Mawdudi had been imprisoned and Qutb sent him his books. Mawdudi had more extremist views in his writings, which Qutb began to align with during his incarceration. He connected with Qutb in faith, experience in prison, and in writing. This connection allowed him to heavily influence Qutb’s ideology as he went through the same circumstances.[114]

In prison is where his advocacy of violence was introduced and written about,[115] but it was never intended to be a widespread use of violence. The violence he suggested was one of a small martial vanguard to be used to overthrow oppressive governments like what he had been experiencing for over 50 years. When he was released from prison and asked to lead the Muslim Brotherhood, the Brotherhood had previously decided to acquire weapons. Unable to stop the acquisition, he gave instructions for them to train only to defend themselves if the government came after them. Their possession of weapons is what the Regime used as reason to reimprison Qutb and execute him in 1966.

114. Calvert, Sayyid Qutb, 199.
115. Calvert, Sayyid Qutb, 88.

Before the execution was to occur, Qutb's sister Hamida was asked to relay as message from the government. It was a plea deal for him to confess to the things he had been tried for and instead of death he would receive a reduced prison sentence. "Qutb responded that he could not accept it. The alleged complicity with anti-government forces 'did not happen, and I would never tell a lie.' Moreover, God had already decided his fate: 'Life decrees are in the hands of Allah. . . All is in the hands of Allah, and Allah is behind us encompassing everything.'"[116] Qutb was able to freely give his life for a higher cause because of his understanding of God.

Abdullah Azzam (1941–1989)

Abdullah Azzam is the fifth influential figure of Salafi-jihadi-takfir ideology and the first to overlap in time with the previous figure. The timeline here really begins to condense as prominent theorists begin overlapping and their actions are directly impacting each other and the world. Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri were among those directly influenced by him to join the *mujahidin*. Azzam was a member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. He was unsatisfied with the organization's secular agenda that took away from the greater message of Islam. Like the other figures of influence, he was a scholar that had a significant impact on the Muslim community. His thoughts and inspiration came from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Impassioned by the incursion of a non-Muslim nation into a predominantly Muslim country, Azzam published a highly influential fatwa (legal proclamation) on the necessity and importance of jihad for all Muslims. It was the duty of the Muslim *ummah* (entire community) to come to the defense of Afghanistan against an oppressive Soviet occupation. This began a worldwide campaign to inspire thousands of Muslims to travel to Afghanistan and wage martial jihad. "[H]is famous slogan was 'Jihad and the rifle alone; no negotiations, no conferences, no dialogues'—Azzam explicitly made the anti-Soviet campaign the priority for all believing Muslims, not just Afghans."[117]

116. Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb*, 262.
117. Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 23.

Al-Ghazali (1058–1111)

Al- Ghazali was responsible for the shift of jihad ideology from its origins in violence to an internal struggle. Azzam was responsible for returning jihad ideology back to its origins of a purely violent struggle. Historically there have been those who taught that jihad was one of the pillars of Islam. He affirmed that jihad was second in importance to one's declaration of the shahada. Even beyond it being a pillar of Islam, he contended that to be a true Muslim one had to embrace and engage in violent jihad. Backed financially by the United States in their efforts to combat the Soviets, he was able to extend his global influence and travel to the U.S. to propagandize for the cause.[118]

Osama bin Laden (1957–2011)

The sixth influential figure, Osama bin Laden, evolves Azzam's model of jihad and expands it to a global scale without regard for borders. His invitation to Muslims around the world to join in the fight to spread *Salafism* globally. He felt that it was the duty of al-Qaeda to awaken the Islamic community to the imposing threat of Western secularism and modernization. He taught that America was responsible for the current suffering of Muslims around the world. One of the main examples he used to argue the point was America's role in the Palestinian conflict. The successful attacks on September 11, 2001, were devastating and revelatory. The great Western powers were vulnerable, and jihad could be waged against them. As the United States responded in retaliation, terrorist organizations joined together to fight vicariously for al-Qaeda.

Bin-Laden's globalized philosophy used violence to draw public attention to the potential of a future governing caliphate. This was accomplished as he employed his own finances and education to strategically orchestrate large and small attacks. Small attacks maintained constant attention and inspiration for the message, and large attacks were conducted to instill hope in the future possibility of victory. The struggle could be won by engaging the United States in an impossible multifront war against all of Islam. It was essential to engage in the struggle of violent jihad to demonstrate one's faith and bring about the long-sought-after caliphate

118. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxxiv–xxxv.

that would unify all Muslims.[119]

Abu Bakr Naji (2004)[120]

The seventh influential figure in the advancing transformation of *Salafi-jihadi-takfir* ideology is a writer publishing under the pseudonym Abu Bakr Naji. Naji's work titled, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage through Which the Ummah Will Pass* proposes a shift from large-scale attacks to multiple smaller attacks on targets such as hotels and airports. The reasoning behind this strategy is a war of attrition and the exhaustion of resources for widespread security coverage. Jihad could be carried out in smaller attacks by anyone, without oversight, empowering all who desire to demonstrate their faith. Naji held that the *Salafi-jihadi-takfiris* were going to achieve victory inevitably however he proposed that his strategy would be more efficient in attaining the endstate.[121]

Historical Background of ISIS

Jama'at al Tawid wal Jihad (1999–2004)

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi organized a group known as Jama'at al Tawid wal Jihad (JTJ) in 1999 under the financing of al-Qaeda. This is simply one of the many names the organization was known by. Bin Laden didn't agree with al-Zarqawi's ideologies, but they were close enough to his own that he left al-Zarqawi to run his training camp in Afghanistan with little oversight. The difference between al-Qaeda's ideologies and the JTJ's was vision. Al-Zarqawi sought to use violence in the name of jihad to eliminate those who oppose Islam and to establish a caliphate by force. Bin Laden approved of the use of violence to cultivate an environment where the Muslim community would call for the creation of a caliphate on their own. Though the JTJ warranted little notice at first, when they moved their camp to Iraq, the U.S. used them as justification in the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The JTJ came to the forefront with extreme demonstrations of violence and the bombings of the UN Headquarters and Jordanian Embassy in Iraq.

119. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxxv.

120. Accurate birth or death dates are unavailable for the individual publishing under the pseudonym Abu Bakr Naji. The year 2004 is used because it was the year *The Management of Savagery* was published.

121. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, 46–47.

In 2004, the Battles of Fallujah provided experience and credibility for the organization's leadership.[122]

Tanzim Qaedat al Jihad fi Bilad al Rafidayn (2004–2006)

That same year the JTJ shifted its name to *Tanzim Qaedat al Jihad fi Bilad al Rafidayn* or al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). This served to formalize its connection with al-Qaeda. In 2005, three hotels were attacked in Jordan, causing Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri to caution al-Zarqawi on his tactics. Abu Mohamed al-Maqdisi was able to give some influence to the voice of reason. Al-Zarqawi shifted the AQI's focus to consolidating like-minded groups into the Jihadis' Advisory Council in Iraq, an umbrella organization created early in 2006. This organization served to instigate civil war in Iraq. One month later the al-Askari shrine, an important holy site for Shia Muslims, was partially destroyed in a bombing, bringing about the civil war the council sought. Al-Zarqawi became an even greater target for the U.S. and was killed by an airstrike in June 2006.[123]

Islamic State of Iraq (2006–2010)

On October 15, 2006, Abu Umar al-Baghdadi was designated as the new leader and declared the group to be the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). Al-Qaeda and other organizations opposed this declaration, but this did not shift ISI's actions as they proceeded to challenge the local and tribal leaders. In response to ISI's challenge of power came the Sunni Awakening Movement and the inception of the Sons of Iraq. The Islamic State of Iraq went underground as a result of the combined efforts of the U.S., the Iraqi Security Forces, and the Sons of Iraq. However, they continued to conduct mass-casualty attacks, at specific times and places, to communicate that coalition forces only left because they were forced out.[124]

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122. Muhammad al-'Ubaydi, Nelly Lahoud, Daniel Milton, and Bryan Price, "The Group That Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State," *The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, December 16, 2014, https://www.ctc.usma.edu/the-group-that-calls-itself-a-state-understanding-the-evolution-and-challenges-of-the-islamic-state/; Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xiii–xvi.
123. al-'Ubaydi, Lahoud, Milton, and Price, "The Group That Calls Itself a State."
124. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xvi–xviii.

Arab Spring (2010–2014)

In 2010, protests against the governments began in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Bahrain, Jordan, and Yemen. The protests that quickly escalated to civil war in Syria were a result of an overreaction by the Syrian government when they tortured and killed a young boy for painting antiregime graffiti. The governing body was comprised of a minority group known as the Alawites, an outgrowth of Shia Islam that is considered apostate by many Muslims. Nevertheless, they were the first to recognize Iran's Islamic government. This has created strong ties between the two countries. Syria, located between Iran and Lebanon, has assisted Iran in supplying Hezbollah, a Shia base political group in Lebanon. The government had also been hostile towards Saddam Hussein (Iraq) and funneled in fighters against U.S. with the fall of Hussein's regime. Foreign fighters traveled to Syria to fight in the civil war against the Basher al-Assad (Alawite) Regime and to funnel to Iraq. Foreign fighters filled the eastern Syrian vacuum left by Syrian civil war in the west. Many of these fighters ended up in ISI ranks because of financial stability, even if they didn't agree with the organization's ideology. In 2010, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi assumed leadership over ISI when Abu Umar is killed in an airstrike. He then traveled to Syria to take advantage of the weakened condition of the country.[125]

ISI evolves into ISIS (2011–2014)

When U.S. forces leave in 2011, the Iraqi government began to remove senior Sunni leaders and senior security forces leaders, angering Sunni tribes and the Sons of Iraq. Simultaneously, ISI was beginning to occupy space in Syria and in Iraq in the al-Anbar Province and city of Mosul. It was in this period that ISI transitioned into the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The propaganda campaign spoke of providing security and having a Sunni majority ruling government. This plan influenced individuals, families, and tribes to come to their side before they left Syria and came to Iraq. Nonreligious groups saw the benefit of ISIS and thought they could be controlled. Secular Sunnis sought to control them and were

125. Nelly Lahoud and Muhammad al-'Ubaydi , "Jihad Discourse in the Wake of the Arab Spring," The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, December 2013, https://ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/CTC-Jihadi-Discourse-in-the-Wake-of-the-Arab-Spring-December2013.pdf; Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xviii–xx.

in turn used by ISIS as the plan backfired. "Threats, kidnappings, and extortion were and are part of the ISIS playbook."[126] Taking over Syria and Iraq was not a surprise, but a systematic preparation involving years of engagements and building relationships. ISIS couldn't maintain total control over its subordinate fighters. A branch of ISIS members, Jabhat al-Nusra (al-Nusra front), broke away from ISIS after al-Baghdadi employed them in the west Syrian Civil War. They engaged in multiple battles in 2014 and 2015 despite sharing ideologies. [127]

Declaring a Caliphate (2014)

In January 2014, ISIS announces to the world that they are a notable force to be reckoned with when they conducted a military parade of power through the streets of Fallujah. On a regular basis, they would execute raids against Iraqi Security Forces. One of the most notable is the jailbreak of Abu Ghraib prison where hundreds of prisoners were freed and went on to become ISIS fighters. In Syria, ISIS continued to attack and seize towns and villages along the Euphrates River valley from Syrian forces. Raqqa became their capital. Deir al-Zur, a city along the Euphrates, continued to be highly contested from 2014 through 2018. As their successes continued, ISIS was able to gather fighters from hundreds of different groups in opposition to the Syrian government. In Iraq, the raid of Mosul turned into a rout, causing fearful Iraqi Security Forces to flee, subsequently relinquishing control of the city to ISIS. "One of the great applications by ISIS was its use of social and Internet media to express their wave of success."[128]

ISIS' multi-year engagement plan incorporating intimidation tactics resulted in many tribal and civic leaders being pro-ISIS when they assumed control. "On June 29, 2014, the Islamic State was declared to be the caliphate, and all Muslims were invited to join the state in its defense and expansion."[129]

126. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxi.
127. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xx–xxi.
128. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxi–xxii.
129. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxii.

ISIS in Power (2014–2017)

As Iraqi Security Forces could no longer protect the country from ISIS, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the most recognized and influential religious leader over Shia Iraqis, called upon all Iraqis to stand firm and defend the country. Fighters that gathered in answer to al-Sistani's call formed the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). The various groups comprising the PMF were predominantly financed, armed, and equipped by Iran (a Shia majority country). "The PMF became the most successful non-Kurdish fighting force in Iraq by the end of 2014."[130] Qasem al-Soleimani, the senior Iranian leader directed PMF actions against ISIS in both Iraq and Syria.

In addition to the Shia grand ayatollah's call to rise against ISIS, groups from various countries in Africa, Afghanistan, Indonesia, and the Philippines established official ties with ISIS. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria continued to commit horrific crimes against ethnic and sectarian minorities like the Yazidi communities. Brutalities included mass murder, slavery, rape, and kidnapping.[131]

In 2014 the U.S. initiated Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) to provide air support, training, and logistical support. Six countries from the UN Security Council signed a nuclear material agreement, ending the arms and economic embargo sanctions on Iran. The country was in a better position to provide support to the Syrian Assad regime. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria provoked more nations to join in fighting against them when they bombed a Russian passenger jet and conducted multiple bombings in Paris. Major turning points in the conflict against ISIS occurred in 2016–2017. Iraq began a 9-month long battle to retake Mosul in October 2016, ending in July 2017.

The battle for Raqqa in Syria began as the fight for Mosul approached its conclusion. "ISIS affiliates also captured and defended Marawi, Philippines in this period. These major urban battles with large commitments of government forces, huge commitments of firepower, and significant infrastructure destruction and loss of life characterized what it took to remove

130. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxiii.
131. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxiii.

ISIS from control"[132]

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria inspired an increase in attacks in Europe and the United States. These attacks differed widely in planning, preparation, execution, and impulsiveness. Perpetrators utilized guns, knives, trucks, and bombs as means to carry out their attacks. Salafi-jihadi-takfiri ideology, followed by ISIS, is what greatly connected many of these attacks. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria claimed a number of those attacks even without direct ties to the offender.[133]

Remaining and Expanding (2017–2019)

Notwithstanding having lost its territorial foothold in Iraq and Syria, ISIS has adopted the propaganda phrase "remaining and expanding."[134] This message communicates to the world that they are still capable of accomplishing what other extremist groups have not been able to accomplish. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria continues to work to ensure the caliphate it created will endure to the end of days and the final judgment. With their presence and control within Iraq and Syria reduced to a small scattering of locations, they continue to actively propagate their ideology virtually through videos and written material, as well as conduct terrorist attacks globally. In 2019, a group on the island of Sri Lanka declared their allegiance to ISIS and conducted attacks resulting in the deaths of nearly 300 people, wounding almost twice as many more. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria ideology could continue to inspire individuals all over the world, to commit acts of brutality and terrorism like those in Sri Lanka.[135]

Organizational Leadership

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi

Ahmad Fadeel al-Nazal al-Khalayleh was born in Zarqa, Jordan. He is better known by his war name, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. "The man's given name was Ahmad Fadil al-Khalayleh, but he preferred to be called 'al-Gharib,' or 'the Stranger,' a name he had picked up during his days

132. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxvi.
133. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxii–xxvi.
134. Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 16.
135. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, xxvi–xxvii.

as a fighter in the Afghan civil war. Some, however, were already calling him 'the one from Zarqa,' the tough industrial town in northern Jordan where he grew up. The phrase in Arabic is 'al-Zarqawi.'"[136] In the 1980s, he traveled to Afghanistan to fight the Soviet Union and drive them from the country but arrived as they were leaving the country. He returned home and began organizing a militant group. His involvement led to his arrest and imprisonment. Prison served to refine his faith and his leadership style. Abu Mohamed al-Maqdisi, a highly influential religious scholar, was one of his prison mates. It is al-Maqdisi who is credited for shaping the ideology of al-Zarqawi, who went on to form the parent organization and ideology for ISIS.[137]

Al-Zarqawi was inadvertently released from prison early as a part of a mass pardon by the new Jordanian ruler. To prevent from being arrested again he fled to Afghanistan after his release, and met with al-Qaeda leaders, receiving money to develop a training camp. The JTJ was organized and trained in the camp. When the U.S. invaded Afghanistan he moved his operations to Iraq. In an address to the UN in 2003, al-Zarqawi was personally mentioned as one of the justifications for the U.S. to invade Iraq. Without this acknowledgment on the world stage he may have never become a significant opponent. Al-Zarqawi did not transform the group into a state, but he did lead effective attacks against the U.S. forces in Iraq and highly publicized bombings in Jordan. Spectacular staged violence was a trademark of al-Zarqawi's idea of jihad. He saw violence as the means to establish an Islamic caliphate. As a result, he organized attacks targeting Shia holy sites and neighborhoods. Sunnis united themselves to defend against retaliatory attacks from Shia and coalition forces. Al-Zarqawi has come to be known as the father of the Islamic State that created the environment for the organization to grow.[138]

Abu Ayyub al-Masri and Abu Umar al-Baghdadi

Abu Ayyub al-Masri and Abu Umar al-Baghdadi assumed leadership

136. Warrick, *Black Flags*, 20.
137. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, 7; Warrick, *Black Flags*, 17; Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 20–21, 28–30.
138. Warrick, *Black Flags*, 7–8; Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 32–33, 36, 39.

over different aspects of the organization after the death of al-Zarqawi in 2006. Little accurate information is known about either one. There was a need to remain associated with al-Qaeda as well as a desire to create an Islamic State. "Al-Masri replaced al-Zarqawi as the leader of the terrorist organization known to Americans as AQI, and Abu Umar al-Baghdadi became the leader of the newly declared ISI of which AQI was one of many subordinate organizations."[139] Together they were responsible for leading the group from 2006 to 2010, and both are criticized for their inadequate leadership. In 2010 al-Masri and al-Baghdadi were killed in the same U.S. missile strike.[140] They are the link between al-Zarqawi and the infamous Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Abu Bakr al-Quraishi al-Baghdadi

Born as Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al-Badri al-Samarrai in 1971, north of Baghdad, Al-Baghdadi a religiously driven scholar stood in contrast to al-Zarqawi's brute-like character.

Al-Baghdadi chose a symbolic name after the first successor of Muhammad, Abu Bakr. When chosen as the leader of ISI in 2010, he expanded on the violent religious narrative al-Zarqawi, al-Baghdadi, and al-Masri used. It was his intention to make it a reality. His background and lineage met the leadership requirements laid out in prophetic statements about the end of times. During the reign of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, it was established that a caliph had to be a Quraish descendant.[141] Baghdadi was from the Quraish tribe and had legitimate claims. Under his leadership, ISI increased its terrorist activities, expanding from Iraq to Syria, transforming the organization into what would become ISIS. In 2014, a video was released showing al-Baghdadi speaking from the pulpit in the Great Mosque of al-Nuri in Mosul, Iraq. He personally called on all Muslims to come to the caliphate and to follow him as the rightful successor of the Prophet Muhammad.[142] This had followed the seizure of Raqaa, Syria, the capital of the Abbisad Caliphate, another symbol to show the Islamic community that ISIS was there to establish a modern caliphate. Leaning on his knowl-

139. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, 96: Warrick, *Black Flags*, xv.
140. Warrick, *Black Flags*, 249.
141. Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad*, 77.
142. Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 19.

edge, symbolism, and reputation he was able to accomplish what other jihadist groups had been unable to do, create a state.

Abu Mohammad al-Adnani

Abu Mohammad al-Adnani a Syrian is included in this list with the leaders of ISIS because of his significant role as the spokesman for ISIS and designation as the "Emir of Syria."[143] He was a major figure behind media statements and the propaganda campaign seen on the international stage to recruit and conduct external operations. His influence also extended to vetting other official groups that pledged loyalty to ISIS. It was his voice, audibly or literarily, that was most often heard to promote plans and direct attacks.[144] These statements were often directed at those who lived outside of the declared caliphate. For example, he is quoted as saying the following:

> If you can kill a disbelieving American or European—especially the spiteful and filthy French—or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be. Do not ask for anyone's advice and do not seek anyone's verdict. Kill the disbeliever whether he is civilian or military, for they have the same ruling.[145]

In retrospect, based on the response to his invitations of violence and action, it is clear he was very effective. The decisions and advice originating from him had a global impact. The U.S. was patient and waited until the opportunity presented itself to eliminate him by a coalition airstrike in

143. Feras Hanoush, "Who was Abu Mohammad al-Adnani," *The Daily Star* (September 2016), https://www.proquest.com/docview/1816554933?accountid=4488.

144. Robin Wright, "After the Islamic State," *The New Yorker* (December 12, 2016): 30, https://content.ebscohost.com/ContentServer.asp?EbscoContent=dGJyMNLe80SeqLI4xNvgOLCmsEqeqK9Ssay4SrGWxWXS&ContentCustomer=dGJyMPGuskyurK5IuePfgeyx43zx1%2B6B&T=P&P=AN&S=R&D=aph&K=119923729.

145. Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 310.

2016.[146]

Operations and Influence of a Decentralized State (2019–2022)

Iraq and Syria

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria has continued to conduct insurgency operations in Iraq and Syria after losing its geographic footing in 2019.[147] In Iraq, the group has avoided significant resistance by operating in less accessible areas particularly in the Anbar province and the Jazirah desert. Additionally, IS has taken advantage of ungoverned areas disputed by the Iraqi government and Kurdistan Regional Government. These areas include parts of Kirkuk, Diyala, Salah ad Din, and Ninawa provinces. "In Syria, low-level operations were directed mainly against the Syrian Democratic Force (SDF) and Syrian Army targets, as well as local council heads, village elders and government buildings. In fact, it had taken advantage of the security vacuum left by the reduced military forces activities due to COVID-19 operations, escalating its insurgent activities in Iraq and Syria."[148] The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria continues to utilize the central Syrian Badia (desert) as a sanctuary, allowing it to regroup rather undisturbed. As a result, attacks have increased against pro regime convoys and isolated groups. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria continues to recruit via social media and in humanitarian camps for displaced persons, where it

146. Robin Wright, "Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, The Voice of ISIS, Is Dead," The New Yorker (August 30, 2016), https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/abu-muhammad-al-adnani-the-voice-of-isis-is-dead.

147. After ISIS lost control of its geographic territories in 2019, it has been commonly referred to as the Islamic State (IS). However, out of respect for Muslims that do not recognize the organization as the authoritative Islamic State, they will continue to be referred to as ISIS in this work.

148. Nur Aziemah Azman, "The Islamic State (IS): Maintaining Resilience in a Post-Caliphate, Pandemic Environment," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 13, no. 1 (January 2021): 106–111, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26979990.

enjoys relative freedom of movement and extensive influence.[149]

Afghanistan

In 2021, Afghanistan experienced the total collapse of the civilian government as the Taliban seized power in the wake of the U.S. withdrawal. Despite their rapid victory the Taliban lacked the means to assert total dominance and governmental control over the country. This has resulted in the manifestation of other terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), which could yield a launchpad for international terrorism. "Although [al-Qaeda] and IS[IS] are geopolitical rivals, they share an essentially similar ideological agenda. . . given 'every attack that IS[IS] has executed equates to what al-Qaeda has also wanted,'. . . in Afghanistan itself, IS[IS] appeared violently opposed to the Taliban and its [al-Qaeda] allies."[150]

Pakistan

Though Pakistan experiences the devastation of terrorist attacks, the majority of the militant groups and factions merged with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). "Significantly, TTP, 'the deadliest Pakistani terrorist group'—maintaining political distance from both [al-Qaeda] and Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) – refocused instead on excising the 'ex-FATA region from Pakistan' to 'convert it into a self-styled theocracy,' rather than transforming Pakistan itself into a 'Sharia state.'"[151]

Bangladesh

Throughout 2021, Neo-Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (Neo-JMB), an ISIS-affiliated group has continued to recruit and train over cyber-space unabated. They have adapted to the environment created by the COVID-19 and law enforcement groups. One of the ways they have adapted is by recruiting individuals of different demographics to avoid detection.

149. Nur Aziemah Azman, "Underlying the Islamic State (IS) Propaganda: Striving for Relevance and Dominance," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 14, no. 1 (January 2022): 113–120, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48640768.

150. Kumar Ramakrishna, "Global Threat Assessment 2021," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 14, no. 1 (January 2022): 1–10, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48640762.

151. Ramakrishna, "Global Threat Assessment 2021."

India

Historically, Indian Muslims have seldom responded to calls to take part in jihad campaigns. However recently, the Islamic State-Hind (IS-H) has gained more traction and fashions their propaganda to arouse Indian Muslims against the progressively more Hinduised India.

Sri Lanka

In 2019, Naufer Moulavi, linked to other ISIS attacks, orchestrated the Easter Sunday attacks, unmatched in scale since 9/11, leaving almost 300 dead. The attack had been inspired by ISIS and carried out by the National Thawheed Jamaat (NTJ), a local Islamist extremist group.[152]

Central Asia

The five Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have not reported any terrorist attacks in the last two years. There are four Central Asian militant groups that operate out of Afghanistan under the protection and control of the Taliban, with some ties to al-Qaeda but not ISIS.[153]

Indonesia

Terrorism in Indonesia continues to be overshadowed by two jihadi groups, ISIS and al-Qaeda. Those that support ISIS, particularly those connected with the Jamaah Ansharud Daulah (JAD) network and Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT), are more likely to commit attacks in the country. Over the past year Indonesia saw a rise in pro-ISIS independent cells and lone actor attacks. For example, in 2021, Anshar Daulah Gorontalo (ADG), an independent pro-ISIS group not linked with JAD, and Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defender Front/FPI), were reported being respon-

152. Shanthie Mariet D'Souza, Iftekharul Bashar, Sudha Ramachandran, Abdul Basit and Amresh Gunasingham, "South Asia," Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses 14, no. 1 (January 2022): 90-98, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48640764.

153. Nodir Sloiev and Raffaello Pantucci, "Central Asia," Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses 14, no. 1 (January 2022): 90-98, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48640765.

sible for some of the attack plots.[154]

Philippines

The Philippines did see a drop in terrorist activities between 2019 and 2021. However, multiple terrorist groups continue to operate within its borders. The four main organizations that remain aligned with ISIS are two factions of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), and the Maute Group (also known as Dawlah Islamiyah). Philippines troops continue to combat these terrorist groups.[155]

Malaysia

In Malaysia, violent terrorist activities have experienced a decline due to the government-imposed restrictions because of the pandemic. Last year there were no reports of terrorist-related arrests. Nonetheless, multiple terrorist organizations continue to conduct online recruiting and training operations in the country. The Malaysian Special Branch (MSB) is aware of members from the Indonesian groups Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and Jemaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) from Myanmar, and Anshorullah At Tauhid (a local cell). Outside the country, pro-ISIS and al-Qaeda Malaysian nationals have been identified fighting in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia.[156]

Singapore

Singapore's security agencies have not reported any notable intelligence that would indicate a pending terrorist attack within their borders. However, in 2021 they considered the Islamist extremism threat, posed by ISIS and affiliated groups, to be high as they are identified as the primary threat actor. They have seen an increase in pro-al-Qaeda activities following the Taliban's success in Afghanistan, but the long-term effects remain

154. V. Arianti, Unaesah Rahmah, et al., "Southeast Asia," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 14, no. 1 (January 2022): 11–20, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48640763.
155. Arianti, Rahmah, et al., "Southeast Asia."
156. Arianti, Rahmah, et al., "Southeast Asia."

unknown.[157]

Nigeria

The terrorist organization known as Boko Haram was founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yasuf.[158] Over a decade later in 2015, the group had taken control of the north-eastern corner of Nigeria, and land in adjoining countries, equal in size to the country of Belgium, and declared themselves to be an independent Islamic caliphate. During this time, they had aligned themselves with al-Qaeda, but then switched their allegiance to ISIS. That same year, "the Global Terrorism Index declared Boko Haram 'the deadliest terrorist group in the world', and still classifies it among the four most violent terrorist groups."[159] As of 2020, the group had been responsible for the deaths of more than 27,000 people and displaced approximately 2 million people. They continue to operate even with coordinated efforts to eliminate them.

Media / Propaganda

"[The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] propaganda is now boosted with narratives that underline its relevance and dominance in the global jihadist movement. Notwithstanding the dwindling number of IS[IS] official content, its online presence remains, owing to the efforts of its supporter networks."[160] One of the greatest capabilities ISIS has ever employed is the media. It has enabled them to spread influence globally and manipulate the narrative for their benefit.[161] Having a mastery of the media has set ISIS apart from all other groups who have had a similar agenda. Despite having lost almost all its geographic territory, ISIS continues to exploit the

157. Arianti, Rahmah, et al., "Southeast Asia."
158. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, 28–29.
159. Abdul Raufu Mustapha and Kate Meagher, eds. *Overcoming Boko Haram: Faith, Society & Islamic Radicalization in Northern Nigeria*, (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2020) 1, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvnwbzsf.10.
160. Azman, "Underlying the Islamic State (IS) Propaganda," 113.
161. Mahfuh Bin Haji Halimi and Muhammad Saiful Alam Shah Bin Sudiman, "Religious Extremism: Challenging Extremist and Jihadist Propaganda," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 13, no. 1 (January 2021): 112–117, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26979991.

power of the internet and social media. "[ISIS] narratives continue to be propagated on various social media and encrypted messaging platforms, despite efforts by technology and social media companies to clamp down on online jihadist networks and accounts."[162]

Twitter, Zello, and WhatsApp have been some of the most successfully employed messaging and communication media platforms for ISIS. They have enabled ISIS to send messages and training out worldwide within minutes.[163] This proof of concept "has now demonstrated to every current and future substate, nonstate or post-state actor what can be accomplished through the use of a simple phone application."[164]

Government restrictions have prevented ISIS from establishing an official website however, using third-party sites it has been able to easily disseminate images, videos, and information. Al-Furqan, an Islamic religious education institution, and al-Hayat are official publishers the organization has employed to publish content using open-source sites or private publishing venues.[165]

One of the best-known magazines published by ISIS was called *Dabiq*. It was named after the place in Syria where, in the end of days, the Dajjal will be defeated in battle by the army led by Jesus. Understanding the content would be difficult without first knowing Islamic history and culture. Even so, it is one of the best resources to gain insight about ISIS' point of view.[166] Another magazine produced was the *Rumiyah*, meaning "Rome." It differed from the *Dabiq*, by focusing on the global narrative, and highlighted planned actions and events, giving the ideology and teachings

162. Nur Aziemah Azman, "The Islamic State (IS): Maintaining Resilience," 106.
163. Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 212–214.
164. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, 102.
165. A.I. Abalian and A. Bijan, "Youth as an Object of Online Extremist Propaganda: The Case of the IS," *Rudn Journal of Political Science* 23, no. 1 (2021): 78, http://journals.rudn.ru/political-science/article/view/25712: Idi Warash, "Jihad and Radicalism: Epistemology of Islamic Education at Pesantren Al-Furqan in Musi Rawas District," Jurnal Ilmiah 21, no. 2 (August 2021): 152–169, https://jurnal.ar-raniry.ac.id/index.php/islamfutura/article/view/7683/5060.
166. Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 210, 214, 220–221.

practical application.[167]

The best-known videos produced by ISIS target both the Arabic-speaking and English-speaking audiences. There are numerous other videos in a variety of languages, each intended to send a specific message. *Clanging of the Swords* is a widespread example of one that communicates the power of ISIS by showing hi-definition recordings of fighters brutality killing individuals.[168] "The most important element is symbolism. The perpetrator, victim, setting, means of conduct, and location all have symbolic value in that they communicate much more than the events themselves. They seek to appeal to both regional and global audiences through the use of a powerfully staged spectacle."[169] Music videos featuring fighters dancing to instrumental music or chanting have been popular amongst salafi-jihadis. The chants are used to convey messages with memorable melodies and rhythms that are easy to remember.[170]

Primary Values/Ideology

Apocalypse

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) fighters are driven by the vision that they are the army of righteousness destined to fight in the final battle, when Jesus returns and defeats the false messiah. This apocalyptic vision cannot be found in the Qur'an but originates from hadith.[171]

In the prophetic passages of the Muslim holy texts known as hadith, Zarqawi saw his fate foretold. He and his men were the black-clad soldiers of whom the ancient scholars had written: 'The black flags will come from the East, led by mighty men, with long hair and beards, their surnames taken from their home towns." These conquerors would not merely reclaim

167. Joshua Keating, "ISIS's End-of-the-World Problem," *Slate.com* (September 13, 2017), https://slate.com/technology/2017/09/isiss-apocalyptic-prophecies-arent-coming-true.html.
168. Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 211–212.
169. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, 102: Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 215–218.
170. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, 102.
171. McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse*, 163–170.

the ancient Muslim lands. They also would be the instigators of the final cataclysmic struggle ending in the destruction of the West's great armies, in northern Syria. "The spark has been lit here in Iraq," Zarqawi preached, "and its heat will continue to intensify until it burns the Crusader armies in Dabiq."[172]

Al-Masri used this ideology to declare the Islamic State in 2006 before the organization had any control over land. The apocalypse would not come unless there was a caliphate. Anciently the leaders of the Abbasid Caliphate had established this precedent when they declared the caliphate before defeating the Umayyad Caliphate.[173]

Shirk

Shirk can be defined as associating anything with God. Similar to idolatry for Jews and Christians. The first pillar of Islam is the declaration that there is no god, but the one God. A polytheistic belief is *shirk*, but so is obfuscating God's Oneness in any form. "[S]hirk can also be defined as placing obstacles in the way of God, whether greed, or drink, or pride, or false piety, or any other grave sin that keeps the believer apart from God."[174] Associating anything with God is among the most serious sins that can be committed. This provides some explanation for why ISIS destroys artwork, monuments, or relics, it is to destroy anything that may suggest a form of shirk. Using these definitions, from the perspective of ISIS, Western nationalism, democracy, or commercialism are forms of *shirk* and must be destroyed.[175]

Jahiliyah

Jahiliyah is a state of ignorance, originating from pre-Islamic Arabia, when God's Oneness and law were not known. Additionally, it is used to describe societies that get rid of moral and legal inhibitions for permissive-

172. Warrick, *Black Flags*, 7–8.
173. Keating, "ISIS's End-of-the-World Problem": Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, 19.
174. Aslan, *No God but God*, 213.
175. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, 59–60.

ness and promiscuity.[176] "The *jahiliyyah* is a condition and not a period in time. The *jahiliyyah* today has spread all over the world, in every corner on the face of the earth - in all systems and thought, in all human ideologies and convictions. . . It is based on the foundation that human desires of all types and forms arc the sole governing god, rejecting the shari'ah of Allah."[177] It is from this ideology that ISIS and other extremist groups rationalize that those they attack are not Muslim. They are seeking to bring the world out of a state of jahiliyah.[178]

Jihad

In translation it means "literally, 'struggle' or 'exertion.' 'Greater' jihad is the struggle within oneself to live a righteous life and submit oneself to God's will. 'Lesser' jihad is the defense of Islam and the Muslim community."[179] That is how the majority of the Muslim community views jihad. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria believes that the only way to cleanse the world from the condition of jahiliyyah is through violent jihad. "In Maqdisi's view, each Muslim bore a personal obligation to act when confronted with evidence of official heresy. It wasn't enough for the faithful simply to denounce corrupt rulers. They were compelled by Allah to slaughter them. 'His radical conclusion was that the leaders were infidels, and Muslims should kill them,'"[180] They do not hold to the belief that violent or defensive jihad is lesser but that is in fact a sixth pillar of Islam. "The only way to fully and properly submit to the will of God is through the process of jihad. It is only when one gives one's life over to the will of God that one completely submits. This argument means that only the jihadi

176. Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Quran,* vol 3 (United Kingdom, The Islamic Foundation, 2015), 36, 60–61, https://www.kalamullah.com/Books/InTheShadeOfTheQuranSayyidQutb/volume_3_surah_4.pdf
177. Sayed Khatab, "Hakimiyyah and Jahiliyyah in the Thought of Sayyid Qutb," *Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 3 (July 2002): 164–165, https://content.ebscohost.com/ContentServer.asp?EbscoContent=dGJyMNHX8kSeqLQ4xNvgOLCmsEqeqK9Ss664SLKWxWXS&ContentCustomer=dGJyMPGuskyurK5IuePfgeyx43zx1%2B6B&T=P&P=AN&S=R&D=asn&K=7357628.
178. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, 60.
179. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know*, 244.
180. Warrick, *Black Flags*, 20.

is a real Muslim."[181]

Martyrdom/Shuhada

Martyrdom can be defined as a violent death for principles or a religious cause. The most important Qur'anic verse usually connected with martyrdom is "Whoever obeys God and the Messenger will be among those He has blessed: the messengers [martyrs], the truthful, those who bear witness to the truth, and the righteous— what excellent companions these are!"[182] The Arabic word for martyrs is *shuhada*, and "appears in the Qur'an primarily in the sense of 'witness'—that is, Muslims should act as a living testimony for the rest of mankind."[183] Overtime this understanding shifted to encapsulate the concept of "violent self-sacrifice in the course of *Jihad* (holy war)."[184] Those who sacrifice themselves for Islam are believed to bypass purgatory, and go straight to paradise, being free from sin. The evolved idea of violent self-sacrifice in the form of a suicide attack, where innocents will be killed, is not supported by the prominent traditions of Islam today.[185] Nonetheless, the term is also used to describe zealots that utilize suicide attacks for the purpose of defending their interpretation of Islam. The rationale for ISIS extremists is that because "the martyr is willing to commit suicide is used by the group as 'testimony' and 'evidence' of the worthiness of its cause. . . Extremist groups employing suicide attacks justify the deaths of innocent victims by classifying them as additional

181. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, 60–61.
182. Qur'an 4 (Women): 69; M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, trans., "Women," in *The Qur'an*, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/book/islam-9780192831934/islam-9780192831934-chapter-4?astart=69&asize=20.
183. Meir Hatina, *Martyrdom in Modern Islam: Piety, Power, and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 36, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e025xna&AN=696294&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
184. Asma Afsaruddin, "Martyrdom in Islamic Thought and Praxis," in *Martyrdom and Terrorism: Pre-Modern to Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Dominic Janes and Alex Houen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), chap. 3, https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199959853.001.0001/ acprof-9780199959853-chapter-3.
185. Asma Afsaruddin, "Martyrdom in Islamic Thought and Praxis."

martyrs."[186]

Takfir

Takfir is about labeling other Muslims as *kafr* (non-believer) and infidels and legitimizing violence against them. *Takfīr* is based on an individual's own specific understanding of who is not a believer or a Muslim. ISIS does not ask, "'What is belief?' or even 'What is unbelief?' Rather they [ask], 'Who is an unbeliever or infidel?'"[187] In their exploration of the boundaries of takfir they have reached the conclusion that it is even permissible to fight those who are not fighting against them. It is permissible to utilize "several coercive approaches, such as executions, public beheadings, repentance, and crucifixion to try to control, terrorize and purify its society [(ethnic cleansing)]."[188] They condemn all innovations (external cultural influences) and reject the opposing doctrines of *Sufis* and Shiites in an effort to cleanse Islam of Shi'a. Any Muslim that does not accept their interpretation of Islam is declared an apostate and infidel. Abd al-Wahhab, a highly influential historical scholar, presented 10 nullifiers, that ISIS has also adopted, and if any Muslim should commit even one nullifier they were to be considered *kafr*. The third nullifier states, "Whoever does not hold the polytheists (mushrikeen) to be disbelievers (kuffar), or has doubts about their disbelief or considers their ways and beliefs to be correct, has committed disbelief."[189] Peaceful Muslims that don't excommunicate other Muslims or condemn individuals of other faiths are considered apostates. Such extreme beliefs have caused some division among its ranks.[190] Regardless, the only way to survive under ISIS rule is to join them or risk death upon discovery.[191]

Tawhid

Tawhid has typically been translated as monotheism however that is an

186. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, 61–63.
187. Jamileh Kadivar, "Exploring Takfir, Its Origins and Contemporary Use: The Case of Takfiri Approach in Daesh's Media" (*Contemporary Review of the Middle East*, 2020), 4.
188. Kadivar, Exploring Takfir, 6–8.
189. Kadivar, Exploring Takfir, 10.
190. Kadivar, Exploring Takfir, 12.
191. Kadivar, Exploring Takfir, 4–12.

incomplete translation. "The number one in Arabic is wahid. It comes from the same three-letter root that produces words like unified, unity, union, and united. Tawhid also comes from this root. . . Those who believe in tawhid do believe in one God."[192] In addition to being monotheistic, tawhid carries with it the notion that it is the pure and original belief system revealed to all the prophets.[193] The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria takes it further. Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi has said,

> '[T]awhidi' ideology is based on two things: belief in Allah and declaring the tyrannical evil-doer an infidel. But . . . people do tend to over use and under use this tool; for this reason it is important to adhere to the Shari`a, as it provides the 'golden median', the perfect balance. The Shari'a requires one to furnish proof before declaring another an infidel. . . [al-Maqdisi,] makes it very clear that his version of Islam, his notion of the oneness of Allah (tawhid), is incompatible with the idea of government by the people. A system of government in which power is vested in the people is inextricably linked to polytheism and divestiture of God from His role as the sole source of law.[194]

It is from this understanding that followers of ISIS make use of takfir and justify their use of violence to bring the world out of the state of jahiliyah.

Summary

The information provided examines the religious ideology of ISIS to understand the driving element behind their actions and their rationale for authorizing the use of violence. The background of *Salafi-jihadi-takfir* ideology as it relates to ISIS provides insight into the organization's operational history and influencing factors. Understanding this ideology enables commanders to prepare themselves and their troops with the knowledge why their enemy fights the way it does and why they need to maintain their standards of disciple and abide by the principles of the law of war. The law

192. Steed, *ISIS*, 2019, 64–65.

193. William McCants, ed., *Militant Ideology Atlas* (The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, November 2006), 217, https://ctc.usma.edu/militant-ideology-atlas/.

194. McCants, *Militant Ideology Atlas*, 175, 195.

of war reminds and informs commanders of why they fight and what they should be focusing on as they engage in armed conflict.[195] The U.S. and ISIS have been engaging in conflict since the inception of ISIS. Even after the defeat of ISIS in 2018, multiple ISIS cells operating in different countries continue to be targeted by the U.S. military. Due to the current decentralized organizational structure of ISIS and its highly influential religious ideologies, the organization in its various forms continues to subsist and thrive in recruiting. Militarily the U.S. will continue to engage ISIS, and decisionmakers need to be aware of the limitations and constraints they will be operating under as well as the religious complexities they will face.

Conclusion

The information provided gives you the opportunity to expand your knowledge of an extremist group. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) as an organization that may never regain the momentum and influence it once had. However, *Salafi-jihadi-takfiri* ideology will continue to spread. It is my recommendation that chaplains take the time to familiarize themselves with the foundational pieces of the ideology. It is a source of powerful logical arguments when tied to the Islamic faith and is the greatest recruiting tool for Islamic extremist groups.

Additionally, this work has shown the evolution of the ideology through influential individuals. Maintaining an awareness of new ideological developments on the world stage plays a critical role in anticipating future religious impacts that may result in conflict. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) rose to power because of international policies, civil wars, and the continuing evolution of religious ideology. The foundational base established in this work is a starting point for chaplains to identify future ideological shifts.

This resource can provide chaplains with information about ISIS and its development. Chaplains have the capacity to offer unique expertise as the commander's religious advisor. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria has presented itself as a violent extremist group with its declaration as an

195. *Department of Defense Law of War Manual* (Washington D.C.: Office of General Counsel Department of Defense, 2016), 39.

Islamic State and enforcement of their world view. They continue to have global influence through their religious ideology and online propaganda.

The briefing template provided from this information is a resource for chaplains to use in creating estimates, area analysis, impact assessments, and religious factors analysis, which will help their commander better understand how religion might impact their unit's mission.

The following brief was created from the information in this booklet. The slides are intended to be shown in full size and presented in a tabletop breifing format.

Commander's Tabletop Briefing (ISIS)

The following slides are intended to be printed on full size pages and presented in a tabletop briefing format.

Slide 1 (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria)

UNCLASSIFIED

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria:

ISIS

Commander's Orientation Brief

UNCLASSIFIED

Slide 2 (Agenda)

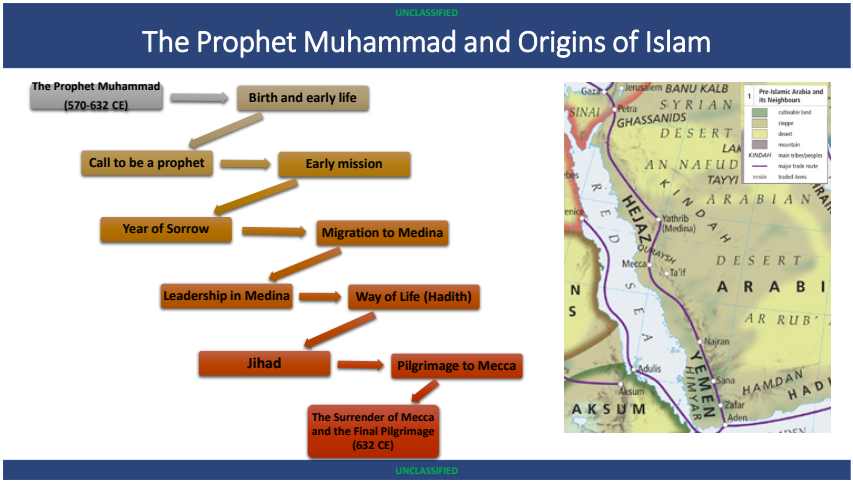
UNCLASSIFIED

Agenda

- The Prophet Muhammad and Origins of Islam
- Succession and the Rightly Guided Caliphs
- Islamic Practices
- Salafi-Jihadi-Takfiri an Islamic Extremist Ideology
- Influencers of Salafi-Jihadi-Takfiri Ideology
- Historical Background and Leadership
- Influence on the World Stage
- Media / Propaganda
- Primary Values / Ideology

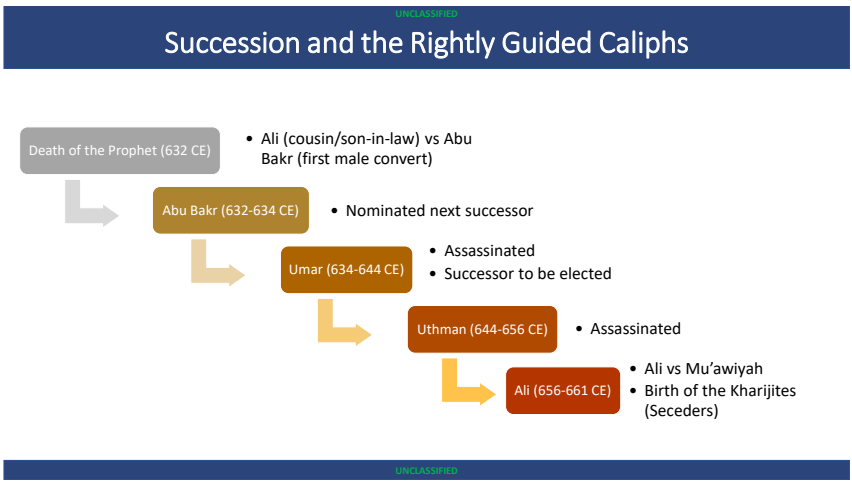
UNCLASSIFIED

Slide 3 (The Prophet Muhammad and Origins of Islam)



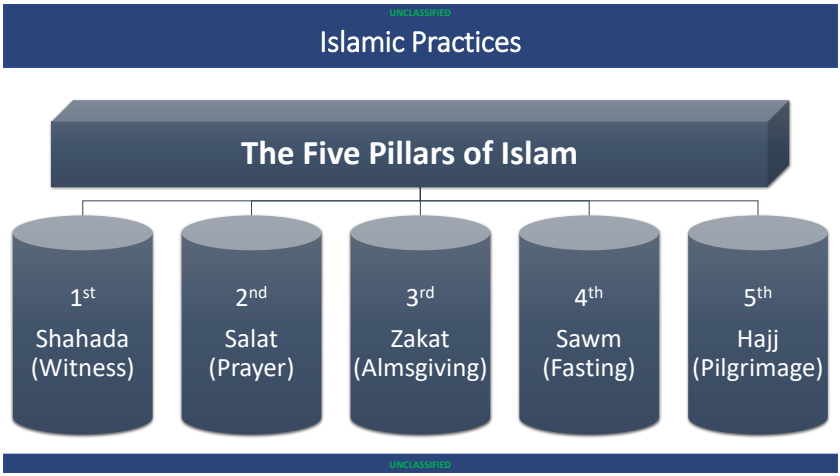
See pages 11–16 for briefing information

Slide 4 (Succession and the Rightly Guided Caliphs)



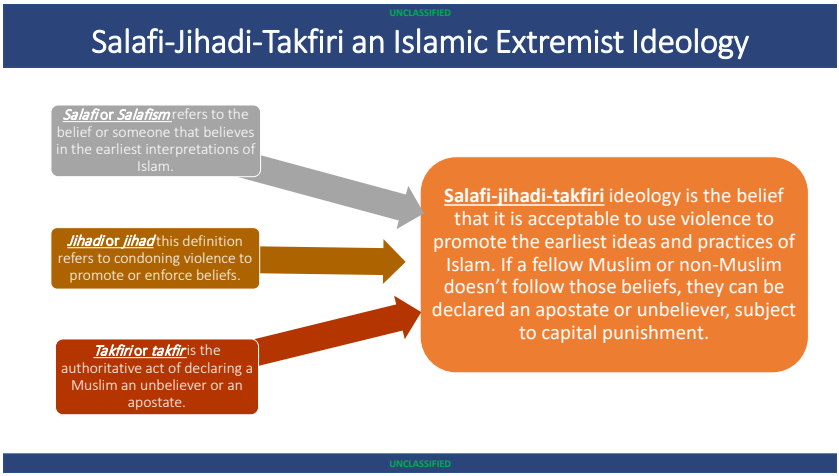
See pages 16–18 for briefing information

Slide 5 (Islamic Practices)



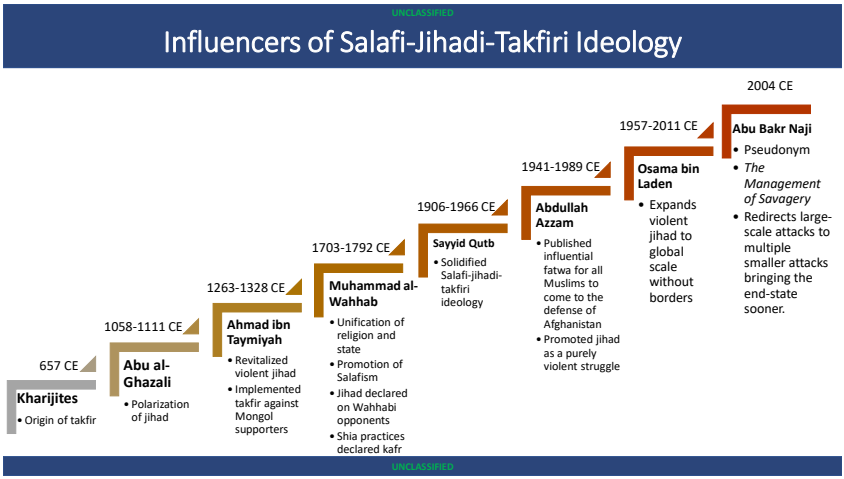
See pages 20–22 for briefing information

Slide 6 (Salafi-Jihadi-Takfiri an Islamic Extremist Ideology



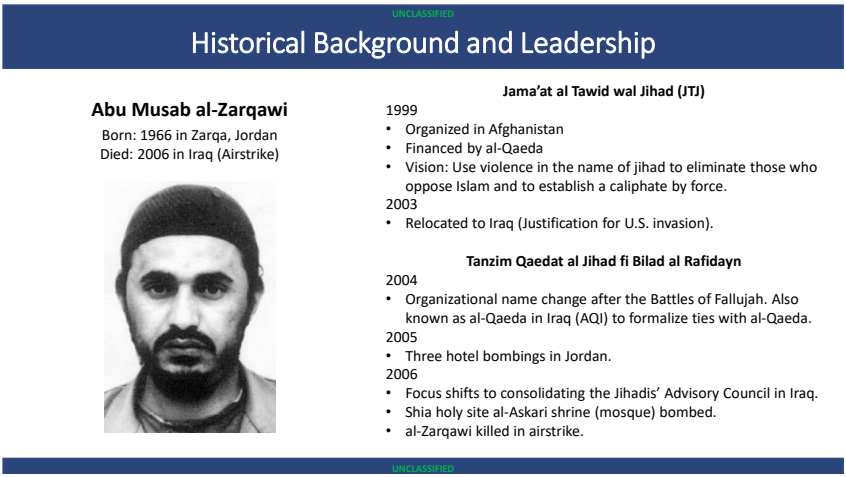
See pages 23–26 for briefing information

Slide 7 (Influencers of Salafi Takfiri Ideology)



See pages 27–36 for briefing information

Slide 8 (Historical Background and Leadership: al-Zarqawi)



See Pages 26–37 for briefing inforamtion

Slide 9 (Historical Background and Leadership: al Masri & Al-Baghdadi)

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Historical Background and Leadership

Abu Ayyub al-Masri

Leader of AQI
Died: 2010 (Airstrike)

Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)

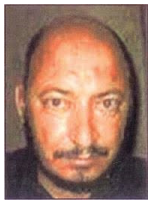
October 2006
- Tanzim Qaedat al Jihad fi Bilad al Rafidayn declares itself ISI.

2006 – 2010
- ISI's challenge of power triggers the Sunni Awakening Movement and the inception of the Sons of Iraq.

2010 – 2014
- Arab Spring – government protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Bahrain, Jordan, and Yemen.
- Syrian Civil War – ISI ranks swell.

Abu Umar al-Baghdadi

Leader of ISI
Died: 2010 (Airstrike)



There was a need to remain associated with al-Qaeda as well as a desire to create an Islamic State. Together they led the organization al-Zarqawi had created. Al-Masri led the organization known by Americans as AQI. Al-Baghdadi became the leader of the newly declared ISI of which AQI was one of many subordinate organizations.

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See pages 36–38 for briefing information

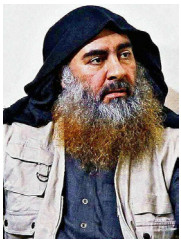
Slide 10 (Historical Background and Leadership: al-Baghdadi & al-Adnani)

UNCLASSIFIED

Historical Background and Leadership

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi

Born: 1971 of Quraish descent
Chosen as leader of ISI in 2010
Died: 2019



Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)

2010
- Violent religious narrative expanded
- Increase in terroist activities

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)

2011 – 2014
- U.S. Forces depart Iraq.
- Sons of Iraq betrayed by government leadership.
- ISI evolves into ISIS.

2014
- Caliphate declared from the Great Mosque of al-Nuri in Mosul, Iraq.
- Mosul captured after Abu Ghraib raid.

2014-2017
- Popular Mobilization Forces form to oppose ISIS.
- ISIS establishes ties with extremist groups world-wide.

2017-2019
- Coalition forces retake Mosul and occupied territory.
- "Remaining and Expanding"
- Spread of ideology inspires individuals and groups to act alone.

Abu Mohammad al-Adnani

Spokesman for ISIS
Directed propaganda campaigns and international operations
Died: 2016

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See pages 43–44 for briefing information

Slide 11 (Influence on the World Stage)

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Influence on the World Stage

Country / Countries		Number of Groups affiliated with ISIS
Afghanistan		1
Bangladesh		1
India		1
Indonesia		4
Iraq and Syria		1
Malaysia		5
Nigeria		1
Pakistan		1
Phillipines		4
Sri Lanka		1

*This list is not a fully exhaustive depiction of active organizations affiliated with ISIS.

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See pages 45–47 for briefing information

Slide 12 (Media / Propaganda)

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Media / Propaganda

- Social Media
  - Twitter
  - Zello
  - WhatsApp
- Magazines
  - Dabiq
  - Rumiyah
- Video Media

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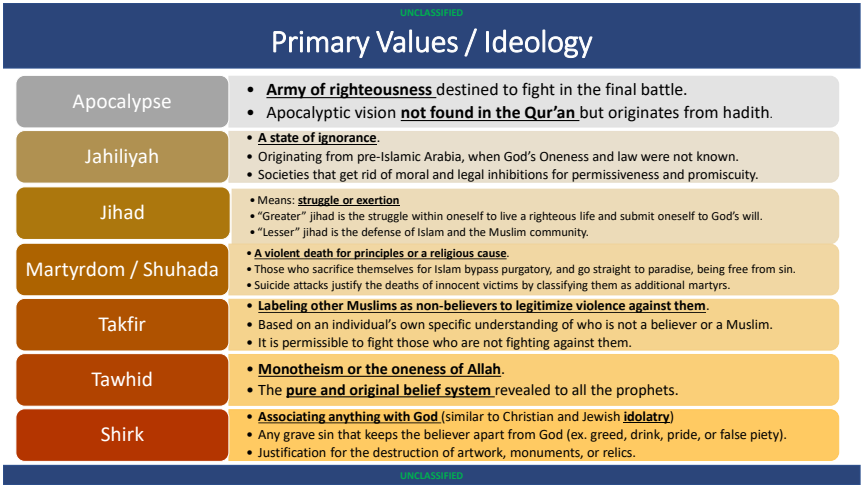
See pages 49–51 for briefing information

Slide 13 (Primary Values / Ideology)



See pages 52–56 for briefing information

Slide 14: (Questions)

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