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**The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria:
How an Obscure Terrorist Group Eclipsed Al Qaeda in the Jihadist Movement**

By

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Committee Approval

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To

Grandma, my Academic ‘Persistent’, I would not be where I am without everything you have done; to Granddad, the silent stalwart, who is always there for all of us; and to all my family and friends who have been kind enough to stay with me through the good and the bad that comes with writing a Thesis.

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Thesis Abstract—Idaho State University (2015)

With the spread of radical Islamic forces in the Middle East and the rise of ISIS, it is important to study these terrorist groups in both their physical aspects, including monetary, military and territorial control, and ideological characteristics. It is necessary to understand the goals and ideological drive, in this case the interpretation of Islam. The Territorial Imperative, which is a framework created to identify the stage of a group's development from a political movement through insurgency and, finally, a legitimized power, will be used in an attempt to understand the developmental stage of ISIS and its goal of establishing a Caliphate. With the information derived from the Territorial Imperative and the conclusions it yields, ISIS' current level of power and its future destiny for success or failure is assessed.

Introduction and Literature Review

With the spread of terrorism and the resulting turmoil in the Middle East, it is of great importance to gain an understanding of the actors in the region. This not only involves understanding the tactics of terrorist organizations, but must include the very foundations of the groups, both physically and ideologically. The idea of accurately comprehending a group's motivations and worldly power is paramount in attempting to interact with them, whether or not that interaction is peaceful. Whenever a group or nation-state is openly at war with your own nation, in this case the United States of America, this knowledge is essential to be able to thwart, defeat, and to "neutralize" them.

In the case of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which was known in Arabic as "Ad Daesh" short for *Ad Dawlah al Islamiyah fi al Iraq wal Shams*, there have been a number of recent misunderstandings, or deliberate misrepresentation of ISIS, regarding its ideological and physical foundations, as well as its current resources. This is manifested in two major misconceptions of ISIS. The first misconception is that it is merely a terrorist group that happens to have territory and the second is a misunderstanding of what guides this group's actions.

The stance of the Obama administration, as of April 2015, was to refrain from labeling ISIS as an "Islamic extremist" group. The reasoning behind this is debatable and in my opinion dangerous. It is not a stretch to see that ISIS has corrupted the Islamic religion and faith, but no matter how twisted ISIS' interpretation of Islam may be, it does

Have foundations in that religion.¹ If the ideological foundations of the group are not examined and left unclear, this will result in a misguided, if not perilous, strategy for defeating this organization both on and off the battlefield. The difficulty in combating this group is greater if one does not analyze its true goals and aspirations for the group and the world. This is not to say that all things will become clear in regard to ISIS if we can understand the motivations and current physical power ISIS wields. It does offer a much more solid footing than to attempt to label it something it clearly is not.

An example of this misguided method of combating ISIS is the idea that giving the Islamic extremists jobs will help to end the use of violence by its members.² This methodology shows a dangerous lack of understanding of what drives these groups, what their goals are and what they hope to achieve. The mislabeling of ISIS is continued by various individuals, referring to ISIS as being merely a terrorist group. I would not deny that ISIS uses brutal terrorist tactics as a major strategic move, but ISIS has moved well beyond even the broad and encompassing definition of a terrorist group. Due to the number of its members (surpassing 10,000) and its ability to control openly land it has conquered, it is at least an insurgency. If it can maintain control over territory and create the infrastructure of governance, it could achieve “belligerent” status, that is, recognition by other state actors that ISIS would have earned the status of an emergent state. This

¹ *Shari'ah*, the Sacred Law of Islam, prescribes that if a Christian or Jew converts to Islam, he or she has complete absolution of previous sins and is now fully a brother or sister in the faith. ISIS has posted videos showing captives being forced to convert to Islam, but upon their conversion they are beheaded nonetheless. Under *Shari'ah* and Qur'anic precepts “*la fikra fi al Din*” (Let there be no compulsion in religion) from Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 256, the forced conversion of non-Muslims is forbidden. But if ISIS considers these to have been an effective conversion, then the killing of the new convert would be murder of an innocent under Islamic law, which would be viewed as grossly shocking by most Muslims and also an abuse of Islamic Law.

² Keith Koffler, “State Department Spokeswoman Wants to Fight ISIS with Jobs,” *White House Dossier*, February 17, 2015, accessed April 5, 2015, <http://www.whitehousedossier.com/2015/02/17/state-department-spokeswoman-fight-isis-jobs/>.

would parallel the history of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which began as being regarded as a mere terrorist faction and now has quasi-state status in the Palestinian Authority.

In this thesis, I will argue that ISIS is on the threshold of attaining international recognition as a belligerent state. As of spring 2015, two such examples of insurgent groups achieving de-facto status as states are the Kurds, whose rival parties have two separate side-by-side states in northern Iraq and Hezbollah, which has made southern Lebanon its de-facto mini-state. There are two research questions at the center of understanding ISIS and other terrorist groups, which I hope will prove my claim. The first question will be an empirical one: Where is ISIS in its development as a radical movement? This question will be the central focus of this thesis. The second question is equally important, but more speculative in nature. Can ISIS succeed in its goals to become a legitimate state, if it continued the tactics and strategies it developed in the period 2013-2015? Legitimacy here could be operationally defined as being accepted as having the right to exercise authority by the population under its control and some recognition by other regimes in the region of quasi-sovereign status. Examples of such legitimacy would include the Palestinian Authority and the Kurdish Autonomous regional governments in the north of Iraq.

Literature Review

We can see the beginnings of this quest for legitimacy through territorial acquisitions in many different works both modern and from the past. We arguably can examine the Territorial Imperative as the basis of the human psyche, as explained in depth by Robert Arden in his controversial book, *The Territorial Imperative: a Personal*

Inquiry into the Animal Origins of Property and Nations (1966). Ardey discusses the need for territory, something to call one's own, that helps to explain the need for groups of like-minded individuals to acquire territory. Also, one could point out that a somewhat Machiavellian approach is being taken, in terms of using any means necessary to accomplish the group's goals. However, that is the extent of it, due to the fact that the goals are hardly what Machiavelli would have wanted to see achieved by the use of those means. While most people associate Machiavelli with "The Prince," his real aspirations are apparent in "The Discourses" in which it is clear that he would prefer a Republic run by its own free citizens rather than having only princely states. The end goal of Ad Daesh is not a republic with popular sovereignty but a theocratic monarchy, namely an Islamic *Khalifat* [Caliphate].

The focus, in this case, is on terrorist groups who seek to gain legitimacy. The following discussion concerns the literature that helped create the Territorial Imperative framework and the sources that provide information to help fill the data needed to answer the questions. When trying to create the questions pertinent to the Territorial Imperative, two pivotal works form a very strong basis to do so.

The first is a RAND Corporation report, "How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering Al Qai'da," authored by Seth G. Jones and Martin C. Libicki.³ This particular work is important because it discusses a variety of terrorist groups from the recent past and the present. Jones and Libicki thoroughly study the shortcomings and successes of these terrorist organizations to make an argument for the most effective way to combat the spread of al-Qaeda. They explore various aspects of a terrorist group's progression

³ Seth G. Jones and Martin C. Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering Al Qa'ida* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008).

from a political movement to dissident group, to insurgency and beyond. These aspects of Libicki and Jones' work will be used to assist in creating the necessary questions. These criteria will produce an effective test for measuring a group's progress toward its end goals.

Their report, published by RAND, was a tool used in creating the methods for my thesis, but it will be in conjunction with a work by Dr. Sean Anderson, "Imperatives and Prerequisites for Future Non-State Islamic Terrorism."⁴ Dr. Anderson presented this paper at the November 11, 2011 annual conference of the Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa. His paper will help to round out the creation of the criteria necessary for the Territorial Imperative. Dr. Anderson offers significant insight into the place ideology has on end goals and tactics as exhibited by the group in question. With this overall aspect, Dr. Anderson's work will also offer direct information in how specific criteria will be developed.

These two works by Dr. Anderson and Libicki and Jones were the backbone in regard to the method and form of my thesis. However, to fill in the data needed to validate the Territorial Imperative, I used a wide variety of news outlets and publications to establish the data needed. These sources will include Al-Jazeera, Fox News, ABC, MSNBC, CBS, the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times and overseas news outlets. In many cases, I used more than one source for the same data point to establish a more reliable set of data.

These types of sources were used predominantly in describing the physical aspects of the ISIS organization and its power. To establish certain other historical

⁴Sean K. Anderson, "The Imperatives and Prerequisites for Future Non-State Islamist Terrorism" (paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa, Washington, D. C., November 4, 2011).

aspects of ISIS, I relied heavily on Aaron Y. Zelin's work, "The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda for Supremacy of the Global Jihadist Movement," published by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.⁵ This work helps to establish much of the history of ISIS, and offers groundwork to flesh out discussed events in the group's history, including organizational foundations, leadership, relationships between key figures and structural shifts of the group.

This large base of information created a resource pool necessary for framing this thesis. I used the idea of the Territorial Imperative to create a list of criteria that showed what kind of group ISIS was, both in ideology and power. The first chapter of this paper establishes the Territorial Imperative, as a testable framework. Once the methods were completed, the discussion of proper nomenclature of ISIS is discussed in Chapter Two to follow its evolution as an organization. This section raised many questions about where and how ISIS began that are addressed in Chapter Three. This chapter not only gives a history of ISIS, but helped to answer many questions of the Territorial Imperative.

The physical foundation and ideological basis for ISIS were discussed in Chapter 4. The answers for the remaining Territorial Imperative criteria are found in Chapter 5. The previously discussed facts are assembled and placed directly into the Territorial Imperative framework to see where ISIS stood, as of May 2015 in its desired transition to become a revived and even global Caliphate.

The Arabic term *Khalifah* refers to the unitary state-cum-church political entity established by the successors (*Khulafa*) of the Prophet Muhammad, who established his own theocratic polity over the Arabian city of Medina (*Yathrib*). Subsequent conquests

⁵ Aaron Y. Zelin, "The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda for Supremacy of the Global Jihadist Movement," *Research Notes: Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, no. 20 (June 2014): 1, accessed February 22, 2015, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote_20_Zelin.pdf.

extended this state Arabian Peninsula by the time of his death in 632 C.E. Before his death, Muhammad supposedly sent emissaries to the Byzantine Emperor, the Sassanid Iranian Emperor and the Pope of the Coptic Church in Alexandria “inviting” them to accept Islam and threatening war if they did not submit to him. The Iranian Emperor is reported to have torn up the message. The superstitious Byzantine Emperor is said to have had his clerics examine it and filed it away for future reference. The account of the Coptic Pope is that he shrewdly replied that he would consider the demand and sent back a slave girl, Miriam, as a gift to the Prophet. There are no records of these historical claims in the Roman or Persian records other than in the *Hadith* literature. After his death, his successors expanded the theocratic state by the conquests of Egypt and the Sassanid Empire and partial conquest of Byzantine lands in Asia Minor. As the Prophet taught that he was the last in the line of true prophets, the formal designation for the office that now replaced the Prophet in exercising supreme secular and religious authority over these lands was the *Khalifat*.⁶

However, first, I examined the development of the Territorial Imperative as a framework in the first chapter of this paper.

⁶ See also Ted Robert Gurr’s “A Causal Model of Civil Strife: A Comparative Analysis Using New Indices,” *The American Political Science Review* 62, no. 4 (December 1968): 1104-1124. On p 1121, Gurr defines “facilitation” as an intervening variable in explaining increasing civil unrest. The principle component of “facilitation” appears to be territory in which a revolutionary group can operate unopposed by the regimes’ military or security forces. “The terrain and transportation network of a country constitute a basic structural limitation on the capabilities of insurgents for maintaining a durable insurrection. A complex ‘inaccessibility’ index was constructed taking account of the extent of transportation networks related to area, population density, and the extent of waste, forest, and mountainous terrain; the highest inaccessibility scores were received by polities like Bolivia, Sudan, and Yemen, which have limited transportation networks and large portions of rugged terrain.” This “facilitation” variable explained 48 percent of the variation in the levels of “Total Magnitude of Civil Strife.”

Chapter One

The Concept of the Territorial Imperative

The control of territory seems to be a requirement for establishing legitimacy as a nation-state. This is what scholars call the “Territorial Imperative.” ISIS presented itself as having been the first, and the most successful Islamic movement, in establishing control over a geographic area.⁷ For this reason it is important to have a way to judge the success of this group and any other groups that appear to follow the same manner of power consolidation.

To understand how and where a terrorist or extremist group can go from being a movement or insurgency to becoming a recognized nation-state, we have to look at the notion of the Territorial Imperative. This is evidenced by the need for a large membership and subsequently a large constituency that the group supports. Further, there is a need for some sort of monetary gain to pay for its actions to advance the group’s cause. Those needs seem relatively basic for any organization to function, either as a government or as a group, with designs to hold its place through legitimization or by conquest and force.

The basic ideas just described have long been recognized. One could contend that they are the same requirements that all nation-states must meet to gain legitimacy. The Territorial Imperative posits a universal set of goals for all groups who aspire to legitimize themselves in a territory. These goals need to be fulfilled for an insurgency to become a recognized entity in the eyes of the international community.

The early stages of any group seeking territory begin in similar ways, claiming easily inhabitable land. This leaves a conundrum for groups who wish to control territory,

⁷ This claim could be contested by the adherents of the late Imam Khomeini whose movement succeeded in creating what it considers a true Islamic polity. Likewise, its satellite ally, Hezbollah, has established its own quasi-state within Lebanon.

but are not in current possession of it. Unlike past cases, when the unwanted or rebellious could move to “the new world,” this was no longer an option. The problem also has been compounded by the ideals of nationalism and a resurgence of religious identification. This has led to groups trying to carve out space in existing, controlled territories, either due to nationalistic/ethnic ideals and connections or due to religious connections. These two categories can be mixed, such as in Northern Ireland in the 1960-1990s.⁸

In recent years, this problem has manifested itself as a Middle Eastern affair. Unfortunately, many Muslim or Islamic terrorist groups attempt to return to the medieval ages, or even further back, with their religious and societal goals.⁹ These goals of gaining control and maintaining group solidarity have strong roots in the basis of human nature. The recent social psychology research of Jonathan Haidt has demonstrated that the need for groups to create their own identity and solidarity and to venerate traditions, holy objects and holy places are basic moral instincts that traverse across all cultures.¹⁰ To find the additional requirements, we examined the two works which pertain to terrorist or insurgent groups and focus very specifically on al-Qaeda and how to combat it or why it failed.

⁸ See also *Ireland in the 20th Century* by Tim Pat Coogan, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); *Making Sense of the Troubles* by David McKittrich and David McVea (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

⁹ This could be said to be true of the Taliban, who gained control over 90 percent of the territory of Afghanistan, and instituted its own religious courts, but otherwise carried out none of the social and economic functions of a nation-state in providing for the needs of the population under its control. Secular education was banned. Most hospitals and clinics could not operate since they forbade female nurses to attend to male patients while male gynecologists were forbidden to touch women or even to assist in childbirth. Roads crumbled and the electrical grid barely remained functional. By contrast in Lebanon in the areas under Hezbollah control, schools and clinics were established, public sanitation and hygiene and potable water systems improved, and various social welfare agencies developed to care for widows and orphans—particularly those whose fathers had died in “martyrdom operations.” Hezbollah gained respect not only from non-Shi’ite groups within Lebanon, but also from foreign non-Muslim governments. Hezbollah made itself one of the few organized Arab military organization whom the Israelis really feared.

¹⁰ Jonathan Haidt, “Elevation and the Positive Psychology of Morality,” in *Flourishing: Positive psychology and the life well lived*, ed. by C. L. M. Keyes & J. Haidt, (Washington DC: American Psychological Association), 275-289.

The first work was *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering Al Qa'ida* by Seth G. Jones and Martin C. Libicki. This document was created as part of the RAND Corporation report. The second work was a paper by Dr. Sean Anderson that he presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of Middle East and Africa in November 2011, titled “The Imperative and Prerequisites for Future Non-State Islamist Terrorism.” These two resources create a set of requirements that any terrorist or insurgent group will need to meet in order to complete successfully its goals for legitimacy.

Jones and Libicki began by defining the term of terrorism, stating that it “... [involves] the use of politically motivated violence against non-combatants to cause intimidation or fear among a target audience” as well as “... [having] a political nature and involves the perpetuation of acts designed to encourage political change. It involves the targeting of civilians. And it is restricted to organization other than a national government.”¹¹

The authors continue by defining a terrorist group “...as a collection of individuals belonging to a non-state entity that uses terrorism to achieve its objectives. Such an entity has at least some command and control apparatus that, no matter how loose or flexible, provides an overall organizational framework and general strategic direction.”¹² This definition is concise and highly accurate and was used as the chosen definition moving forward in this research.

¹¹ Jones and Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End*, 3.

¹² Jones and Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End*, 3-4.

Jones and Libicki then discussed four assumptions as to why these groups resort to terrorism. Also, these assumptions served as the first criteria in the Territorial Imperative. The first assumption that they discussed is the two “proximate” roles of terrorism, which are to gain support and/or coerce the opposition. This is done for numerous reasons to move the terrorist group’s goals forward. The second assumption is “mainly utilitarian.” The group changes its goals and methods from feedback received from the group and the population as a whole, both supporters and the opposition. The third is the deliberate choice to use terrorism to achieve its goals. The fourth assumption is that these groups arise from a larger political movement and are rarely loners.¹³ However, this is not to exclude the lone wolf terrorist, who attaches him/herself to a terrorist group’s ideals, but acts alone with no or little actual integration into the terrorist group with which he or she has self-identified.

These four reasons behind the use of terrorism were combined into one criterion of the Territorial Imperative. If the group is using terrorism, how effectively is it being used? Terrorism is not always required fulfill the Territorial Imperative; however, it is often the main chosen method by non-state actors because of its shock value and effectiveness. A peaceful use of the Territorial Imperative was the non-violent resistance movement adopted by Mohandas Gandhi in the Indian Independence movement. By proclaiming “days of fasting and prayer,” Gandhi in effect created what amounted to a general strike. Telegraph, stations, trains, government offices and the postal service came to a complete halt. Although British troops maintained possession of the territory of India, they were denied effective use of that territory and had to use British soldiers to

¹³ Jones and Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End*, 4.

restore telegraph and train communications. The same results could have been obtained by insurgents cutting the telegraph lines, derailing trains, and threatening to murder Indian civil services and their families, if they showed up to work for the British in the Raj administration.¹⁴

The second major criterion is whether the group has become an insurgency. This is done by “(1) a group...trying to overthrow a government or secede from it, (2) more than 1,000 civilians and combatants have died over the course of the war, and (3) more than 100 combatants have died on each side.”¹⁵ This is rather a low number in terms of how many casualties there are by the end of most recorded insurgencies. Further, the United States Interagency Initiative identified insurgency in the January 2009 “U.S. Counterinsurgency Guide.”

Insurgency can be defined as ‘the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region.’ Insurgents seek to subvert or displace the government and completely or partially control the resources and population of a given territory. They do so through the use of force (including guerrilla warfare, terrorism and coercion/intimidation), propaganda, subversion and political mobilization....¹⁶

These guidelines allowed quick recognition and increased the chances for countering the insurgency early. This criterion is one of great importance to the Territorial Imperative because it does two things. It shows that the terrorist group has enough members to effectively confront government forces in a more direct way and that the group has enough support to be well known and still active in the area.

¹⁴ Mahatma Gandhi, *An Autobiography—The Story of My Experiments With Truth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).

¹⁵ Jones and Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End*, 10.

¹⁶ *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide, January 2009*, (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 2009), 6, accessed April 16, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/119629.pdf>.

The next criterion is whether a group remains cohesive or instead “splinters.” This is the idea that if the group is not meeting the goals of its members, or resorts to non-violent means of action, the group will splinter.¹⁷ Also, I included the addition of these splintered groups into a new group, which became the major focus for this paper. So, the third criterion is, will the group splinter or has it already splintered through inaction or a change in ideology in terms of method?

The ideological motivation of the group is the next major criterion. Jones and Libicki discussed the two major ideologies, which are nationalistic and religious. Nationalistic ideology suggests a group has goals for “independence territorial control [and/or] autonomy.”¹⁸ Religious ideology drives a group to commit terrorism because of a mandate to force that religious system on others. Both of these ideologies are extremely difficult to defeat due to the deep roots that ethnicity and religion create. However, we can see a new type of ideology, which combines the two. Therefore, the fourth criterion is what ideological motivation does the group in question use or what combination, thereof. This is of paramount importance to see what type of subgroups within the nation’s population the terrorist group or insurgency can draw from and how fervently they will fight. I argue that both have very powerful draws to the notion of separation, if they feel they are being under-represented or prejudiced against because of ethnicity or religion.

However, religion offers an even more difficult issue because ethnic groups tend to lose their rebellious fire when the governments they are combating accept them as equal, or they split from the country that has wronged them. With religious groups,

¹⁷ Jones and Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End*, 13-14.

¹⁸ Ibid, 15.

especially with Islamic extremists groups, they not only want to control their own piece of land. Instead, they want to convert the entire world. This adds another element to the religious criterion—the type of religious fanaticism, i.e., local control or world conversion.

Economics is another major aspect. Jones and Libicki discuss how economic grievances can contribute to a terrorist group's motivation. This, then, is followed by discussing regime type. Both of these factors, economics and regime type, play a role in the original grievance and show why certain groups will rely on terrorism. However, economic reasons only play into how the groups start, in terms of external beginnings.¹⁹ It is important, however, to look at what types of funding the groups are using. This can include support from sympathizers, stolen resources, which are then sold on the black market or to legitimate countries, and so on. This then creates our next criterion—the economic means of the group in question.

Further criteria are discussed in Dr. Sean Anderson's paper "The Imperatives and Prerequisites for Future Non-State Islamist Terrorism," in which he discusses the territorial aspect of the Territorial Imperative, as it pertains to Muslim groups, in particular, and groups as a whole. The groups must have a territory to call their own to meet their particular beliefs of what society should be. Thus, do the groups hold territory?²⁰

Once the groups have established control over their own territory, have they created a form of government that gains the constituents' loyalties and offers some level

¹⁹ Jones and Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End*, 16-18.

²⁰ Anderson, "The Imperatives and Prerequisites."

of performance legitimacy? Dr. Anderson concludes that this is why al Qaeda and the Taliban failed. Once they had the territory, all they did was punish people for infractions of *Shari'ah* (Islamic law) instead of creating a legitimized legal and social system.²¹ If al Qaeda and the Taliban had formed a legitimate government, they not only would have created territories to train the fighters, but they would have created a loyal, or at least a compliant, constituency in the territory that they held. This is usually accomplished by providing the basic needs of security, economic vitality, educational and health care institutions that often the previous regime had neglected to provide.

This criterion is followed closely by the need for state sponsorship. This is particularly important early in the existence of the group. State sponsorship ranges from “...passive acquiescence of intimidated regimes, to moral sympathy, to limited material support, to more substantial material support and finally to a degree in which the non-state group functions in effect as a wholly-own subsidiary of the sponsoring state.”²² However, it could be argued that once a group takes over land and has a level of economic stability, it no longer needs sponsorship, only allies, as would any other state actor. This would be the case if the group gains control of some economic resource sufficient to fund itself. The Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Sendero Luminoso group in Peru were able to forego external state support, as they were able to finance themselves through taxing the coca farmers and seizing part of the cocaine trade for themselves. So, this leads to our final criterion—group sponsorship and allies.

²¹ Anderson, “The Imperatives and Prerequisites.”

²² Ibid, 11.

Jones and Libicki discussed the number of combatants needed by the group. Their research suggests that the 1,000 mark is the tipping point between being just a terrorist group and becoming an insurgency. This first portion would be included in the earlier requirement in reference to the transition to insurgency. However, one can draw conclusions from circumstantial evidence.²³ This does not address the issue as to when a group goes from being just an insurgency to becoming a legitimate military force. On page 100 of Jones and Libicki's monograph, their chart notes a maximum of 10,000 fighters. It is then reasonable to conclude that a group over 10,000 would begin to fall into the realm of a true military force. If the group then adopts uniforms, insignia of rank and visible hierarchy then it may come to be regarded as a legitimate military force subject to the Third Geneva Convention. However, this criterion still relies on an earlier stated requirement of a group truly holding territory, or just holding small enclave locations.

Having worked through the various criteria for Territorial Imperative, it is important to put them in an order of importance. I propose the following order of the nine criteria for the Territorial Imperative:

1. *Does the group have a nationalistic or religion based ideology?* This can be a deceptively difficult question to answer. However, I placed it first because it is paramount in knowing the motivation in order to understand the type of group.
2. *Does the group use terrorism? How effectively do they use it?* The former question is of great importance and should be relatively easy to answer because, more than likely, the group has come to the attention of the

²³ Jones and Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End*, 99-100.

international community through a terrorist act, or some other violence.

The latter question may be harder initially to answer, but again it is very important to the effectiveness of the group to enact their plans.

3. *Currently, is the group cohesive or is there a possibility that the group will split?* This question is partially answered by the answers to the previous two questions. If the group has a weak motivation, or is ineffective in enacting its plans, it may splinter and the members will leave for a more successful group or create their own group.
4. *Has the group become an insurgency?* This is looked at, almost exclusively, if the group has over 1,000 members who are combatants, not merely members of their support network. The next two questions solidify the insurgency requirements.
5. *Does the group have monetary means?* The funding is either through sympathizer support and/or other countries supporting the group. This also can include stolen resources that are sold either to other legitimate countries or on the black market. This question can be very hard to answer in terms of specifics because most countries will not admit to helping an insurgency; sympathizers will not admit support for fear of reprisal; and, the black market does not have traceable transactions to follow. However, one can draw conclusions from circumstantial evidence.
6. *Does the group hold and control a section of land?* This question is self-explanatory.

7. *Does the group have over 10,000 fighters?* This question, along with the answers found for requirements 5 and 6, are directly involved in changing the group from an insurgency to a legitimate nation-state, or a group on the threshold. At 10,000 fighters, it is reasonable to describe the force as a military force and no longer an insurgency.
8. *Does the group have a government established in their held lands?* This is important, as we discussed earlier, because it is a major step in the direction of legitimization into a newly formed country.
9. *Does the group have sponsorship or allies?* This can be very similar, in many cases, to the answer for requirement 5 because the sponsor can and would be their monetary backer. However, if the answer to 7 suggests they have more than 10,000 fighters and 5 is answered in a manner that suggests the group has its own means of money and material, it can effect a completely different outcome. More than likely, if the only monetary support is through a sponsor, the group is still at its insurgency stage. However, if the group has a developing government and its own supply chain, and, in essence, an economy, then it needs allies and international community sponsors for legitimization. With the growth in power by the group in question, the need for sponsorship and alliances becomes less tantamount to their success and almost more of a comfort to have friends than a necessity for success. Further, this can include support given to them from other similar groups in other countries. In its simplified form, do they have friends, or not?

These nine criteria lay the foundations for any group, who hope to control their own territory and gain legitimacy. This is true with the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and so on. In this research, I focused on the group known as ISIS to see if the group fulfilled these requirements or if it was moving towards these goals.

These nine criteria form an important framework for the understanding of any group. We must also create a certain ranking structure, based on the way each question is answered in the Territorial Imperative.

These rankings help categorize any group's data that is applied to the Territorial Imperative. The rankings of the groups were placed in order, based on how many questions are answered in the affirmative. The outcome of the data answers the various questions and places the group within a certain level of the Territorial Imperative.

The ranking structure is as follows:

1. Political Dissident group: answers 'yes' to questions #1, and, in certain circumstances, answers 'yes' to #3, #5 and #9.
2. Terrorist Group: answers 'yes' to questions #1, #2, #3, #5 and #9.
3. Insurgency/Insurgent Group: answers 'yes' to questions #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6 and #9.
4. Rebellion: answers 'yes' to question #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #7 and #9
5. Nation-State Potential: answers 'yes' to all questions.

It is important to note that a 'yes' answer to any and all of the questions above gives the groups the potential to become the level prescribed to them. In many cases, there are conditions attached to the questions answered. For example, question number 5

asks, “Does the group have monetary means?” The answer can be ‘yes’. However, if its only income is through sponsorship from another group, or a state sponsor, its likelihood of succeeding in moving into a higher level drops dramatically. This list of questions and ranking system helps to apply accurately the data that is found about any group. Further, the data gives insight about the groups, so that they are not mislabeled as something that they are not.

Chapter Two

Names of ISIS

The names of ISIS trace its evolution. Organizations, or groups, often find a name that captures its beliefs, values, methods and goals. As a group develops over time, it is plausible that its name will change, as well. To be sure, since its inception, ISIS has continually changed its name, as has the rest of the world in referring to this group. We commonly hear the term ISIS from some sources, IS from others and ISIL from yet others. What do these names and variants mean? This question is an important part in understanding the ever-changing power and goals of this particular group. This chapter explains the changing names of ISIS through a brief explanation of its foundations and past actions. By doing so, it showed how ISIS started from a small terrorist group to become an insurgency into what it became by 2015, a group claiming nation-state status while in fact it was only at the belligerent stage, all the while displaying its expanding aspirations and ideologies.

Abu Musaba al-Zarqawi founded the direct forerunner to ISIS in 1999. He named this group *Jamaat al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad* (JTWJ) which translates to “The Organization of Monotheism and Jihad.” The group retained this name from 1999 until 2004.²⁴ In 2004, Zarqawi began a “marriage of convenience” with his rival, Osama bin Laden, and al-Qaeda. Zarqawi declared *bay’a*, the personal religious oath of allegiance, to bin Laden, and officially changed the group’s name to “al-Qaeda in the Land of Two Rivers,” better

²⁴ Zelin, “The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda.”

known as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). However, the group avoided using that term due to Zarqawi's desire to remain semi-autonomous from al-Qaeda.²⁵

Divergent goals and tactical imperatives began to force Zarqawi and bin Laden apart.²⁶ With the death of Zarqawi, *bay'a* no longer applied. This is due to the fact that only an individual can pledge *bay'a* to a leader, but not to an organization.²⁷ Shortly before Zarqawi's death, another major change occurred with his organization. He combined AQI with a number of other Iraqi insurgency groups to create the "Consultative Assembly of Jihadists," or *Majlis Shura al-Mujahedin*, (MSM) with AQI at its head.²⁸

After Zarqawi's death in June 2006, the MSM again changed its name to the *Dawlat al-Iraq al-Islamiyah*, the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), which was led by Abu Abdullah al-Rashid al-Baghdadi and Abu Ayyab al-Masri.²⁹ This leadership arrangement lasted until 2010 when al-Masri and Abu Abdullah al-Rashid al-Baghdadi were killed by

²⁵ Zelin, "The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda," 2; Michael Knights, "The ISIL's Stand in the Ramadi Falluja Corridor," *CTC Sentinel* 7, no. 5 (May 2014), accessed February 22, 2015, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-isils-stand-in-the-ramadi-falluja-corridor>.

²⁶ Zelin, "The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda," 3-4; Craig Whitlock, "Death Could Shake Al-Qaeda in Iraq and Around the World," *Washington Post*, June 10, 2006, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/09/AR2006060902040.html>.

²⁷ Zelin, "The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda," 3.

²⁸ Zelin, "The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda," 2-3; Bill Roggio, "The Rump Islamic Emirate in Iraq," *The Long War Journal*, October 16, 2006, accessed February 22, 2015, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2006/10/the_rump_islamic_emi.php.

²⁹ Brian Fishman, "Using the Mistakes of al Qaeda's Franchise to Undermine Its Strategies," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 618, (July 2008): 48-50, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/40375774?sid=21105937595403&uid=2490268863&uid=3739256&uid=2134&uid=3739648&uid=60&uid=2490268873&uid=70&uid=3&uid=2>; Roggio, "The Rump Islamic Emirate."

U.S. and Iraqi operations. Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi then took control.³⁰ The names that we have just discussed are not in contention for the current name of the organization in 2015, due largely to the fact that they are out dated in terms of current events and structure of this group. However, the changes are important for they reveal the evolution from merely being part of a worldwide global network to becoming an independent entity. Further, the group became an entity with pretences to leadership over the other Islamic extremist groups and even a claim to sovereignty over the entire Muslim world.

By 2013, ISI had spread into Syria during its civil war. At this point, ISI renamed itself as the Islamic State of Iraq and *al-Sham*, or in its complete form, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). However, the Arabic translation of this name is *al-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi al-Iraq wa-al-Sham*.³¹ These two translations, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) are the two most common names attributed to the group. *Al-Sham* is usually meant to describe greater Syria, Syria-Palestine, or the Levant. However, it historically meant Syria, but more often than not it is translated as the Levant, which includes far more territory than just Syria.

The Obama administration had been using the ISIL acronym of the name which had one major flaw, namely the use of the anachronistic term Levant. The Levant (from

³⁰ Joshua Keating, "Who is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi," *Slate*, June 16, 2014, accessed February 22, 2015, http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_world/2014/06/16/abu_bakr_al_baghdadi_how_did_isis_s_leader_go_from_total_unknown_to_the.html.

³¹ Anna Mahjar-Barducci, "The MNLA's Fight for a Secular State of Azawad," *MEMRI*, Series Report No 848, (June 19, 2012), accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/6462.htm>; Paul Wood, "Key Free Syria Army rebel 'killed by Islamist group'," *BBC News: Middle East*, July 12, 2013, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-23283079>; "Syria Iraq: The Islamic State militant group," *BBC News: Middle East*, August 2, 2014, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24179084>.

the old French *levant*, meaning rising [as of the sun]), traditionally and later would include Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories, Syria and Turkey, all countries bordering on the eastern Mediterranean.³² A look at the map (Illustrations, Figure 1) reveals ISIS does control a portion of the traditionally described Levant, but it does not control enough of the territory to warrant such a name, regardless of its ultimate goals, claims, and other groups' allegiances.

The name Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is much more geographically correct since the group controls a large portion of both of these areas. Furthermore, this term gains legitimacy when one recognizes that borders and terms placed on these areas have been obtained only in modern times since the borders were drawn up by colonial powers during the Versailles Treaty conference at the conclusion of World War I, while independence for these territories was granted following World War II. ISIS is a more logical name or translation for the points mentioned above. However, with the ever-changing goal of this group, the name has changed again to the Islamic State (IS). With this name change, al-Baghdadi has claimed that IS is the authentic Caliphate with worldwide ambitions.³³

³² Institutions that use the same definition for Levant are the Council for British Research in the Levant, UCLA Near East Languages and Cultures Department and UCL Institute of Archaeology. *The Journal of Levantine Studies* also defines the Levant as the above institutions.

³³ Adam Whitnall, "Iraq crisis: Isis declares its territories a new Islamic state with 'restoration of caliphate' in Middle East," *The Independent* (UK), June 30, 2014, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-declares-new-islamic-state-in-middle-east-with-abu-bakr-albaghdadi-as-emir-removing-iraq-and-syria-from-its-name-9571374.html>; "ISIL renames itself 'Islamic State' and declares Caliphate in captured territory," *Euro News*, June 30, 2014, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.euronews.com/2014/06/30/isil-renames-itself-islamic-state-and-declares-caliphate-in-captured-territory/>.

The proclamation of a Caliphate by al- Baghdadi has dismayed many other groups, and has led many, including other jihadists, to discredit his claim.³⁴ This strong negative reaction has led to the IS Caliphate being referred to as Da'ish or DAESH by many Arab dissenters. It is the Arabic acronym for IS, which is *al-Da wlah al-Islamiyah fi al-Iraq wa-ash-Sham*. The U. S. State Department officially began to call this group DAESH in late 2014 because of the use of the name by America's Arab partners.³⁵ In fact the name DAESH has led to ridicule of the organization throughout the Arab world, some noting that with a slight change in pronunciation 'Da'ish' becomes 'Ja'hish'—"The state of donkeys in Iraq and Syria." However, much of the ridicule centers on the fact that while ISIS makes its pronouncements in a now archaic Qur'anic pronunciation and pretends to follow the "original true Islam," the making of acronyms was completely alien in the

³⁴ Bill Roggio, "ISIS announces formation of Caliphate, rebrands as 'Islamic State'," *Threat Matrix-Blog of the Long War Journal*, June 29, 2014, accessed February 22, 2015, http://www.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/06/isis_announces_formation_of_ca.php#; Shafik Mandhai, "Muslim leaders reject Baghdadi's caliphate," *Aljazeera*, July 7, 2014, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/muslim-leaders-reject-baghdadi-caliphate-20147744058773906.html>; Simran Khosla, "This is What the World's Newest Islamic Caliphate Might Look Like," *Global Post*, June 30, 2014, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/middle-east/iraq/140630/what-the-worlds-newest-islamic-caliphate-might-look->; "Iraq's Baghdadi calls for 'holy war'," *Aljazeera*, July 2, 2014, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/iraqi-rebel-leader-calls-holy-war-201471202429388292.html>; Jack Moore, "Iraq Crisis: Senior Jordan Jihadist Slams Isis Caliphate," *International Business Times*, July 2, 2014, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/iraq-crisis-senior-jordan-jihadist-slams-isis-caliphate-1455041>; United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2178, September 24, 2014, accessed February 22, 2015, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2178%20%282014%29; The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Statement by the President on ISIL," September 10, 2014, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-isil-1>.

³⁵ U.S. Department of State, "Terrorist Designations Operating in Syria," May 14, 2014, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/05/226067.htm#>; Faisal Irshaid, "Isis, Isil or Da'ish? What to call militants in Iraq," *BBC Middle East*, June 24, 2014, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27994277>.

Arabic language and reflected a Western tendency to create acronyms. This refutes their pretense to Islamic purity and authenticity.³⁶

This adds another level to the name argument. Does DAESH or IS fit the group more appropriately? It is easy to recognize that with the widespread disapproval of the claimed Caliphate IS and its attached meanings are not sufficiently appropriate or accurate for a name at this stage in the group's metamorphoses. DAESH, on the other hand, does offer a reasonably accurate name, because it is the acronym of the Arabic name of ISIS. It has also gained much support from Arab partners. ISIS hates the term DAESH because it recognizes the reality that it is a localized phenomenon and not a global Islamic State. The hyper-zealousness of supportive groups like Boko Haram in Nigeria, declaring their allegiance to "The Islamic State," creates a conundrum for al-Baghdadi, since there is no territorial continuity of Boko Haram with DAESH. In what sense does DAESH own or control Boko Haram? Boko Haram controls no territory. If the Nigerian President Muhammad Buhari, elected in 2014, decided to use the Nigerian military in a coordinated and forceful manner that his timorous predecessor Goodluck Jonathan never dared to do, then the military defeats of Boko Haram would become DAESH's defeat as well and become an embarrassment for the caliphal pretensions of al-Baghdadi.

One is led to believe that ISIS and DAESH are the two most appropriate names that could be used for the group in question. Nonetheless, I continued to use the anglicized version of the name for this paper, ISIS, all the while recognizing that it may well work to change its name in the future.

³⁶ Alice Guthrie, "Decoding Daesh: Why is the new name for ISIS so hard to understand?" *Free Word*, February 2, 2015, accessed April 15, 2015, <https://freewordcentre.com/blog/2015/02/daesh-isis-media-alice-guthrie>.

Chapter Three

Physical Foundations and Structure of the Islamic State

This chapter examines the history of ISIS, a group founded by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, from its foundation to the present. This discussion is followed by a description of its organizational structure, as it was understood by May 2015. This chapter answered a number of the criteria posed by the Territorial Imperative. It starts with the original organization that has evolved into ISIS and then continues through the history of this group up to May 2015, the present time of writing of this thesis, in order to pinpoint exactly when to find the data needed to answer various questions posed by the Territorial Imperative. Those include questions regarding its governing structure, fighting forces and funding.

I: Historical Foundations of ISIS

In 1999, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi formed a group known as the Organization of Monotheism and Jihad (*Jama'at al-Tawid wal-Jihad*) or JTJ. Zarqawi, of Palestinian descent, was born in Jordan in 1966 and named Ahmad Fadhel Nazzal al-Khalaylah.³⁷ He began his life “a bully and a thug, a bootlegger and a heavy drinker, and even allegedly, a pimp in [his home town of] Zarqa’s underworld.”³⁸ He traveled to Afghanistan in 1989 to fight the Soviets. Unfortunately for his dream of fighting the invading Russians, the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan that year. Thereafter, Zarqawi

³⁷ “Abu Musab al-Zarqawi,” *Discover the Networks.org*, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/individualProfile.asp?indid=788>.

³⁸ Mary Anne Weaver, “The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi,” *Atlantic*, July/August 2006, accessed March 7, 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/?single_page=true.

became a reporter for an Islamic magazine, *Al-Bonian al Marsous*, (*The Strong Wall*), which gave him the opportunity to meet Osama bin Laden.³⁹

Upon returning to Jordan, Zarqawi was arrested and convicted for having explosives in his home. He was imprisoned there until 1999. It was reported he was radicalized while in prison.⁴⁰ After Zarqawi was released, he led the failed Millennium Plot in Jordan. The plan involved bombing a hotel and several religious sites. After the plot was foiled by Jordanian security forces, he fled to Pakistan, which revoked his entry visa. He then fled to Afghanistan.⁴¹ The foundations of ISIS began at this point in Zarqawi's life. Zarqawi founded JTJ with a very modest amount of seed money or, as other sources report, \$200,000 from Osama bin Laden. Zarqawi began by building JTJ at a camp near Herat, Afghanistan.⁴²

The motivations behind the formation of JTJ were twofold—first, to follow an extreme interpretation of the Islamic law *takfir*, which is the formal excommunication of a Muslim or the declaration that a group, which considers itself to be Muslim, is in fact an apostate or heretical group. The person or group put under the ban of *takfir* may be

³⁹ Mary Anne Weaver, "The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi"; Sami Moubayed, "Death of Zarqawi: George gets his Dragon," *Asia Times*, June 9, 2006, accessed March 7, 2015, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/HF09Ak03.html; Laura Smith, "Timeline: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi," *The Guardian* (US edition), June 8, 2006, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/jun/08/iraq.alqaida1>; Craig Whitlock, "Al-Zarqawi's Biography," *Washington Post*, June 8, 2006, accessed March 7, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/08/AR2006060800299.html?nav=rss_world/africa.

⁴⁰ "The Insurgency," *PBS Frontline*, February 21, 2006, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline///insurgency/etc/script.html>.

⁴¹ Jonathan Finer and Craig Whitlock, "Zarqawi's Network Asserts It Launched Attack in Amman," *Washington Post*, November 11, 2005, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/11/10/AR2005111002074.html>.

⁴² Bill Roggio, "Exodus and Ascent," *Long War Journal*, March 30, 2005, accessed March 7, 2015, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2005/03/exodus_and_asce.php; Whitlock, "Al-Zarqawi's Biography"; Zelin, "War between ISIS and al-Qaeda."

attacked and its members killed until the individual or group makes a formal submission to the Islamic authority that placed the ban of *takfir* upon it. But, this then begs the question, who or what constitutes the “legitimate Islamic authority” competent and entitled legally to impose or rescind the ban of *takfir*? Secondly, ISIS contemplated actions against Israel, the UN and USA for what JTJ considered their oppression of Iraq.⁴³ JTJ also used various terror tactics against Jordanian and Iraqi security forces until the US invasion in 2003.⁴⁴ It began what it called a “war” against the US military and became an intermediary for foreign fighters to use various contacts in Iraq through JTJ.⁴⁵

From August 2003 until December 2004, JTJ was involved in a great number of bombings and other attacks. These included bombing the Jordanian embassy and various other targets in Baghdad, as well as bombing of oil platforms in the Persian Gulf. On September 30, 2004, 41 people were killed, mostly children; the full list of atrocities continued long after these spectacular attacks.⁴⁶ This string of violence continued

⁴³ Zelin, “War between ISIS and al-Qaeda”; Weaver, “The Short Violent Life”; “Al-Qaeda group claims Salim death,” *BBC News*, May 19, 2004, accessed March 7, 2015, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3727597.stm; “The Insurgency.”

⁴⁴ Gary Gambill, “Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi: A Biographical Sketch, *The Jamestown Foundation* 2, no. 24 (December 16, 2004), accessed March 7, 2015, http://web.archive.org/web/20070930185929/http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=400&issue_id=3179.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ “Leaders condemn Iraq church bombs,” *BBC News*, August 2, 2004, accessed March 7, 2015, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3527032.stm; Pierre Bairin et al, “Car bomb kills 35 in Baghdad,” *CNN.com*, June 18, 2004, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/06/17/iraq.main/index.html>; Robert S Leiken and Steven Brooke, “Who Is Abu Zarqawi?” *CBS News*, May 18, 2004, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/who-is-abu-zarqawi/>; “Al Qaeda group claims Salim death”; “The Insurgency”; Pam Benson, “CIA: Zarqawi tape ‘probably authentic’,” *CNN.com*, April 7, 2004, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/04/07/zarqawi.tape/index.html?s=PM:WORLD>; “Guide: Armed groups in Iraq,” *BBC News*, August 15, 2006, accessed March 7, 2015, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4268904.stm; Associated Press, “Fast Facts: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi,” *Fox News*, June 08, 2005, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/2006/06/08/fast-facts-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/>.

accompanied by beheadings and executions throughout 2004. These methods of terror were still being used in 2015.⁴⁷

The spread of sectarian violence, specifically violence against Shi'ite Muslims, is one of the more remarkable aspects of this group.⁴⁸ These attacks by Zarqawi's group are unique because other Islamist groups generally avoid sectarian violence against Shi'ite Muslims until they have won the battle against the "infidel."

With this wave of sectarian violence, the JTJ began to transition into an al-Qaeda affiliate by October of 2004 through a letter pledging allegiance to Osama bin Laden and with this pledge the JTJ changed its name.⁴⁹ The group became known as the Organization of Jihad's Base in Mesopotamia (*Tanzim Qai'dat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn*), abbreviated to TQJBR. It was also known as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).⁵⁰ With the pledge of loyalty (*bay'a*) from Zarqawi to bin Laden, Zarqawi gained access to al-

⁴⁷ Associated Press, Fast Facts; "Turkish hostage shot to death in Iraq," *China Daily*, August 3, 2004, accessed March 7, 2015, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-08/03/content_357131.htm; "Zarqawi beheads US man in Iraq," *BBC News*, May 13, 2004, accessed March 7, 2015, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3712421.stm.

⁴⁸ Sabrina Tavernise, "20 die as insurgents in Iraq target Shiites," *International Herald Tribune*, September 17, 2005, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://web.archive.org/web/20080127045649/http://www.ihf.com/articles/2005/09/16/news/iraq.php>; "Another wave of bombings hit Iraq," *International Herald Tribune*, September 15, 2005, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://web.archive.org/web/20071028173331/http://www.ihf.com/articles/2005/09/15/africa/web.0915iraq.php>; "Al-Zarqawi declares war on Iraqi Shia," *Aljazeera*, September 14, 2005, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2005/09/200849143727698709.html>.

⁴⁹ Mu'asker al-Battar, "Zarqawi's Pledge of Allegiance to al-Qaeda," *The Jamestown Foundation* 2, no. 24, trans. Jeffery Pool (December 15, 2004), accessed March 7, 2015, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=27305#.VP3QxuGrE_i](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=27305#.VP3QxuGrE_i); Associated Press, "Al-Zarqawi group vows allegiance to bin Laden," *NBC News.com*, October 18, 2004, accessed March 7, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/6268680#.VP3S6uGrE_h.

⁵⁰ Zelin, "The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda"; "Govt. bans al-Zarqawi terror group," *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 26, 2005, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.smh.com.au/news/National/Govt-bans-alZarqawi-terror-groups/2005/02/26/1109180145854.html>.

Qaeda's many resources and in return it gave bin Laden the much desired influence and perhaps even what proved to be an illusory "control" over the jihad in Iraq.⁵¹

AQI began to gain both power and fighters loyal to Zarqawi.⁵² With this new power, AQI under the control of Zarqawi and the spiritual head Sheikh, Abd-al-Rahman, continued its attacks in the same manner as it had in previous years. These atrocities included beheadings, executions, and bombings, as well as conventional attacks. In late January of 2005, there were several bombings during the Iraqi Legislative elections. One noteworthy attack was the combination of suicide bombings and conventional means on Abu-Ghraib prison in April of that same year, killing 12 prisoners and wounding 44 U.S. troops.⁵³

To be sure, AQI's goals expanded because of its new affiliation with al-Qaeda. In a letter from Ayman al-Zarqawi, bin Laden's second-in-command, a set of four goals were put forth: 1. "expulsion of U.S. forces from Iraq"; 2. "the establishment of 'an Islamic authority or amirate' [emirate], covering as much Iraqi territory as possible"; 3. [extension of] the jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq" and 4. "finally

⁵¹ Zelin, "The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda."

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ "Another wave of bombings hit Iraq; Rory Carroll and Julian Borger, "Egyptian envoy to Iraq killed, says al-Qaeda," *The Guardian* (US edition), July 8, 2005, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/jul/08/alqaida.iraq>; Department of State, the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism*, April 28, 2006, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2005/65275.htm>; ABC News Investigative Unit, "Militants Attack Abu Ghraib Jail," *ABC News*, April 4, 2005, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=639568&page=1>; "Attacks in Iraq on election day," *CNN.com*, January 30, 2005, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/meast/01/30/iraq.attacks/index.html>.

the clash with Israel [would come], because Israel was established only to challenge any new Islamic entity.”⁵⁴

The seeds for the renewed Caliphate,⁵⁵ or Islamic state, were sown at this time among the leadership, and those ideas formed the basis of the goals of the Zarqawi organization. Along with this additional goal of establishing a Caliphate, the sectarian war of AQI increased. However, this began to create a rift between Zarqawi and bin Laden. Bin Laden believed the Shi’ite Muslims were not the issue, but Zarqawi disagreed, contending that the sectarian apostates should be dealt with.⁵⁶ The Anbar Awakening of 2006, or the “Awakening Movement in Iraq,” exacerbated the sectarian war. Approximately 30 tribes in the province joined successfully to drive out AQI. This brought about an increase in AQI attacks both conventional assaults and suicide bombings and a stiffening of opposition to al-Qaeda in 2005 and 2006.⁵⁷

During the first part of 2006, during the “awakening,” AQI created the Mujahedeen Shura Council, (*Majlis Shura Al-Mujahideen*), or MSC, in an attempt to unify Iraqi Sunni secular groups and nationalist members. The MSC was created to help alleviate the divisive tactics AQI used against civilians and the increasingly

⁵⁴ Brian Whitaker, “Revealed: Al-Qaeda plan to seize control of Iraq,” *The Guardian* (US edition), October 12, 2005, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/oct/13/alqaida.iraq>.

⁵⁵ Originally, the Caliphate, a political and religious state, was established after the death of the Prophet Muhammad and encompassed the lands and its people under its rule.

⁵⁶ “Al-Zarqawi declares war on Iraqi Shia”; Zelin, “The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda.”

⁵⁷ Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, “‘We don’t need al-Qaida,’” *The Guardian* (US edition), October 27, 2005, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/oct/27/iraq.alqaida>; Peter Beaumont, “Iraqi tribes launch battle to drive al-Qaida out of troubled province,” *The Guardian* (US edition), October 2, 2006, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/oct/03/alqaida.iraq>; Joe Klein, “Is al-Qaeda on the Run in Iraq?” *Time*, May 23, 2007, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://web.archive.org/web/20070706191851/http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1624697,00.html>.

fundamentalist doctrine followed by AQI.⁵⁸ In June 2006, U.S. airstrikes killed the longtime leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi perhaps with seven aides, including Sheik Abdul Rahman. At this point, Abu Ayyub al-Masri, also known as Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, is said to have been unanimously elected as the new leader. Al-Masri was Zarqawi's right-hand man and a life-long militant.⁵⁹ However, his succession was not guaranteed, due to the introduction of Abu Abdullah al-Rashid al-Baghdadi. Al-Masri was presented as the leader of the Mujahedeen Shura Council.⁶⁰ Some in the West suspected that Abu Abdullah al-Rashid al-Baghdadi was a fictitious person and that he was created to put an Iraqi face on a foreign-led group. It is reasonable to believe that only al-Masri held power at this time.⁶¹

In October 2006, the transition from the Mujahedeen Shura Council to the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) began, and al-Baghdadi was presented as the leader and emir of the newly formed ISI. The goals of the Islamic State of Iraq were the same as the predecessor

⁵⁸ Karen DeYoung and Walter Pincus, "Al-Qaeda in Iraq May Not Be Threat Here," *Washington Post*, March 18, 2007, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/17/AR2007031701373.html>.

⁵⁹ Associated Press, "Al-Qaida in Iraq's al-Zarqawi 'terminated'," *NBC News.com*, June 8, 2006, accessed March 7, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/13195017/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/al-qaida-iraqs-al-zarqawi-terminated/#.VP8RieGrE_g; "Al-Qaeda in Iraq names new head," *BBC News*, June 12, 2006, accessed March 7, 2015, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/5073092.stm; Mark Tran, "Al-Qaida in Iraq leader believed dead," *The Guardian* (US edition), May 1, 2007, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/may/01/iraq.alqaida>.

⁶⁰ John F. Burns and Dexter Filkins, "A Jihadist Web Site Says Zarqawi's Group in Iraq has a New Leader in Place," *New York Times*, June 13, 2006, accessed March 7, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/13/world/middleeast/13iraq.html>.

⁶¹ Dean Yates, "Senior Qaeda figure in Iraq a myth: U.S. military," *Reuters*, July 18, 2007, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/07/18/us-iraq-qaeda-idUSL1820065720070718?rpc=92>.

organizations.⁶² It is worth noting that under the ISI banner, a cabinet was created. However, it was speculated by outsiders that this council was, with two exceptions, mostly fictional. The first cabinet minister, al-Masri was Minister of War and the suspected true leader of ISI and, the second, Abu Abdul Jabar al-Janabi was Minister of Security.⁶³

The attempt at deception by ISI, as to just whom its leader was, was cleared up in 2010 when al-Masri and al-Baghdadi were killed in a joint strike by U.S-Iraq forces near Tikrit. It lay to rest the question of whether or not Abu Abdullah al-Rashid al-Baghdadi was a fiction perpetrated by ISI to put an Iraqi face of the group.⁶⁴ In that same year, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi became the leader of ISI. Bakr al-Baghdadi, who allegedly held a PhD from the Islamic University of Baghdad, was said to be held in high esteem among his supporters.⁶⁵ In 2003, he formed the Army of the Sunni People Group (*Jamaat Jaysh Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaah*) or JJASJ and headed the *Shari'ah* committee. In 2006, the leadership pledged *bay'a* to the Mujahideen Shura Council and joined the organization.

⁶² Ernesto Londoño, "Resurgent al-Qaeda in Iraq seeks to undermine government," *Washington Post*, November 22, 2009, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://web.archive.org/web/20070928061225/http://www.siteinstitute.org/bin/articles.cgi?ID=publications274907&Category=publications&Subcategory=0>.

⁶³ SITE Institute, "Islamic State of Iraq Announces Establishment of the Cabinet of its First Islamic Administration in Video Issued Through al-Furqan Foundation," *The Search for International Terrorist Entities*, April 19, 2007, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://web.archive.org/web/20070928061225/http://www.siteinstitute.org/bin/articles.cgi?ID=publications274907&Category=publications&Subcategory=0>.

⁶⁴ David Rising, "Top al-Qaida leaders killed in Iraq, US says," *Associated Press Writers*, April 19, 2010, accessed March 7, 2015, https://web.archive.org/web/20100421091821/http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20100419/ap_on_re_mi_ea/ml_iraq; "Senior Iraqi al-Qaeda leaders 'killed,'" *BBC News*, April 19, 2010, accessed March 7, 2015, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8630213.stm; Associated Press, "2 Most Wanted Al Qaeda Leaders in Iraq Killed by U.S., Iraqi Forces," *Fox News*, April 19, 2010, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/04/19/iraqi-al-qaeda-leader-killed-countrys-intelligence-team-pm-maliki-says/>.

⁶⁵ While there is the University of Baghdad, there is no official listing of an "Islamic University of Baghdad."

After the Council again changed its name to ISI, al-Baghdadi held the positions of general supervisor of the *Shari'ah* committees and on ISI's senior consultative council.⁶⁶

ISI has raised money through many different means, including ransoms, commandeering food and ammunition, and stealing oil from Bayji, Iraq and selling it on the black market.⁶⁷ By late 2010 and early 2011, during U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, the strength of the group began to grow significantly, doubling its capacity.⁶⁸ ISI continued its attacks and began to work back into areas previously lost in Iraq, as well as expanding into Syria.⁶⁹ During the end of 2012 and early 2013, ISI changed its name to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (*ad-Dawlat al-Islamiyah fi al-Iraq wa Ash-Sham*), or ISIS, and officially broke away from al-Qaeda, due to in large measure to increasing differences between the two groups in goals and ideologies.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Anthony Shadid, "Iraqi Insurgent Group Names new Leaders," *New York Times*, May 16, 2010, accessed March 7, 2015, http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/05/16/iraqi-insurgent-group-names-new-leaders/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0; Aaron Y. Zelin, "Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi: Islamic State's driving force," *BBC News*, July 30, 2014, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28560449>.

⁶⁷ Lennox Samuels, "Al Qaeda in Iraq Ramps Up Its Racketeering," *Newsweek*, May 20, 2008, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.newsweek.com/al-qaeda-iraq-ramps-its-racketeering-89733/>.

⁶⁸ Bill Roggio, "Al Qaeda in Iraq suicide bomber kills 31 in Iraqi Army Base in Taji," *Threat Matrix, a Blog of the Long War Journal*, November 6, 2012, accessed March 7, 2015, http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2012/11/al_qaeda_in_iraq_suicide_bombe.php.

⁶⁹ Maamoun Youssef, "Al-Qaida: We're returning to old Iraq strongholds," *Associated Press*, July 22, 2012, accessed March 7, 2015, <https://news.yahoo.com/al-qaida-were-returning-old-iraq-strongholds-131645698.html>; Rod Nordland, "Al Qaeda Taking Deadly New Role in Syria's Conflict," *New York Times*, July 24, 2012, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/25/world/middleeast/al-qaeda-insinuating-its-way-into-syrias-conflict.html?pagewanted=all>; Rania Abouzeid, "The Jihad Next Door; the Syrian roots of Iraq's newest civil war," *Politico Magazine*, June 23, 2014, accessed March 7, 2015, http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/06/al-qaeda-iraq-syria-108214_full.html#_VP9XMuGrE_h.

⁷⁰ "Zelin, War between ISIS and al-Qaeda."

II: Current Leadership Structure of ISIS

Now that we have reviewed the evolution of ISIS, it is important to discuss the current structure of this ever-changing and ever-expanding group.

The goal of ISIS signaled by its early founders was that they wanted to create a Caliphate or Islamic State. This pretentious claim of Caliphate holds many responsibilities and powers, both religious and secular. When ISI renamed itself ISIS, it gave a renewal to the group's long dreamed-of goal of establishing a Caliphate, which became apparent with the self-proclaimed title of Islamic State (IS) and Caliphate in June 2014. This information was announced by Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, chief spokesman for ISIS, after a Shura Council meeting.⁷¹ With the creation of the new Caliphate, a new level of 'government' oversight became more apparent in ISIS. There were a number of aspects involved in the iteration of this ever-changing organization.

III: Resources and Territory in ISIS Control

This section reviews the territories ISIS controlled as of spring of 2015 and/or into which it had inserted operatives. This section then explains the leadership apparatus that controlled the main ISIS organization and the various groups that have claimed allegiance to the newly formed Caliphate. Finally, the section concludes by discussing the fighters and equipment that was available to ISIS, based on what is known from outside sources as of May 2015.

⁷¹ Jessica Lawrence, "Iraq crisis: Could an ISIS Caliphate ever govern the entire Muslim world?" *ABC Australia News*, July 2, 2014, accessed March 8, 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-02/could-an-isis-caliphate-ever-govern-the-muslim-world/5559806>; Adam Withnall, "Iraq crisis: Isis declares its territories a new Islamic state with 'restoration of caliphate' in Middle East," *The Independent* (Great Britain), June 30, 2014, accessed March 8, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-declares-new-islamic-state-in-middle-east-with-abu-bakr-albaghdadi-as-emir-removing-iraq-and-syria-from-its-name-9571374.html>.

The main body of land that the Islamic State held, as of April 2015, was the majority of the northwestern part of Iraq and the eastern portion of Syria. In this territory, it controls several large cities, Al Raqqa, its proclaimed capital, Fallujah, Mosul and several others (Illustrations, Figure 2). However, this is not the only region that ISIS fighters have claimed and then controlled. In Libya the Shura Council of Islamic Youth allied with ISIS in October 2014 and took control of Derna, a port city in eastern Libya, and Sabha in southwestern Libya.⁷² With these two directly held areas, ISIS also laid claim to the Sinai and Khorasan Province, which consists of northeastern Iran and neighboring parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as “other nearby lands.” These other lands are Algeria, Chechnya, Philippines and Dagestan.⁷³ All of the groups mentioned held lands or are part of a large group. They are represented in the structure at the head of ISIS.

⁷² Jethro Mullen, “Egyptian warplanes bomb ISIS targets in Libya after killings of Christians,” *CNN London, United Kingdom*, February 17, 2015, accessed March 8, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/16/middleeast/isis-libya-egypt/>; Haaretz, “Middle East updates/ISIS kills 14 Libyan soldiers, official government says,” *Haaretz Newspaper in Israel*, January 3, 2015, accessed March 8, 2015, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/middle-east-updates/1.635108>; Jason Ditz, “ISIS Fighters Kill 14 Soldiers in Southern Libya,” *Anti War.com*, January 4, 2015, accessed March 8, 2015, <http://news.antiwar.com/2015/01/04/isis-fighters-kill-14-soldiers-in-southern-libya/>.

⁷³ Thomas Joscelyn, “Sinai-based jihadist group rebranded as Islamic State’s official arm,” *The Long War Journal*, November 14, 2014, accessed March 8, 2014, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/11/sinai_jihadists_rebr.php; MEE Staff, “IS claims responsibility for Gaza’s French Cultural Center blast, reports,” *Middle East Eye*, February 13, 2015, accessed March 8, 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/claims-responsibility-gaza-s-french-cultural-centre-blast-1790519098>; Mirco Keilberth, Julianne von Mittelstaedt and Christoph Reuter, “The ‘Caliphate’s’ Colonies: Islamic State’s Gradual Expansion into North Africa,” *Spiegel Online International* (Hamburg), November 18, 2014, accessed March 8, 2015, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-expanding-into-north-africa-a-1003525.html>; Pasterno Esmaguel II, “Philippines condemns, vows to help ‘thwart’ ISIS,” *Rappler* (Manila), September 17, 2014, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.rappler.com/nation/69380-philippines-condemns-islamic-state-isis>; Mairbek Vatchagaev, “Caucasus Emirate and Islamic State Split Slows Militant Activities in North Caucasus,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, February 13, 2015, accessed March 8, 2015, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=43542&cHash=7c819b2612b6c4e991453bf9f8fbb1f2#.VQCfGuGrE_h](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=43542&cHash=7c819b2612b6c4e991453bf9f8fbb1f2#.VQCfGuGrE_h); Leila Fadel, “With Cash and Cachet, The Islamic State Expands Its Empire,” *NPR*, November 18, 2014, accessed March 8, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/parallels/2014/11/18/364942091/with-cash-and-cachet-the-islamic-state-expands-its-empire>.

The leader and now self-proclaimed Caliph is the former leader of ISI, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who has been in command of the group since al-Masri's death on April 18, 2010 near Tikrit. Directly under al-Baghdadi were two deputies. The first was Abu Ali al-Anbari, who was the deputy in Syria and controlled twelve governors in Syria. The second was Abu Mulin al-Turmani, who was the Deputy in Iraq and controlled twelve governors. Along with this rather rudimentary 'executive branch' (Illustrations, Figure 3), there was the Shura Council, which was the Caliphate's religious authority and 'monitor'. Its purpose was "to make sure that all local councils and governors are sticking to ISIS' interpretation of Islamic Law."⁷⁴ In matters more worldly, ISIS' 'government' also had various other advisory and ministerial positions. Similar to other governments, there was a cabinet with the usual positions, such as Military Council, Legal Council, Finance and Media. It seems there was some disagreement over who held what office, but several sources agreed that they were an important part of the governing structure, according to the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC) and Richard Barrett's paper "The Islamic State."⁷⁵ This structure that the leadership of ISIS is creating clearly showed its attempt to create a bona fide governing apparatus to control the territory it then held holds. It also had planned systems to govern future acquisitions.

According to Megan A. Stewart's dissertation research (PhD candidate in government at Georgetown University), ISIS "as recently as August [2014], [has] provided education, paid municipal salaries, built roads, opened hospitals, maintained

⁷⁴ Nick Thompson and Atika Shubert, "Anatomy of ISIS: How the 'Islamic State' is run, from oil to beheadings," *CNN, London*," January 14, 2015, accessed March 8, 2015, http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/18/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq-hierarchy/index.html?hpt=hp_t1

⁷⁵ Nick Thompson and Atika Shubert, "Anatomy of ISIS; Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," *The Soufan Group* (New York)," November 2014, accessed March 8, 2015, <http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/TSG-The-Islamic-State-Nov14.pdf>.

electric, trash and sewage services, and even began issuing parking tickets.”⁷⁶ ⁷⁷ In a Reuter’s article of September 2014, through a series of interviews with former residents and activists, it was reported that ISIS had “embedded itself so thoroughly into the fabric of life in places like Raqqa... [and] Syria's eastern province of Raqqa provides the best illustration of their methods. Members hold up the province as an example of life under the Islamic ‘caliphate’ they hope will one day stretch from China to Europe.”⁷⁸ However, there are a number of reports to the contrary from individuals who have fled Raqqa, reporting very different events, including food lines reminiscent of a refugee camp and harsh punishments for educators in the city.⁷⁹ Though the article on the treatment of educators does suggest that ISIS is attempting to establish an educational system, it does not, however, speak to the content of the curriculum that is being taught in this environment.

With this governance structure in place, ISIS had a number of terrorist groups that pledged allegiance to ISIS. In Libya, the Shura Council of Islamic Youth had allied itself with ISIS and controlled territory in the name of ISIS in Derna and Sabha, as mentioned

⁷⁶ Megan A. Stewart, “What’s so new about the Islamic State’s governance?” *Washington Post*, October 7, 2014, accessed April 11, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/10/07/whats-so-new-about-the-islamic-states-governance/>.

⁷⁷ Stewart’s article does not provide statistics specific to ISIS—is Middle East just bundled together with “Asia. However, she does make the statement that ISIS is installing these governmental processes.

⁷⁸ Mariam Karouny, “In northeast Syria, Islamic State builds a government,” *Reuters*, September 4, 2014, Accessed April 16, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/04/us-syria-crisis-raqqa-insight-idUSKBN0GZ0D120140904?irpc=932>.

⁷⁹ Morgan Winsor, “ISIS Threatens Teachers In Raqqa: College Graduates, Educators In Syrian City Forced to Repent, Teach In Islamic State Schools,” *International Business Times*, April 3, 2015, accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/isis-threatens-teachers-raqqa-college-graduates-educators-syrian-city-forced-repent-1869204>; Simon Tomlinson, “The caliphate’s food queues: Hundreds queue for hours as they wait for food in ISIS capital,” *Daily Mail* (UK), April 7, 2015, accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3028921/The-photographs-ISIS-WON-T-posting-propaganda-Hundreds-queue-hours-wait-food-caliphate-s-capital.html>.

earlier.⁸⁰ ISIS also had support from the group *Ansar Bait al-Maqdis* in the Sinai, who announced its allegiance in late 2014.⁸¹ There were at least twelve groups, as of November 2014, including those in Dagestan, Pakistan, and the Philippines, that had allied themselves with ISIS.⁸²

With influence now over significant territory, “political” governance and allegiances can furnish a large number of fighters and offer access to conventional weapons, which would make ISIS a credible military force. There were reports of ISIS commanding between 15,000 and 20,000 fighters.⁸³ With this large number of fighters, which continued to grow every day, ISIS had large amounts of weaponry that it commandeered from the Iraqi Army which were given to the Iraqi army by the United States military through various agreements between the two countries. These items include armor, small arms, surface- to- air missiles and aircraft.⁸⁴ This also included the

⁸⁰ Jethro Mullen, “Egyptian warplanes bomb Isis”; Haaretz, “Middle East updates.”

⁸¹ Haaretz, “Middle East updates.”

⁸² Katie Zavadski, “ISIS Now Has a Network of Military Affiliates in 11 Countries Around the World,” *NY Mag.com, Daily Intelligencer*, November 23, 2014, accessed March 8, 2015, <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2014/11/isis-now-has-military-allies-in-11-countries.html>.

⁸³ Robert Windrem, “ISIS By the Numbers: Foreign Fighter Total Keeps Growing,” *NBC News*, N.D, accessed March 8, 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/isis-numbers-foreign-fighter-total-keeps-growing-n314731>; Revathi Siva Kumar, “UN Report On 15,000 Foreigners Joining ISIS Fighters in Syria and Iraq Will Shock You,” *International Business Times* (Australian Edition), November 3, 2014, accessed March 8, 2015, <http://au.ibtimes.com/un-report-15000-foreigners-joining-isis-fighters-syria-iraq-will-shock-you-1384796#.VKen3PldXC>.

⁸⁴ John Ismay, “At War: Notes from the Front Lines-Insight Into How Insurgents Fought in Iraq,” *New York Times*, October 17, 2013, accessed March 8, 2015, http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/10/17/insight-into-how-insurgents-fought-in-iraq/?_r=0; Charles Lister, “Not Just Iraq: The Islamic State Is Also on the March In Syria,” *The World Post*, October 7, 2014, accessed March 8, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/charles-lister/not-just-iraq-the-islamic_b_5658048.html?utm_hp_ref=tw.

acquisition of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and equipment and doctrine for suicide bombings.⁸⁵

With a military force of this size, one might ask how ISIS managed to pay for and maintain the force through 2014. It was reported that ISIS managed an income of some US \$2 billion. One major source of that income was the selling of between 50,000 and 60,000 barrels of oil a day from Iraq and Syria, as well as the electricity from power plants in northern Syria.⁸⁶ Those figures represented a respectable cash income but they also represented vulnerability—air raids could destroy the oil wells as well as the electrical grid and its generators.⁸⁷ It is unclear if any of this money was reaching the citizenry of the territory that ISIS controlled, with the inclusion of the sources noted earlier regarding life in ISIS controlled territory one could infer that very little is reaching these people.

This ever evolving and sophisticated group had made itself into a world presence that could not be ignored by the international community. Similarly, it would be naïve to consider it merely a terrorist group. It certainly appeared to be a credible and permanent

⁸⁵ Alan Cowell, “‘Low-Grade’ Nuclear Material is Seized by Rebels in Iraq, UN Says,” *New York Times*, July 10, 2014, accessed March 8, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/11/world/middleeast/iraq.html?_r=0.

⁸⁶ Martin Chulov, “How an arrest in Iraq revealed Isis’s \$2bn jihadist network,” *The Guardian* (UK), June 15, 2014, accessed March 6, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/15/iraq-isis-arrest-jihadists-wealth-power>; Scott Bronstein and Drew Griffen, “Self-funded and deep-rooted: How ISIS makes its millions,” *CNN London*, October 7, 2014, accessed March 8, 2015, http://edition.cnn.com/2014/10/06/world/meast/isis-funding/index.html?hpt=hp_t1; Max Fisher, “How ISIS is exploiting the economics in Syria’s civil war,” *Vox*, June 12, 2014, accessed March 8, 2015, <http://www.vox.com/2014/6/12/5802824/how-isis-is-exploiting-the-economics-of-syrias-civil-war>; Jeff Reed, “ISIS Gets \$800Mn Per Year Selling Oil On Black Market, HIS Reports,” *OilPro*, accessed April 4, 2015, <http://oilpro.com/post/7935/isis-gets-800mn-per-year-selling-oil-black-market-ihs-reports>.

⁸⁷ By contrast, the cocaine financing of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia and Sendero Luminoso is all but impossible to destroy by military means. Coca plants and farms exist everywhere and for each coca-processing lab that is found and destroyed others are set up to replace them. It is much more difficult to “replace” destroyed oil wells or to protect a dam’s generators.

threat, particularly if ISIS continued to expand on their resource pool and land acquisition.

Chapter Four

Religious Ideology

Despite claims made by Western media and even other Muslim groups, ISIS certainly had its roots in Islam. It had a number of important foundations and ideologies based on the religion of Islam. This chapter discusses different concepts of the religion, namely the foundations of Sunni Islam and then *Salafism*. *Shari'ah* will be discussed in a broad sense then we will work our way to *Fiqh* and, finally, *Takfir*. This knowledge is necessary for understanding ISIS' ideologies that helped answer a number of the questions included in the Territorial Imperative. It also reveals a direct link to its methods and the end goals that the group has set.

Sunni Islam is the largest branch of Islam with 940 million followers as of May 2015, encompassing 80% of the world's Muslims.⁸⁸ Sunnis refer to themselves as *Ahl al-Sunna wa l-Jam'ah* or "the People of the Prophet's Tradition and the Majority [Jama'ah]". In this case, the prophet is Muhammad and *Ummah* is meant as community or nation based on common religion rather than ethnic origins.⁸⁹ Sunni Islam, as the name suggests, claims to have followed the direct wishes for succession upon Muhammad's death, which was to elect the new Caliph or *mawla* through a council or *Shura*. After being elected to the position, Abu Bakr became the first Caliph. This is in opposition to Shi'ite belief that Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, was selected by Muhammad to become the first Caliph. The "Sunni World" encompasses most of North Africa and

⁸⁸ Nancy Khalek, "Sunni Islam," *Religion Library: Patheos Library*, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.patheos.com/Library/Sunni-Islam.html>; "What is Sunni Islam?" *Religion Facts: Just the facts on religion*, January 3, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.religionfacts.com/islam/sects/sunni.htm>.

⁸⁹ Khalek, "Sunni Islam."

the Middle East with the exception of Iran, which is nearly 100% Shi'ite, Iraq, and other countries such as Yemen in which members of a Shi'ite sect, the Zavis, are prevalent (Illustrations, Fig. 4 & Fig.5).

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant subscribes to a more narrow movement within Sunnism called *Salafism*, this term 'Salafa' means roughly the "predecessors" or "ancestors." In Salafist belief, they live the way of their ancestors because they are considered the "epitome" of Islamic practice. The Salafi believe they must follow the first three generations, which are the "Companions" (Muhammad's generation), the "Followers" (the generation after Muhammad) and the "Followers of the Followers." This call for Muslims to follow the three generations is found in the *Hadith* (record of the prophetic traditions or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) and more specifically as part of the *Kutub al-Sittah* (the six books of *Hadith*).⁹⁰ Professor Juan Cole, Professor of History at the University of Michigan, was quoted in a History News Network article, describing the radical differences between Sunni and Shiite.

Shiites are more like traditional Catholics in venerating members of the holy family and attending at their shrines. Contemporary Salafi Sunni Islam is more like the militant brand of [Puritan] Protestantism of the late 1500s that denounced intermediaries between God and the individual and actually attacked and destroyed shrines to saints and other holy figures, where pleas for intercession were made.⁹¹

With this basic knowledge of the origin of ISIS' beliefs, it is also important to discuss some of the other aspects of Islam that Muslims subscribe to, which are *Shari'ah* and *Fiqh*. In the Muslim world, *Shari'ah* is the religious law of their prophetic religion

⁹⁰ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* s.v. "Hadith," accessed April 5, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/251132/Hadith>.

⁹¹ HNN Staff, "What is the Difference between Sunni and Shiite Muslims—and Why Does It Matter," *History News Network*, June 6, 2014, accessed April 5, 2015, <http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/934>.

and based on the Qur'an, the authentic oral traditions, and consensus of the first three generations.⁹² The *Fiqh* is the human understanding of *Shari'ah*, as prescribed by religious-legal scholars.⁹³ To illustrate the distinction, the Qur'an requires daily prayers but does not elaborate on their content or timing. Details of the formal structure, content and timing of prayers are derived from the various oral traditions. So, *Shari'ah* prescribes five daily prayers, their content and their timing. However, *Fiqh* would address issues about prayer not mentioned in the Qur'an or *Hadith*, but issues that are pertinent in practicing Islam in the modern world. For example, ordinarily prayer would require facing Mecca, reciting Qur'anic verses, and making certain standing positions and prostrations on the ground in a prescribed ritual. However, a Muslim flying in a modern passenger jet will be required to stay seated with belt buckled and likely would be prohibited from trying to stand in the aisle facing Mecca and going through the prescribed motions and recitations of Qur'anic verses. The question is should the Muslim postpone saying the prescribed prayers until after he or she has landed and has found a private space in which to perform their prayers? Or, should the Muslim say the prayers while belted in the seat and make nodding motions when ordinarily he or she should prostrate himself or herself. The *Faqih*, (plural *Fuqaha*), expert in Islamic jurisprudence, has ruled that it is more important to perform the prayers at the ordained times rather than to postpone them. So the pious Muslim may perform the ritual prayers sitting in an airline

⁹² Ritter, R.M., ed., (2005). *New Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors– The Essential A-Z Guide to the Written Word*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 349.

⁹³ Vogel, Frank E., *Islamic Law and the Legal System of Saudi: Studies of Saudi Arabia*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2000) 4–5, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://books.google.com/books?id=-PfDuvnHMGoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=vogel+islamic+law&hl=en&sa=X&ei=JBGKU5GDKYfL8AGQnoG4AQ&ved=0CEMQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=vogel%20islamic%20law&f=false>

seat belted and substitute nodding or bowing forward in place of actual full prostration. *Fiqh* jurists publish these extrapolations of *Shari'ah* in special books for the faithful.

When discussing these two concepts of Islam, it is obvious that ISIS took a very literal and uncompromising view in its interpretation of *Shari'ah*. This is evidenced by its actions toward non-believers, both individuals and groups, whom it considered infidels (*kafir*, pl. *kuffar*). The process of declaring someone who is Muslim a *kafir* is excommunication (*takfir*).⁹⁴ ISIS had intensified Zaraqawi's sectarian opposition to other Muslims, i.e. those who did not hold his standard of Islam and are therefore who were *kafir*. Examples of this continued sectarian warfare was the declaration of ISIS that Hamas is "an apostate" movement and has no legitimate right to wage jihad, nor to undertake any innovation to religion. This offers a decided dilemma for ISIS because Hamas is one of the more skillful users of social media and digital technologies. ISIS even vowed to fight Hamas as the first step to an inevitable conflict with Israel.^{95 96}

The more immediate and important issue is ISIS's treatment of Shi'ite Muslims whom they consider *kuffar*. But what is more troubling is their treatment of *dhimmis*, i.e. "protected persons." While outright polytheists may be converted by force to Islam under *Shari'ah*, Christians and Jews were to be "protected" from forcible conversion by their

⁹⁴ Pierre Tristam, "Takfir," *About News*, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://middleeast.about.com/od/glossary/g/me081213.htm>.

⁹⁵ Ali Mamouri, "Why Islamic State has no sympathy for Hamas," *Al Monitor: the Pulse of the Middle East*, July 29, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/07/islamic-state-fighting-hamas-priority-before-israel.html#>; David Kirpatrick, "ISIS Harsh Brand of Islam is Rooted in Austere Saudi Creed," *New York Times*, September 24, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/25/world/middleeast/isis-abu-bakr-baghdadi-caliph-wahhabi.html?_r=2.

⁹⁶ Tim Fernholz, "Don't believe the people telling you to freak out over this 'ISIL' map," *Quartz*, July 1, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://qz.com/228833/dont-believe-the-people-telling-you-to-freak-out-over-this-isil-map/>.

yearly payment of a *jizya* tax. They are allowed to practice their religions because each religion was originally instituted by a Prophet of Allah, Moses (Musa) in the case of the Jews and 'Isa (Jesus) in the case of the Christians. The *jizya* or “protection money” is rationalized that although Jews and Christians cannot serve in the armies of Islam they are benefitting from the peace and order that Islam provides within its protected realm. Paying a tax to help support the defense of the Islamic State is thus considered just.

A more cynical view of *jizya* is that it is a financial inducement to abandon Judaism or Christianity in favor of converting to Islam. In truth, poor Jews and Christians would have to undergo conversion unless their communities came up with the money to pay their *jizya*. The attrition of poor Jews and Christians has led to a strange result: In most “Core” Middle East Muslim nations the few Jewish and Christian communities that survived to the twentieth century were often more wealthy than members of the Islamic communities among whom they lived. Yet, ISIS began attacking the protected communities of Christians (there are few Jews left in Iraq since the creation of Israel in 1948) and, although ISIS issued an ultimatum to non-Muslims in Mosul and areas of Syria in 2014, there has been little evidence that ISIS is trying to adhere to the tenets regarding *jizya*.⁹⁷

Another major characteristic of ISIS is its belief in eschatology. Muslims believe that the *Mahdi* (the “guided one” or “redeemer”) will come to earth when Islam seems on the brink of destruction and by leading a jihad against the oppressing nonbelievers

⁹⁷ Kelly Phillips Erb, “Islamic State Warns Christians: Convert, Pay Tax, Leave Or Die,” *Forbes*, July 19, 2014, accessed April 16, 2015, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kellyphillips/2014/07/19/islamic-state-warns-christians-convert-pay-tax-leave-or-die/>; Samuel Smith, “ISIS Orders Assyrian Christian Hostages to Convert to Islam, but All Boldly Refuse to Deny Jesus Christ,” *Christian Post*, March 11, 2015, accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/isis-orders-assyrian-christian-hostages-to-convert-to-islam-but-all-boldly-refuse-to-deny-jesus-christ-135449/>.

“redeem” Islam through a period of seven, nine or nineteen years, depending of the interpretation of the *Hadith*. This would be followed by the Day of Judgment.⁹⁸ The particulars of just what is necessary to prepare for the arrival of the *Mahdi* vary among the many jihadist groups. The Islamic State’s propaganda says ISIS will fulfill the prophecy of the *Mahdi* by defeating the “army of Rome” (Rome is interpreted to mean the West in general and the United States in particular) in northern Syria and that Islam’s final showdown with “an anti-Messiah will occur in Jerusalem after a period of renewed Islamic conquest.”⁹⁹

Because of ISIS’ drive to bring about the end times, it has resorted to extreme acts of violence that led even jihadist theorists to criticize ISIS as “deviant,” saying that their Caliphate is “null and void.” This includes a broad range of Islamic clerics, including especially, al-Qaeda clerics.¹⁰⁰ The dissent heard from the religious leadership of Islam is encountered regularly in Sunni criticism, and by jihadist muftis such as Abu Basir al-Tartusi, and Hussam al-Atrush. Al-Atrush said, “Their so-called caliphate has done nothing but incite hatred and disgust for the mujahedeen.” Further, al-Tartusi called ISIS

⁹⁸ Richard C. Martin and Said Amir Arjomand, eds., “Mahdi,” *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003) 421, accessed March 26, 2015, http://archive.org/stream/EncyclopediaOfIslamAndTheMuslimWorld_201211/Encyclopedia%20of%20Islam%20and%20the%20Muslim%20World_djvu.txt; *Encyclopaedia Britannica* s.v., “Mahdi,” accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/358096/mahdi>.

⁹⁹ Graeme Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants,” *Atlantic*, March 2015, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2015/02/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>.

¹⁰⁰ Alistair Crooke, “You Can’t Understand ISIS If You Don’t Know the History of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia,” *The WorldPost*, October 27, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alastair-crooke/isis-wahhabism-saudi-arabia_b_5717157.html; David Kirkpatrick, “ISIS’ Harsh Brand of Islam.”

“Kharijites, a violent sect distinct from Shi’a and Sunni Muslims.”¹⁰¹ The Kharijites originated in 657 C.E. as a splinter group denouncing all other Muslims, both Sunni and Shi’ite, as “apostates” and made regular raids against other Muslims from their hideouts in Oman as late as the 19th century.

Clearly the religious “foundations” or beliefs of ISIS are firmly held by the leadership. However, their extremism has driven a wedge into the Islamic community clearly dividing even the extremist groups. With this being said they had a powerful message and were very successful at making that message appeal to many to draw in new members. This also clarifies much of the motivations for the way ISIS acted in terms of its policies and tactics towards the world as a whole and for the future.

¹⁰¹ “Jihadist ideology: The slow backlash-Sunni religious authorities turn against Islamic State,” *The Economist*, September 6, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21615634-sunni-religious-authorities-turn-against-islamic-state-slow-backlash>; Joanna Paraszczuk, “Syria: Umar Shishani’s Second-in-Command in ISIS Slams Scholars Who ‘Sow Discord’ & Don’t Fight,” *EA WorldView*, February 7, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://eaworldview.com/2014/02/syria-umar-shishanis-second-command-isis-slams-scholars-sow-discord-dont-fight/>.

Chapter Five

Fulfilling the Territorial Imperative

Having worked through the foundations, physical and ideological motivations of ISIS, anyone now can see if this group was fulfilling the Territorial Imperative.

Discussed earlier, nine essential criteria must be answered to fulfill the Territorial Imperative:

1. What is the ideological motivation of the group?
2. Does the group use terrorism?
3. Currently, is the group cohesive or is there a possibility that the group will split?
4. Has the group become an insurgency?
5. Does the group have monetary means?
6. Does the group hold and control a section of land?
7. Does the group have over 10,000 fighters?
8. Does the group have an established government in its held territory?
9. Does the group have sponsorship or allies?

By working through these questions and answering them, we can see to what level this group has reached. In order to see the results, we must start with criterion number 1—what is the ideological motivation of the group?

In the case of ISIS, it is founded upon an interpretation of Sunnism and more specifically *Salafism*. Holders of this belief have embraced a very literal interpretation of *Shari'ah* to create their version of *Fiqh*. Those beliefs have encouraged the beheading of infidels, along with other archaic and draconian punishments. Further, ISIS has a strong belief in eschatology in which the *Mahdi*, or redeemer, will return to rule for a stated

period. This apocalyptic belief is one of ISIS' main tenets. It has gone so far as to say the start of the end time will begin with the defeat of "Rome" in northern Syria.¹⁰² With this being stated, it is reasonable to say ISIS has both a religious foundation which became, in a sense, like the original national movements against Imperialism. For example, Islamic purists have denounced even Arab or Palestinian nationalism and believe in a Pan-Islamic State embracing many nations. ISIS rejects HAMAS as "un-Islamic" because its emphasis on the "liberation" of Palestine at the expense of an emphasis on worldwide jihad is seen as evidence of "nationalism," which Salafists believe to be a heresy derived from contact with Western culture. The Rand Report states the "religious groups have long durations because of staying power of sacred or spiritual based motivations."¹⁰³ According to Eric Hoffer, one reason Jesus was not accepted by all of the Jews was that he failed to win over the traditional religious leaders of Judaism—the Rabbis and Temple priesthood. Only if a leader can win over the intellectual/religious leadership of a people will the common people then accept his leadership.¹⁰⁴ The religious establishments of Sunnism in Al Azhar University in Cairo and other bodies of Sunni ulema have denounced most groups like the *Gamma al Islamiyah* and *Jihad* groups in Egypt. Unless al Baghdadi can win over the Sheikhs of Al Azhar and the Islamic University of Medina, he will not be able to win over the mass of Muslims. ISIS' appeal seems to be based largely among Sunni Arabs in Iraq disaffected by a Shi'ite government that has marginalized Sunnis in Iraq. The basis in religion also means that the ideas are usually

¹⁰² Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants."

¹⁰³ Jones and Libicki, "How Terrorist Groups End," 16.

¹⁰⁴ Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951).

more widely held by the member base and appeals to a large base outside of the immediate area. Further, the religious movement is strengthened by the control of territories that helps to create an ideological center. However, their religious legitimacy has been viewed skeptically by most Muslims and Arabs.

This strong sense of ideological drive is, in many ways, the backbone of this group and many like it. It shows whether the group in question has a strong and supported ideal in that it wants to succeed in bringing others to its cause. In the case of ISIS, it is very clear that the movement has sent a strong religious and ideological message to all of its members and to the many thousands who were flocking to ISIS. It can be argued that there were many who were just attracted to ISIS for the sheer thrill of battle, or were drawn to the violence of the group's ideologies. However, most members were recruited due to their beliefs.

Along with this strong ideology, ISIS was adept at spreading its particular version of Islam, which might make ISIS increasingly long-lived due to its ever-present "truth" about religion. The leaders were able to speak persuasively to the faithful and to young people who are always looking for a cause. In this respect, ISIS has fulfilled the first requirement by being religiously based; possessing a coherent ideology adhered to by all members.

Criterion one is important because it shows the ideology of the group and helps to explain the tactics that it implements. It is an overarching factor in how the other questions are posed by the Territorial Imperative and in what manner they are answered. Further, it helps in establishing what groups the movement can draw from.

The second criterion—does the group use terrorism?—can be answered in regards to ISIS’ as “Yes.” Numerous examples demonstrate a myriad of various terrorist tactics used by ISIS, including beheadings, burning people alive, bombing civilian and military installations and terrorizing whole populations by threatening both ethnically and culturally genocide.¹⁰⁵ Beheadings and burnings were used for centuries, around the world, as punishments for crimes. Allowed in *Shari’ah* law, Saudi Arabia still uses this method of capital punishment today. What made ISIS’ use of these tactics terroristic in nature was the arbitrary manner in which it carried them out, separate from *Shari’ah* law that it claimed to subscribe to.

ISIS based these punishments upon *Shari’ah* law, much like other Muslim countries. However, it did not receive the decision from a religious court. These beheadings were “instant” convictions by a masked spokesperson on the videos. The horror was compounded by the manner in which the executions were broadcast for the world to see. Moreover, there would be a list of demands or a threat involved that the executions would continue if country “X” does not fulfill demand “Y.” In the case of the Jordanian pilot, ISIS captured him, demanded that prisoners be released in Jordan, and when Jordan refused to release the prisoners, they immediately burned the pilot. This

¹⁰⁵Franklin Lamb, “SYRIA: ‘Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently’,” *Intifada: Voice of Palestine*, May 8, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.intifada-palestine.com/2014/05/syria-raqqa-slaughtered-silently/>; “A Short History of ISIS Propaganda Videos,” *The WorldPost*, March 11, 2015, accessed March 26, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/11/isis-propaganda-videos_n_6846688.html; Zahra Radwan and Zoe Blumenfeld, “OP-ED: Surging Violence Against Women in Iraq,” *Inter Press Service News Agency*, June 27, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/06/op-ed-surging-violence-against-women-in-iraq/>; RTT Staff Writer, “ISIL Militants Killed More Than 1000 Civilians In Recent Onslaught In Iraq: UN,” *RTT News*, June 25, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.rttnews.com/2340932/isil-militants-killed-more-than-1000-civilians-in-recent-onslaught-in-iraq-un.aspx>; Sylvia Westall and Mariam Karouny, “Video shows Islamic State execute scores of Syrian soldiers,” *Reuters*, August 28, 2014, (U.S. Edition), accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/28/us-syria-crisis-idUSKBN0GS10Q20140828>; Maria Abi-Habib, “Iraq’s Christian Minority Feels Militant Threat,” *Wall Street Journal: World*, June 26, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/iraqs-christian-minority-feels-militant-threat-1403826576>.

action is distinctly different from the functioning of a legitimate justice system, where there is a crime; the individual is accused of said crime; he/she goes before a judge or jury and, if found guilty, is punished. The punishment is based on laws that define it rather than an arbitrary decision that includes demands of other actors.

Terrorism was being used by ISIS to get its “message heard” around the world, but also it had a basic ideology of the group. It appeared to be systematically destroying anything that did not fit its very strict version of Islam, through any means necessary. This included arbitrary justice and other asymmetric warfare methods.

This leads us directly into criterion number 3, which is, “Will the group splinter?” This question could be answered by May 2015 with a resounding “No, not currently.” This conclusion has been reached because of the highly successful media presence of the group. It created its own television news outlet called *Al-Hayat (The Life)* and published its first issue of the magazine *Dabiq* during the summer of 2014. Moreover, ISIS also published digital magazines, as well as adeptly making effective use of social media to spread its message to prospective members and to invigorate its base. The use of these media outlets helped to disseminate the ideologies decided by the higher echelon of the group and passed to the lower levels of the group without much dilution of the message.¹⁰⁶ This was evident with the continuing declarations of *bay’a*. Despite the

¹⁰⁶ Sheera Frenkel, “Meet The ‘ISIS Fanboys’ Spreading The Message Of Iraq’s Most Feared Terror Group,” *BuzzFeed News*, June 16, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.buzzfeed.com/sheerafrenkel/meet-the-isis-fanboys-spreading-the-message-of-iraqs-most-fe#.vxML1oJ3xV.I>; Michael W. S. Ryan, “Hot Issue: Dabiq: What Islamic State’s New Magazine Tells Us about Strategic Direction, Recruitment Patterns and Guerrilla Doctrine,” *The Jamestown Foundation*, August 1, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=42702&cHash=0efbd71af77fb92c064b9403dc8ea838#.VRcRe-GrE_h](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=42702&cHash=0efbd71af77fb92c064b9403dc8ea838#.VRcRe-GrE_h); Bill Roggio, “US targets al Qaeda’s al Furqan media wing in Iraq,” *Long War Journal*, October 28, 2007, accessed March 26, 2015, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/10/us_targets_al_qaedas.php#; cont. next page.

criticism of ISIS, it was still pulling in new members all the time, including, in 2014, Boko Haram, or *Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād*, an Islamic Nigerian terrorist group, headed by Abubakar Shekau.¹⁰⁷ However, young, confused westerners who had recently converted to Islam and had only a superficial understanding of Islamic *Fiqh* were hardly representative of a movement that aspired to become attractive among the greater mass of Muslims worldwide,

At the time of this writing in May 2015, there is little possibility that the government or the leadership structure of ISIS will splinter. The powerful hold al-Baghdadi has on the group as Caliph and the leadership structure he has in place to govern the controlled territory of ISIS appeared to be quite stable. With the continuing gains made in terms of membership and a singular drive by the highest levels of the group, it is unlikely that a fragmentation of ISIS is possible anytime soon.

The fourth criterion is the first that falls solely within the physical realm. “Has the group become an insurgency?” The answer is “Yes.” Also, it affects one’s understanding of the type of power the group held. In ISIS’ case, it became an insurgent group in 2004, when its then leader Zarqawi swore *bay’a* to Osama bin Laden and created AQI.¹⁰⁸ The group then solidified even more when it became the Islamic State of

Roula Khalaf and Sam Jones, “Selling terror: how Isis details its brutality,” *Financial Time* (UK), June 17, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/69e70954-f639-11e3-a038-00144feabdc0.html?__ftcamp=crm/email/2014617/nbe/AsiaMorningHeadlines/product#axzz3VX7F;

¹⁰⁷ Patrick Cockburn, “War with Isis: Islamic militants have army of 200,000 claims senior Kurdish leader,” *The Independent* (UK), November 16, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/war-with-isis-islamic-militants-have-army-of-200000-claims-kurdish-leader-9863418.html>; Associate Press, “Boko Haram swears formal allegiance to ISIS,” *Fox News*, March 8, 2015, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/03/08/boko-haram-swears-formal-allegiance-to-isis/>.

¹⁰⁸ Zelin, “The War Between ISIS and al-Qaeda.”

Iraq.¹⁰⁹ It is clear that it weakened in 2010-13, but it came back even stronger by holding territory in both Iraq and Syria with far more than 1,000 fighters. This shows that the group had long since acquired the support and para-military potency to create an insurgency.¹¹⁰

The strength of ISIS grew even more obvious when you look at its monetary status by May 2015, which leads to criterion 5—does the group have stable monetary means? ISIS currently has a strong economic strategy. Even as far back as 2010, the group was self-funded and had \$2 billion in its “war chest.”¹¹¹ Also, there are reports of the group selling \$2.5 million of oil a day, controlling oil pipelines and refineries,¹¹² selling hydroelectricity back to the Syrian government, levying taxes and extorting the general population in the areas under its control. This sort of “governance can be equated to a kleptocracy which involves extorting taxes from the conquered people and not giving them social services, etc. in return is not a strategy “to win hearts and minds.” The original followers of Muhammad would divide their war booty even with the civilians

¹⁰⁹ Zelin, “War Between ISIS and al-Qaeda.”

¹¹⁰ Thomas E. Ricks, “Situation Called Dire in West Iraq,” *Washington Post*, September 11, 2006, accessed March 26, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/10/AR2006091001204.html?nav=rss_email/componentshttp://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/11/world/middleeast/us-actions-in-iraq-fueled-rise-of-a-rebel.html?_r=0; Ben Hubbard and Eric Schmitt, “Military Skill and Terrorist Technique Fuel Success of ISIS,” *New York Times*, August 27, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/28/world/middleeast/army-know-how-seen-as-factor-in-isis-successes.html?_r=0.

¹¹¹ Hannah Allam, “Records show how Iraqi extremists withstood U.S. anti-terror efforts,” *McClatchy DC*, June 23, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2014/06/23/231223/records-show-how-iraqi-extremists.html>; Martin Chulov, “How an arrest in Iraq revealed Isis’s \$2bn jihadist network,” *The Guardian* (UK), June 15, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/15/iraq-isis-arrest-jihadists-wealth-power>.

¹¹² Karen Leigh, “ISIS Makes Up to \$3 Million a Day Selling Oil, Say Analysts,” *ABC News*, August 2, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=24814359>; Scott Bronstein and Drew Griffin, “Self-funded and deep-rooted: How ISIS makes its millions,” *CNN, London*, October 7, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, http://edition.cnn.com/2014/10/06/world/meast/isis-funding/index.html?hpt=hp_t1.

who stayed behind. If ISIS was giving some sort of financial support to the people under its control, it would gain legitimacy. Further, it controlled the “bread basket” in the area of Raqqa, Syria, which allowed it to produce income from the crops grown in that region, bringing in revenue from cotton and wheat.¹¹³ This level of financial self-sufficiency made ISIS a powerful group that did not rely on the support of an established nation-state or other groups. ISIS has had a stable economy due to the fact that it remained self-funded. It attained large sums of income from various sources, as well as controlling certain raw materials. This allowed ISIS to rely on itself, not outside sources.

The answer to criterion 5 leads to criterion 6: Does the group hold and control a section of land? The answer, again, is “Yes.” ISIS controlled vast areas of Syria and Iraq with a large force, using fear and brutality. Fuad Hussein, the chief of staff of Iraqi-Kurdish President Massoud Barzani, estimated that “ISIS rules a third of Iraq and a third of Syria with a population of between 10 and 12 million living in an area of 250,000 square kilometers.”¹¹⁴ The control of these lands offered a sizable area for the ISIS loyalists to come together and further its ambitions. It inspired the members to defend the land they controlled because the land gave ISIS its monetary power to fund a large potential fighting force.

In the case of ISIS, 5 and 6 are very intimately connected due to the fact that ISIS’ funding is drawn directly from the land that it held due to its reliance on mineral

¹¹³ Scott Bronstein and Drew Griffin, “Self-funded and deep-rooted”; Max Fisher, “How ISIS is exploiting the economics of Syria’s civil war,” *Vox*, June 12, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.vox.com/2014/6/12/5802824/how-isis-is-exploiting-the-economics-of-syrias-civil-war>; Audrey Kurth Cronin, “ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group: Why Counterterrorism Won’t Stop the Latest Jihadist Threat,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, March/April 2015 accessed April 7, 2015, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/143043/audrey-kurth-cronin/isis-is-not-a-terrorist-group>.

¹¹⁴ Cockburn, “War with Isis.”

extraction and food production from parts of Syria. The belief that ISIS was firmly controlling the land was that it had the power to tax and, in many cases, extorts money from individuals in land controlled by ISIS in both Syria and Iraq. If given the chance, it could potentially use this territory as both fighter recruitment through indoctrination and a tax base to expand both military and civil matters within the controlled territory. This allowed not only for ISIS to have abilities offered to it from its territories, but also the potential for a much more powerful resource in the future.

Criterion 7 asks, “Does the group have over 10,000 fighters?” According to CIA estimates in September 2014, ISIS then had between 20,000 and 31,500 fighters. However, Mr. Fuad Hussein believed that there must be around 200,000 fighters because “in Kurdistan last month they were attacking in seven different places as well as in Ramadi...and Jalawla.... It is impossible to talk of 20,000 men or so.”¹¹⁵ Although Mr. Hussein’s estimate could be greatly exaggerated, ISIS’ force very clearly surpasses the 10,000 mark and is made even more potent due to the considerable arsenal of other weaponry that ISIS possesses. This level of force was compounded by the fact that the recruitment methods used by ISIS in 2013-2015 were very effective and could probably remain so for some time. This would allow for an impressive current fighting force along with the strategically important reserves that every military needs in times of war. Another added benefit was that it also could apply these reserves to other aspects of the newly formed Caliphate by ISIS.

¹¹⁵ Cockburn, “War with Isis.”; Revathi Siva Kumar, “UN Report on 15,000 Foreigners Joining ISIS Fighters In Syria And Iraq Will Shock You,” *International Business Times* (AU Edition), November 3, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://au.ibtimes.com/un-report-15000-foreigners-joining-isis-fighters-syria-iraq-will-shock-you-1384796#.VKen3PldXC>; Robert Windrem, “ISIS By the Numbers: Foreign Fighter Total Keeps Growing,” *NBC News*, February 28, 2015, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/isis-numbers-foreign-fighter-total-keeps-growing-n314731>.

Along with the massive amount of recruits, its stockpiles included armor, small arms, missile systems and some aircraft.¹¹⁶ Further, ISIS enhanced its reign of terror with car bombs, suicide missions and IEDs and, according to the UN, had stolen low-grade nuclear material from Mosul University.¹¹⁷ This combination of manpower and weapons systems made ISIS a formidable force.

The next criterion, number 8, asks, “Does the group have a government established in its controlled land?” The answer current answer to this criterion is in theory ISIS did have a government. ISIS was in the process of establishing a government as evidenced by its leadership structure. The executive branch, or *Al Imara*, consisted of al-Baghdadi as Caliph and a cabinet of advisors, who reside in their capital of Raqqa, Syria. Rounding out the executive branch were two deputy leaders who each control twelve governors inside Iraq and Syria. Furthermore, ISIS established legislative and financial branches.¹¹⁸ The affirmative answer to this question would help to strengthen the foundation of a number of the previous requirements.

However, it is one thing to have a government in theory and structure, but quite another to fulfill governmental obligations. In this regard, ISIS supposedly was doing

¹¹⁶ John Ismay, “Insight Into How Insurgents fought in Iraq,” *New York Times*, October 17, 2013, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/10/17/insight-into-how-insurgents-fought-in-iraq/>; Charles Lister, “Not Just Iraq: The Islamic State is Also on the March in Syria,” *The World*, August 7, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/charles-lister/not-just-iraq-the-islamic_b_5658048.html?utm_hp_ref=tw.

¹¹⁷ Alan Cowell, “‘Low-Grade’ Nuclear Material Is Seized by Rebels in Iraq, U.N. says,” *New York Times*, July 10, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/11/world/middleeast/iraq.html?_r=0; Ruth Sherlock, “Iraq jihadists seize ‘nuclear material’, say ambassador to UN,” *The Telegraph* (UK), July 10, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/10958388/Iraq-jihadists-seize-nuclear-material-says-ambassador-to-UN.html>.

¹¹⁸ Thompson and Shubert, “Anatomy of ISIS”; Ben Hubbard, “Life in a Jihadist Capital: Order With a Darker Side,” *New York Times*, July 23, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/24/world/middleeast/islamic-state-controls-raqqa-syria.html>;

rather well. According to one source, it created social services and other public services, directed construction projects, coordinated religious lectures, and even founded an educational system of sorts. In this regard, ISIS supposedly was doing rather well. In an article published on the “Channel NewsAsia” website, Omar al-Huweidi, a writer and ISIL expert from Raqqa, was quoted as saying, "In Raqa [sic], ISIL has offices for everything you can imagine: health, education, security, Islamic aid, tribal relations management, and even an embassy of the emirate of Aleppo."¹¹⁹ This was corroborated in a report published on the governance of ISIS in mid 2014. There were a number of sources that established that there were public service works being put into place by ISIS¹²⁰ Moreover, ISIS had set up a taxation system across all territories under its control.¹²¹ Their system experienced the same woes of most governments—from labor disputes to bureaucratic disgruntlement.¹²² This nonetheless shows an attempt, with a certain level of success, to control and govern the territories under ISIS’s control. With the semblance of

¹¹⁹ Agence Presse France, “Iraqis, Saudis call shots in Raqqa, ISIL’s Syrian ‘capital’,” *ChannelNewsAsia*, June 9, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/specialreports/mh370/news/iraqis-saudis-call-shots/1178866.html>.

¹²⁰ Charles C. Caris and Samuel Reynolds, “ISIS Governance in Syria,” *Institute for the Study of War: Middle East Security Report* 22, July 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ISIS_Governance.pdf.

¹²¹ Maggie Fick, “Special Report: Islamic State uses grain to tighten grip in Iraq,” *Reuters*, September 30, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/30/us-mideast-crisis-wheat-idUSKCN0HP12J20140930>; Charles C. Caris and Samuel Reynolds, “ISIS Governance in Syria,”; Hubbard, “Life in a Jihadist Capital”; Aaron Zelin, “The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Has a Consumer Protection Office,” *The Atlantic*, June 13, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/06/the-isis-guide-to-building-an-islamic-state/372769/>.

¹²² Simon Tomlinson, “‘ISIS made me clean the toilets...and my iPod didn’t work’: How disenchanted Islam fanatics are returning home because jihad isn’t as glamorous as they hoped,” *Daily Mail* (UK), December 1, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2855780/Indian-IS-recruit-goes-home-having-clean-toilets.html>; Heather Saul, “Isis now targeting women with guides on how to be the ‘ultimate wives of jihad’,” *The Independent* (UK), October 31, 2014, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-now-targeting-women-with-guides-on-how-to-be-the-ultimate-wives-of-jihad-9830562.html>.

success that ISIS was having in governance it cannot be overlooked that there are a number of reports to the contrary.

This formation of government leads to the final criterion Number 9, “Does the group have support or allies?” As we have seen, ISIS became self-reliant in just about every way. It did have support from certain other jihadist groups. However, it did not have allies or support from legitimate nation-states. Iran, being a militant Islamic society, did not support ISIS because Iran is Shi’ite and ISIS is Sunni and has brutally persecuted Shi’ites. The Saudis, and even radical Sunni mullahs, found ISIS too radical and “deviant.”

The widespread alienation from acceptance became ISIS’ true weakness. If much of the world is at odds with your beliefs, your chances of winning are diminished. However, the situation for ISIS could be different because it is grounded on a theological base which has brought it numerous individual supporters, many of whom have travelled to fight for ISIS.

This criterion, however, does not limit itself to established international states. As was pointed out earlier, many groups pledged loyalty to ISIS, which gave it a vast support base and conceivably help its military situation. These partners might not be offering a strong trade in goods or other traditional means of partnership. However, they held the potential to offer a level of unrest in those countries where the supporting groups live. This has led to a need for those afflicted countries to deal with the problem at home, before directing their attention to the actual territory of ISIS. This potential could be important for a group like ISIS. Unfortunately, the actuality of this might turn out to be very different.

With this support for other groups, two major sides presented themselves. First, pledges of loyalty established that ISIS had groups that wanted to show their support and it did offer more potential for membership and a widening base of power outreach to other areas not directly held by ISIS. The second dilemma is ISIS wants these groups to be “franchises” of ISIS. This is due to the fact that many of these groups have been very small and/or ineffective.

Due to this fact, it can be concluded that ISIS did not fulfill the ninth criterion either, because it had no known established state supporters while their non-state supporters are, in many cases, very ineffective and a detriment to the continuation of ISIS and its achievement of its goals.

As one now can see, ISIS answered most of the aspects of the Territorial Imperative. By looking at the particular questions and the ways in which they were answered, the answers show that ISIS became not just a terrorist group or an insurgency, but rather a powerful rebel group well on its way to establishing its legitimacy, both military and civil means. By 2014 it became very dangerous to believe that ISIS was still simply a terrorist group, or even an insurgency, because it had achieved many of the criteria that are included in the Territorial Imperative in such a way that suggested they had every resource needed to establish themselves as a stable and permanent international actor. However, they had not achieved this by mid-2015 due to their short falls in criteria 8 and 9.

Conclusion

Having established where ISIS fits into the Territorial Imperative framework and thus into the international community, one question in particular remains: “Will ISIS be successful in attaining its end goals?” and maybe more pressing for US policy-makers in 2015: “would it succeed in fulfilling the Territorial Imperative?” This is a much more difficult question to answer than it appears.

In my opinion, ISIS was still balancing means and ends as late as 2015 and was yet somewhere between success and failure. We have seen that it had a message that appeared to draw many to its banner. Along with a powerful message, ISIS made effective use of modern technologies, such as social media and video editing, to appeal to even more recruits by emphasizing its emotional content. It does seem unusual for such a group to be so adept at these modern means of communication and persuasion. This is due to the fact, that in the West, we tend to use modernity as both a means and an end. In this way, ISIS is quite like Khomeini’s Iranian followers and Hezbollah in Lebanon in that it would use modern, largely Western means, such as Twitter and Face book, to return Muslim society to fourteen centuries ago both in societal matters and quality of living standards. This is due to ISIS’ emphasis on not having any need for social advancement or innovation, which it derives from its interpretation of Islam.

Nonetheless, these odd but effective tactics implemented with electronic media have and will continue to help fill the ranks of ISIS. The continuing gains made in new recruits, ISIS’ ability to self-fund and the plethora of armaments at its disposal all contribute to ISIS’ ability to reach a legitimized status as at least a recognized belligerent

if not indeed the Islamic Caliphate reborn. The recruits will form a fighting force for ISIS, but they are only one aspect of creating a successful Caliphate.

There are a number of major challenges facing ISIS in the future. The first is ISIS' complete lack of openly acknowledged friends from among the international community. This lack of announced alliances includes established countries, as well as some jihadist groups, including al-Qaeda and Hamas. I mention them since Hamas and al-Qaeda are well-established groups within the jihadist "community" and carry significant sway. On the other hand, a number of leaders of other jihadist groups have pledged *bay'a* to al-Baghdadi. However, these jihadist groups tend to be small in membership and/or upstart groups. This is not to say that they may not pose a legitimate threat. This lack of friendly support seems to me to be one of ISIS' greatest weaknesses. However, as of May 2015, the group seemed able to counter this lack of support by indicating that its ideals and power were enough to serve its ends.

Although the lack of partners was problematic, the true downfall of ISIS might be its lack of manufacturing capacity as late as mid-2015. All of its supplies were acquired through pillaging and conquest. These were, however, the early days in ISIS' control of territory, so it might have time to create this manufacturing base. This problem has been compounded by its slow progress in implementing a governmental structure in controlled territory. It may well be that ISIS will find a way to produce the items it would need in order to attain the goals necessary in creating a Caliphate and becoming a legitimate entity in the world.

As I stated before, the phase by 2015 was a pivotal moment for ISIS, as a burgeoning legitimate international actor. Its downfall in all likelihood would occur if the

Western powers begin massive military ground campaigns and brought about the demise of ISIS by overwhelming force. Although a confrontation with “Rome” is part of ISIS’ master plan, ISIS may have a flawed interpretation of the likely outcome. Ironically, there is an historical parallel in the Jewish Zealots campaign against the Romans in 68-71 C.E. After capturing Jerusalem and most of the territories of Judea and Samaria, the Zealots also believed that by provoking the forces of Rome to combat, their display of faith and strength would cause God to send forth the promised Messiah who would lead the Jews to victory over their enemies. They succeeded in provoking Rome to send its legions against them but the outcome was the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple and the annihilation or enslavement of the entire Jewish population in the areas that had revolted against Rome.

In an effort to be concise, I believe it would take a full military commitment from various world actors, not just the Western powers, to stop and reverse the gains that ISIS has made. Even with this commitment, it would not be an easy endeavor to defeat ISIS, given its ideological basis in religion. Countering this group’s beliefs—regardless of the correctness of ISIS’ interpretations of the religious texts—would be an exceedingly difficult task.

It could be postulated that the success or failure of ISIS is not solely, or even predominately, in its own hands. But, rather, it is in the hands of the world community willing to commit the resources necessary to oppose and eventually defeat ISIS whether militarily or through deprogramming efforts similar to what the Saudi Arabians use to rehabilitate radicalized youths.¹²³ If the threat is not promptly and fully responded to by

¹²³ Jessica Stern, “Mind Over Martyr,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2010, accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65896/jessica-stern/mind-over-martyr>.

the international powers, ISIS, after 2015, will continue to expand, even given the victories and endeavors in 2014-2015 to defeat ISIS by the Kurdish Peshmerga and Jordanian bombing campaigns. The inaction of regional Muslim powers and indifference of the rest of the world community could lead to them eventually fulfilling the Territorial Imperative and establishing themselves as a legitimate power.

To conclude, as of May 2015, I do not believe that ISIS will be defeated quickly nor will it fully succeed in its overall goals of a one world Caliphate. It would take time, lives and resources to halt the spread of ISIS and its ideologies. However, as a first step to combating ISIS, one must understand what it truly is and not underestimate and categorize the group as one thing when there is evidence suggesting something else entirely different. Once the facts are found, it is important to have a framework to plug in the information about a group. This helps to identify the progression of a group and where it fits.

Once we understand what ISIS is, what resources it has and where the group comes from, then and only then, can we begin to appropriately react and implement a policy to defeat them or interact with them. This would open doors to further study of the group both on the changing factors of the group itself and the new issues that it brings through ideological spread, conquest or failure.

Illustrations

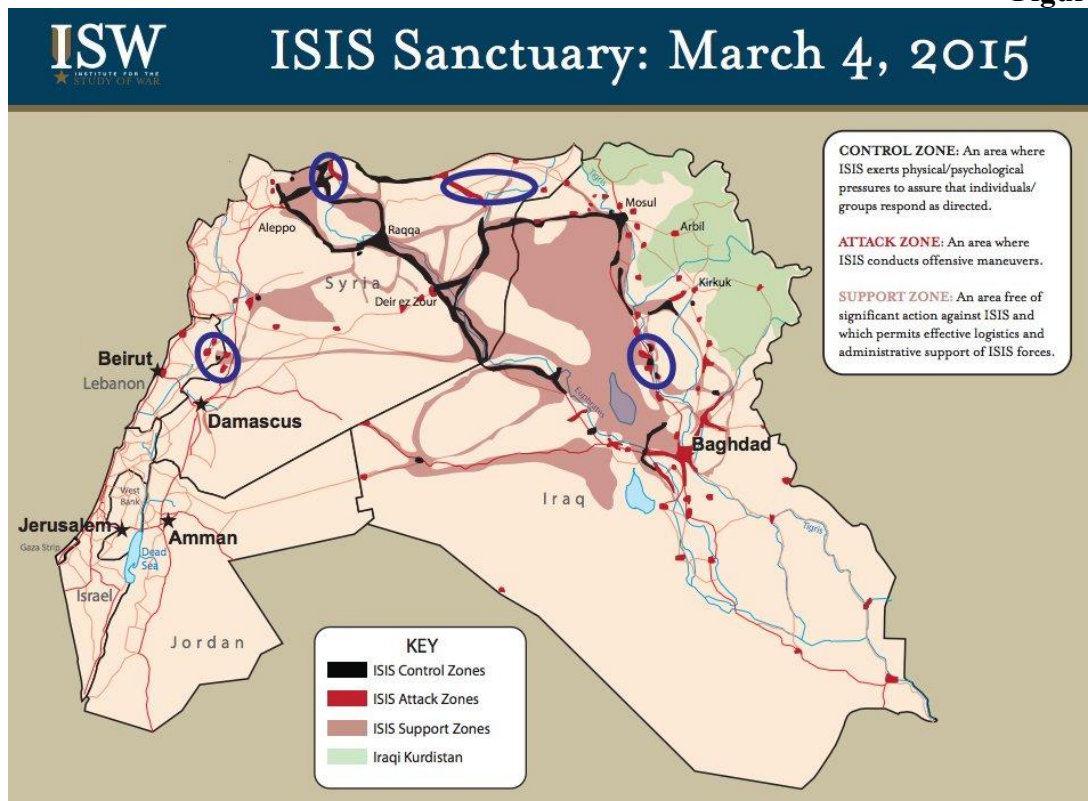
Figure 1

The Levant



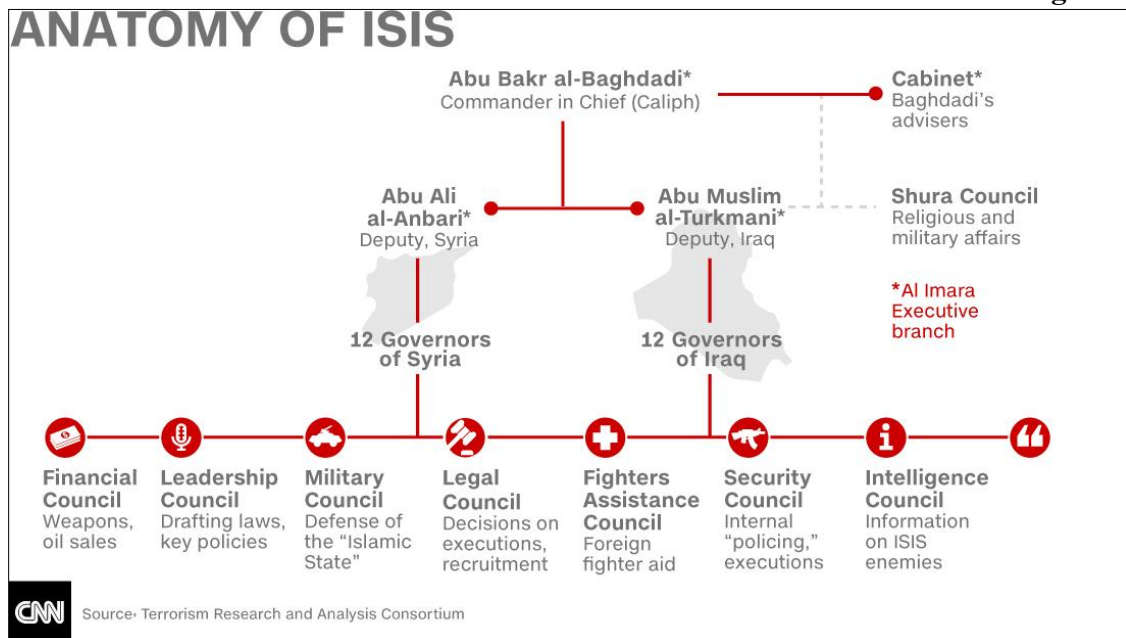
Source: <http://wikitravel.org/en/Levant>

Figure 2



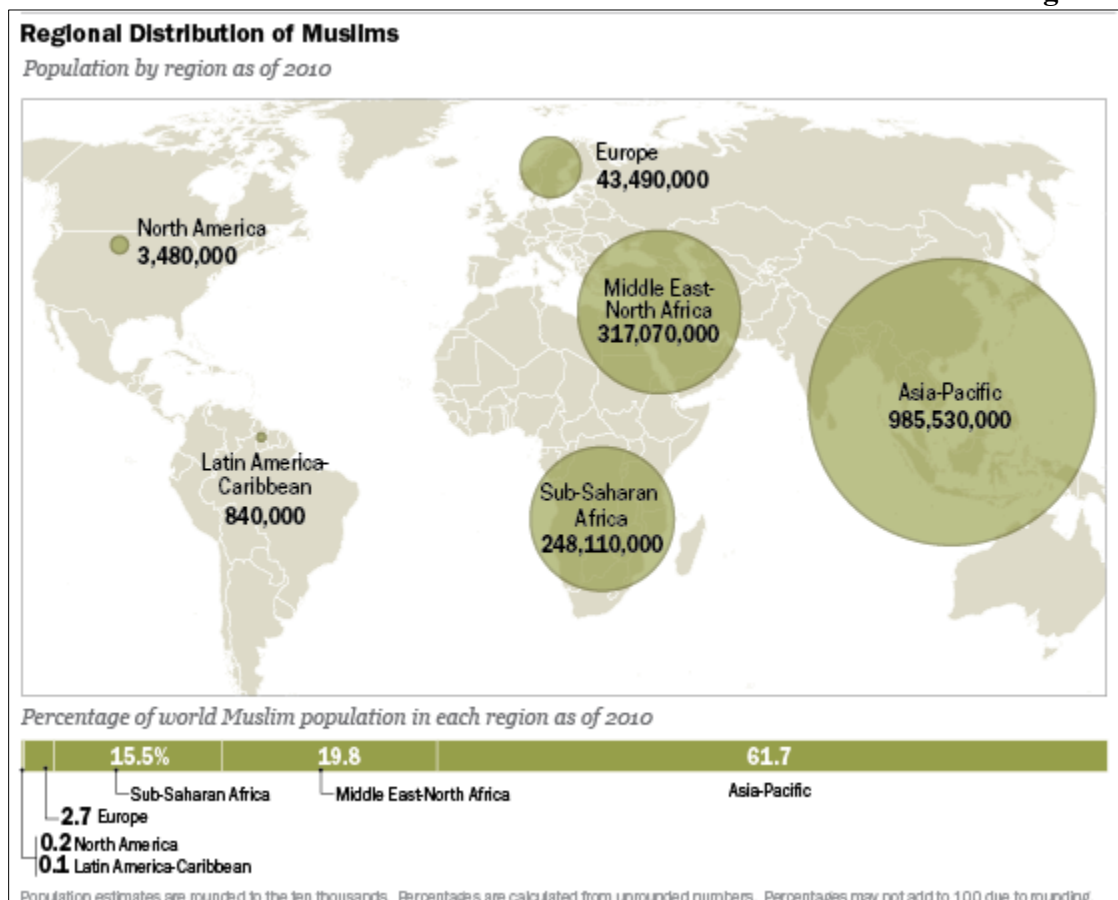
Source: Jessica Lewis McFate, Institute for the Study of War

Figure 3



Source: Nick Thompson and Atika Shubert January 14, 2015.

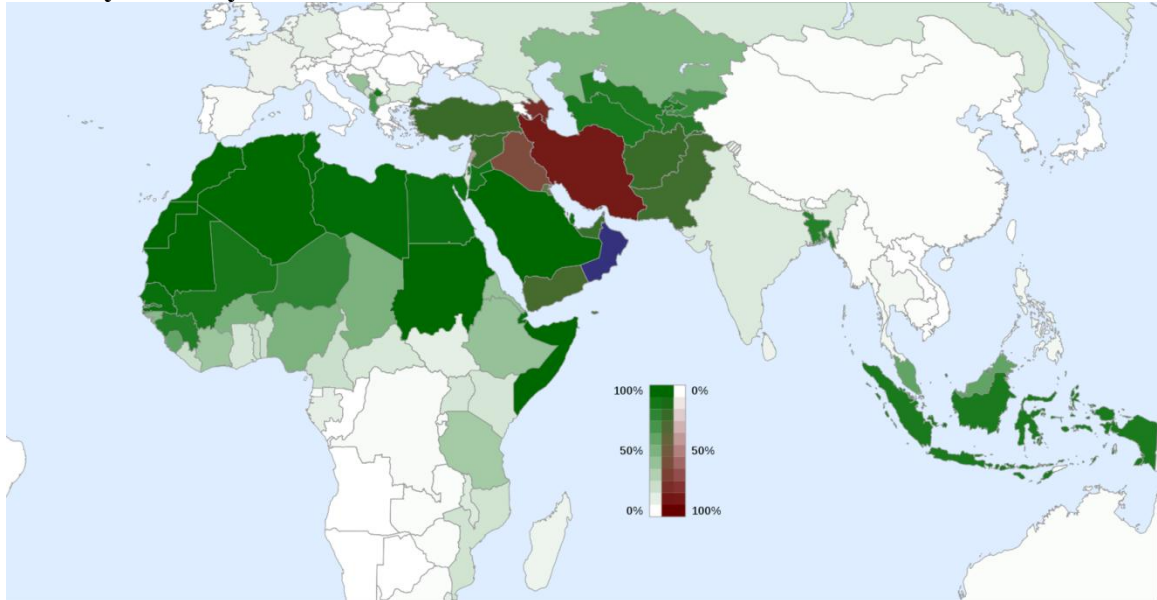
Figure 4



Source: Pew Research Centers Forum on Religion and Public Life
Global Religious Landscape, December 2012

Figure 5

Islam by Country



Countries with more than 5% Muslim population. Sunni █ Shia █ Ibadi █
Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Islam_by_country.png

Glossary

Al-Sham. Usually meant to describe greater Syria, Syria-Palestine.

Bay'a. Pledge of loyalty to a leader.

Caliph. Person acting in Muhammad's place after his death, i.e., the leader of Sunni Islam.

Caliphate. The political-religious state comprising the Muslim community and the lands and peoples under its dominion in the centuries following the death (632 C.E.) of the Prophet Muhammad.

Dhimmi. Persons living in a region overrun by Muslim conquest, who were accorded a protected status and allowed to retain their original faith, i.e., protected persons.

Fiqh. The human understanding of *Shari'ah*, as prescribed by religious-legal scholars.

Faqih. Expert in Islamic jurisprudence (pl. Fuqaha).

Hadith. Record of the prophetic traditions or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, considered a major source of religious law and moral guidance, second only to the authority of the Qur'an.

Jizya. Protection money

Kafir. Infidel (pl. kuffar)

Kutub al-Sittah. Six books of Hadith.

Levant. A land mass traditionally including Syria, parts of Western Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Palestine and Cyprus.

Mahdi. Guided one or redeemer.

Mawla. Caliph.

Salafism. Narrow movement within Sunnism, meaning roughly the “predecessors” or “ancestors.”

Shari'ah. Religious law of the Sunni's prophetic religion, based on the Qur'an, the authentic oral traditions, and consensus of the first three generations

Shura. Consultative council in Islamic tradition.

Takfir. The formal excommunication of a Muslim, or the declaration that a group which considers itself Muslim, is considered an apostate or heretical group.

Ummah. Community or nation.

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