

## **Assessing ISIS: Success or Failure of Islamist Insurgencies**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Assessing the current and long-term success of the Islamist insurgent group, the “Islamic State” (hereafter “ISIS”), requires not only identifying prerequisites for conducting insurgency but also assessing the group’s ability to attain the goals proclaimed by its ideology or program. Such success or failure can be determined by a systematic comparison with other Islamist insurgent groups which have either failed or succeeded in achieving their stated objectives. Examining the historical and theological backgrounds of movements, such as al Qaeda and Hezbollah, reveals that success requires having visible leadership openly controlling a territory and providing security and social services to its population. The importance of territorial control, a social-political infrastructure, and external legitimation is demonstrated by the relative success of groups enjoying Iranian support, such as Hezbollah, over Islamist groups following the non-state strategy of al Qaeda. ISIS has a visible leadership openly controlling a territory and providing at least minimal security and social services to its population but lacking belligerent status and having rejected alliances with like-minded Salafist groups sharing most of its goals. Another essential but often overlooked condition for success for militant Islamist movements is the endorsement of the traditional Muslim Ulema as guardians of the Islamic faith.*

**Keywords:** *Caliphate, endo-terrorism, Hezbollah, insurgency, ISIS, maktabi, Salafist, takfiri, xeno-terrorism.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The first section of the current paper examines the historical ground that gave rise to ISIS. Next follows a discussion of the need for territorial control not merely for tactical reasons but also as following a theological imperative to establish prayer and godly rule according to Islamic precepts. This necessitates a discussion of how the ideology and program of Islamic militant groups differ from those of nationalist-separatist groups or of leftist anti-globalist groups which in turn leads to discerning how these ideological imperatives limit or constrain the kinds of tactics groups may use in order to preserve the key value of their own legitimacy vis-à-vis the competing claims of legitimacy of those regimes or rival groups that they oppose. The paper concludes with an assessment of why certain Salafist groups have lost ground while Maktabi, or Shia led, groups have enjoyed greater success in establishing functioning workable Islamic polities that have gained international recognition and legitimacy. The prospects of ISIS are assessed in the light of the preceding discussions.

### **II. BACKGROUND OF THE TERRITORIAL IMPERATIVE**

Following the 9/11 attacks, most of the focus of the “war on global terrorism” was directed at al Qaeda and its mysterious and invisible leader, Usama ibn Ladin. The toppling of the regime of Saddam Hussein by the U.S. Bush administration in 2003 was criticized throughout the world as a parochial detour from the war of terrorism as it detracted from multilateral efforts to neutralize the al Qaeda threat and that weakened trust and cooperation between the United States and the more than ninety nations that initially had responded positively to the U.S. call for a joint common effort against international terrorism.<sup>1</sup> Ironically the U.S. intervention against the Iraqi regime, whose ties to al Qaeda were at best weak and tentative, led to the 2003-2006 Iraqi insurgency in which al Qaeda elements played a key role. After the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq the remnants of al Qaeda in Iraq created the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) which later pushed al Qaeda off of center stage as the most feared non-state insurgent threat. Al Qaeda and ISIS broke their ties in 2014 over issues of doctrine and tactics. Al Qaeda came to appear increasingly irrelevant to a younger generation of Salafists who have noted that a quarter-century of al Qaeda’s existence neither it nor its various franchises had succeeded in creating what they would accept as a legitimate Islamic state. ISIS, which became the latest permutation of a group that originated with Abu Musab al Zaraqawi (d. 2006), had a brief but contentious relationship with al Qaeda with which they broke relations just before declaring their quasi-state as the restored “Caliphate.” One key to a group’s legitimacy in the eyes of the Salafists is whether the group can conquer territory which they can control openly. While the goal of the Salafists is to create an Islamic state nonetheless any state needs to have territory and a population under its control to make its claims to statehood credible.

Until ibn Ladin’s death on May 2, 2011, al Qaeda had been the focus of Western fears about violent extremism in the name of Islam. The return of the Salafist insurgency in Iraq after the withdrawal of U.S. forces in December 2011 revealed that the group founded by Abu Masub al Zaraqawi in 2006, al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI),

that had been largely crushed by the U.S.-led troop surge in 2007, had made a come-back as a renewed and reinvigorated insurgency under the name of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). In the period 2011-2015 the focus of Western fears about violent extremism in the name of Islam have shifted from al Qaeda to ISIS with its broadcasting via the internet of its spectacular and gruesome killings of Iraqi soldiers, a Jordanian pilot, and of non-Muslims whether they were Iraqis, Syrians or foreigners. However, another Islamic insurgent movement exists, Hezbollah, that has achieved stunning military and political successes creating a *de facto* Islamic state within another state, Lebanon. Hezbollah has proven itself effective in terrorist and insurgent actions through its sophisticated network of cells throughout the world but more importantly it has won such legitimacy within Lebanon that many Western observers now reject the notion that it is merely a terrorist group. It has become the effective government within those areas of Lebanon under its control, encompassing the Beirut waterfront southward to the Israeli border and extending eastward into the Bekaa valley along the Syrian border. Given its territorial control, its extraterritorial reach and its strong backing by the Islamic Republic of Iran Hezbollah is potentially a much more dangerous threat than ISIS yet it has become increasingly overlooked as a violent extremist group.

### **III. CAN NETWAR MAKE THE TERRITORIAL IMPERATIVE IRRELEVANT?**

The criminologist and analyst of Islamic movements, Xavier Raufer, holds that western criminologists and security analysts have fundamentally misunderstood al Qaeda, envisioning it on the model of a Western style terrorist organization, or what he refers to as a “machine.” Instead he believes it better to envision it as a “life-form,” a nebula of like-minded and largely autonomous cells propagated by a single ideology without need for a hierarchical structure: “It is not enough to just collect and process facts about [Usama ibn Ladin’s] finances, tactics, communications and organizational skills. One has to try to understand this vision and worldview.”<sup>2</sup> An alternative analysis of al Qaeda that complements Raufer’s life-form analogy, is that it represents a form of *netwar*. Netwar is a form of low-intensity conflict involving actions short of conventional warfare consisting of small groups joined together in an informal network, using related doctrines, strategies and information age technology to communicate, coordinate, and campaign without relying on one central command.<sup>3</sup> During the 1990s with the decline of state sponsorship of insurgent groups the new non-state groups, such as Hamas and al Qaeda, appeared to be able to operate without state sponsorship and without control of a defined territory.<sup>4</sup>

However the idea of a netwar by Islamic groups failed to consider the role of territorial control and statehood as understood from the theological perspective of al Qaeda, that is, the “vision and worldview” stressed by Raufer, that motivates al Qaeda and other militant Islamic groups and frames their goals. The “international terrorist campaign” was never an end in itself but only the means to an end: the restoration of the pan-Islamic Caliphate, a goal that requires regaining control of the core territories of the Islamic world and acceptance of this rule by the population under the control of this state system.

### **IV. THE GOALS OF MILITANT ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS**

According to Rohan Gunaratna, al Qaeda has passed beyond being merely a revolutionary Islamist group content with attacking perceived enemies of Islam, or even an ideological Islamist group, which employs political violence as part of a more developed social and political strategy, to becoming a utopian or possibly even an apocalyptic group, seeking to destroy the current social order in favor of some millennial order.<sup>5</sup> Kimbra L. Fishel has analyzed the overall strategy of al Qaeda to be the waging of a ‘hegemonic’ war against the secular West led by the United States in order to displace the global hegemony of the West with a revived Islamic Caliphate by elevating the tools and techniques of regional insurgency to the global level.<sup>6</sup> These ultimate goals are both utopian and apocalyptic as defined by Gunaratna: the utopian goal is the re-establishment of a unitary Islamic state on the traditional Caliphate model, embracing all existing Muslim nations, while the apocalyptic goal is the destruction of the United States and its world system, seen as the antithesis of Islam and arch-enemy of the Muslims.

These goals were reaffirmed in interviews conducted in 2005 by Fouad Hussein, a Jordanian journalist, with Abu Musab al Zarqawi and other lieutenants of al Qaeda.<sup>7</sup> Their objectives require possession of territory under Islamist control both as a means to pursue jihad to ‘liberate’ Muslim lands and people under un-Islamic control and as a goal in itself: the liberated territory under legitimate Islamic rule becomes part of the “Dar as Salam,” or “Realm of Peace” of the caliphal state being restored. As such, territorial control for any Islamic insurgency is not simply a matter of tactical convenience but is indeed a religious or ideological imperative: the failure of al Qaeda and its allies, such as the Taliban, to acquire and hold territory in which they could impose their version of Islamic rule ultimately deprived those groups of legitimacy in the eyes of their constituent audiences. It should be noted that the goals of destroying Western hegemony and restoring a legitimate trans-national Islamic state are also shared by the Maktabi followers of the Ayatollah Khomeini. “Maktabi” is the Shia counterpart to the Sunni “Salafist,” and is one who adheres to the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad and

His Household faithfully in all aspects of life. In Iran the term “hezbollahi” came to mean being both a follower of the Ayatollah Khomeini and also one who observed all the traditions of the Prophet and his Household. However since the term “Hezbollah” is also a proper name for the Lebanese Shia military and political movement, “Maktabi” as an alternative term is both accurate and generic. The Maktabis differ from the Salafists in being willing to use the forms of traditional statehood, democratic processes and international diplomacy in addition to insurgency and terrorism to achieve a similar end: restoration of a transnational unitary Islamic state. The only salient difference is that the Shia Maktabis disdain using the name of a ‘Caliphate’ for their ideal state which, however, would be functionally the same as the Salafists’ goal of a restored Caliphate.

Although al Qaeda was viewed as a relatively new organization with unprecedented scope of operations and transnational capabilities it must also be understood according to its own sense of mission and origins. Al Qaeda is an offshoot of the Ikhwan al Muslimin (Muslim Brotherhood) since its founder, Abdullah Azzam, was the Palestinian-born leader of the Jordanian branch of the Ikhwan. Indeed, many of the older Salafist movements active world-wide are connected to the Muslim Brotherhood through the ties of their founders or other prominent members, who began their activist careers as apprentices or middle-tier members of the Ikhwan. Although the Ikhwan is known mainly as an Egyptian-based organization, most of whose members include Muslim scholars, laymen, and activists who are not directly involved in violence, in reality the organization has served to recruit and radicalize young Muslim men from all parts of the Islamic world who in turn have created several violent spin-off jihadist or Salafist groups which proceed to operate in cellular fashion, without visible ties to, or direction from, the main Ikhwan group. The ideology of these various groups has been shaped by the writings of Sayyid Qutb, one of the leading theorists of the Ikhwan who was executed in 1966 by the Egyptian government for his alleged role in a plot to assassinate President Gamal Abdul Nasser.<sup>8</sup> In fact Usama ibn Ladin is believed to have pursued Islamic studies in Jeddah under the guidance of Muhammad Qutb, the brother of Sayyid Qutb, prior to his joining the mujahidin in the Afghan war.<sup>9</sup>

The vision and world-view of Sayyid Qutb are laid out in his seminal work *Ma`alim fi al Tariq* (Milestones). Qutb advanced the argument that since the main object of jihad was enforcing the full enactment of the Shari’ah (the Sacred Law of Islam), rather than the defense of Muslim lands or conquest of non-Muslims as such, there was no reason for Muslims to abstain from initiating military force to advance Islam in the world. While the classical doctrine of jihad did not exclude the use of military aggression to spread Islamic rule, most modern Muslim jurists, including the late rector of al-Azhar, Sheikh Mahmud al Shaltut, had preferred an interpretation of jihad as being primarily a defensive form of warfare.<sup>10</sup> Qutb’s more pro-active and aggressive interpretation of jihad did not stop with marking foreign non-Muslims as lawful targets of jihad. His works also demonized Westernizing and secular nationalist Muslim political leaders and intellectuals as being agents of a revived jahiliyyah (pre-Islamic ‘period of ignorance’) who therefore were to be counted among those enemies of Islam who could be lawfully attacked at will by true believers. The Egyptian Jihad group incorporated Qutb’s thoughts into their doctrine and enacted them with the assassination of Anwar Sadat on October 6, 1981. Ayman al Zawahiri, who succeeded ibn Ladin as leader of the main al Qaeda group, was a prominent member of the same Jihad group and made his way to Afghanistan, along with Muhammad Atef, in 1985 where they joined al Qaeda, and later brokered an effective merger of the Jihad group with al Qaeda.<sup>11</sup>

Islamist militants hold in common certain beliefs with regard to the doctrines of jihad and the unitary Islamic state: First, the Shari’ah has comprehensive solutions for all economic, social, diplomatic, criminal, and civil problems. Second, this Islamic law is itself perfect, immutable, and organic, not to be abrogated in part or amended. These two beliefs are held by most pious Muslims, most of whom are not violent extremists.<sup>12</sup> However the additional third belief that the current Islamic world, with its mixture of traditional Muslim and contemporary Western laws and institutions, and the collapse of the historic Islamic empire and its division into several nation-states, represents a deviation from true Islam, is a belief that distinguishes Islamic extremists from the rest of the fold of pious Muslims. The fourth belief that distinguishes extremists who are more inclined to use violence from mere extremists is the belief that the religious duties of jihad, holy war, or of “enjoining the good and forbidding the evil,” permit and may even require violence to rid Muslim lands of un-Islamic laws, institutions, rulers, foreign powers, and agents when other means fail.<sup>13</sup> While Sunni Salafists and Shia Maktabis differ about the true form and historical identity of the unitary Islamic state established by the Prophet Muhammad in Medina in 622 c.e., they concur in believing that the restoration of the unitary Islamic state is commanded by Islamic law and that the true implementation of the complete code of Islamic laws is impossible without restoration of that state. However they differ in their strategies and choice of tactics and understanding of the organizational prerequisites to make their militant Islamist agenda successful.

Both Salafists and Maktabis agree that the Islamic restoration is to take place through the piece-meal overthrow or takeover of the various separate governments of the Muslim nation-states, regarded by Islamic militants as illegitimate, which nations then would be reunited into a unitary framework of government. Thus the creation of the Taliban state in Afghanistan, along with future possible victories of the Salafists in Algeria, Egypt, or Iraq, would constitute steps toward the restoration of the Caliphate. Salafists emphatically reject the

use of reformism, incrementalism, interstate diplomacy, or democratic processes to achieve this goal as being ungodly compromises of Islam with kufr (unbelief), and instead insist that the goal of a restored Caliphate can only be achieved through jihad defined narrowly as aggressive military activity.<sup>14</sup> While seeking substantially the same final outcomes, the Maktabis differ from Salafists in regarding use of democratic forms and international diplomacy as lawful tactics that complement, but do not replace, armed ‘resistance’ to achieve the desired goals. Despite the similarity of their goals the Salafists abominate the Shias as heretic “Rafidi”s [those who rejected the first three Caliphs as illegitimate] while the Maktabis have rejected the Salafists as “Takfiri”s [those who wrongfully condemn other Muslims for supposed heresy or apostasy.] While the Shia Khomeini and the Sunni ibn Ladin regarded the other’s faith as a false interpretation of Islam both believed that Sunni and Shia radicals could collaborate to fight their bigger common enemies, namely the United States and Israel. However, the outbreak of civil war in Syria in 2011 destroyed whatever tactical concordat existed between Sunni and Shia violent extremists.

The targeting of apostate regimes along with non-Muslim states seeks to terrorize the supporters of these regimes but also to encourage the supposed constituency of ordinary faithful Muslims who presumably detest these regimes. This targeting counts as xeno-terrorism, attacks upon outsiders who are the perceived enemies of the constituency whom the militant groups seek to champion. However, these attacks potentially could kill insiders, members of that same constituency, as ‘friendly-fire’ casualties. Worse, reprisals against supposed collaborators or dissidents, as well as attacks against regime functionaries and police, who are at least nominally Muslim, involves the insurgent militants in homo-terrorism or endo-terrorism, the killing of fellow Muslims. This risks alienating the support of their larger Muslim constituency.

Against the more anarchistic al Qaeda netwar model, Khomeini and his followers adhered to a more traditional organizational format requiring the existence not only of networks of covert terrorist cells and non-state insurgents but also parallel political front organizations complete with quasi-state social and economic institutions intending to create *de facto* control over territories and populations. Whereas al Qaeda’s connection to its worldwide Muslim constituency was indirect and diffuse, through its various printed and electronic media, Iran directly contacted dissident groups creating armed Islamic extremist paramilitaries where they did not previously exist or co-opting those that already existed. These militants led by Iran have followed a more traditional insurgent strategy in which they directly rule and maintain constituencies of Muslim populations under their control and protection. According to the counter-insurgency model created by Max Manwaring success for an insurgency requires the following: External support for the insurgents; undermining the discipline of the defending forces; bolstering one’s own legitimacy at the expense of that of the targeted government; and creating a unity of effort between one’s insurgents, their political-social fronts and their mass public greater than that achieved separately by the various civilian, police, military, and governmental components of the targeted nation. Another critical factor is the quality of one’s intelligence compared to that of the targeted government.<sup>15</sup> Because nation-states generally have more intelligence resources than are available to non-state groups, the provision of intelligence from a sponsoring nation-state to an insurgent group may be considered a critical part of the external aid to an insurgent group necessary to achieve victory.

The most crucial center of gravity of the conflict is the more intangible and fragile quality of legitimacy. The Islamist militants must be able to maintain and expand their legitimacy in the eyes of their Muslim constituencies at the expense of the legitimacy of those regimes which they are fighting. By taking control of a territory and population, the more traditional insurgent movements, such as Hezbollah and Hamas, have had the opportunity to develop their legitimacy through the concrete provision of security and public order as well as social and economic benefits to the population that each controls. Each also acquires the capability to deal with internal enemies, including dissidents and regime collaborators, through procedures and institutions that lay claim to some sort of legal-judicial authority. While the ultimate result may be in effect a form of quasi-state terror over its population it is one that is selective in targeting its opponents and sparing bystanders at the same time. The insurgents’ government provides protection and benefits to the remaining loyal population. This enables the insurgent movement not only to gain legitimacy in the eyes of its governed population but also in the perceptions of the wider worldwide constituency of Muslims whose interests and values the insurgency claims to be championing. It also promotes the perception of legitimacy among non-Muslim governments and publics who come to consider the insurgent movement not simply as a terrorist group but rather as a lawful belligerent and/or bona fide political and social movement having some democratic credentials. In turn this undermines the perceived legitimacy of the targeted regime and its ability to secure external aid and internal unity of effort needed to counter the insurgency.

## **V. THE PREREQUISITE OF TERRITORY: CASUS BELLI AND KEY TO LEGITIMACY**

The obligation of jihad as an individual duty, referred to in ibn Ladin’s 1998 fatwa against Americans, needs some explanation.<sup>16</sup> According to classical Islamic jurisprudence the ordinary status of jihad as a religious obligation is that of fard al kafiya, a “collective duty,” as opposed to fard al ‘ayn, an “individual duty,”

which each Muslim must fulfill personally and which cannot be delegated to another. When the Muslim territories are at peace and under Islamic rule, then the obligation to engage in jihad is fulfilled by the ruler establishing an organized military force which the community supports through supplying recruits and the funds needed to maintain these armed forces. The conduct of jihad by the Muslim army is qualified by rules of war that are very similar to the precepts of the Just War doctrine of St. Augustine forbidding attacks on civilians or wanton destruction of property. However once Muslim lands are invaded by non-Muslims, or else Islamic rule over the country is displaced by non-Islamic rule, then the obligation of waging jihad falls on all Muslims of all descriptions within the affected lands. Whereas women, children, the aged, and the infirm are exempt from the obligation of jihad when it is fard al kafiya, once it becomes fard al 'ayn, these classes of citizens are no longer exempt and must fight. Moreover, given the asymmetry between the organized armed occupying forces and the relatively weaker Muslim civilians, Islamic jurisprudence grants the defenders much greater latitude in permissible tactics to drive out the enemy. Such territorial triggers as the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia or other Muslim nations, the perception of U.S. support for Israel's occupation of Arab lands and Jerusalem, and the U.S. attacks within Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan can be viewed as instances of non-Muslim aggression against, and occupation of, the Muslim lands that would justify the invocation of jihad as fard al 'ayn.

What was novel and unusual in ibn Ladin's fatwa is that the scope of the jihad was not simply limited to Muslim lands under alleged occupation but extended to any lands where Americans could be attacked. Throughout al Qaeda's declarations the principle of jihad is linked to the issue of redeeming Muslim lands occupied by non-Muslims.<sup>17</sup> However it is also linked to freeing these lands from the rule of Muslim persons and groups regarded as insufficiently committed to the precepts of Islam. While this commands xeno-terrorism (attacks on persons outside of one's constituent group) it also seeks to avoid endo-terrorism (attacks on persons within one's constituent group.)

We – with God's help – call on every Muslim who believes in God and wishes to be rewarded to comply with God's order to kill the Americans and plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it. We also call on Muslim ulema, leaders, youths, and soldiers to launch the raid on Satan's U.S. troops and *the devil's supporters allying with them, and to displace those who are behind them* [emphasis added] so that they may learn a lesson.<sup>18</sup>

The territorial issues that have motivated Islamist militants include the following: First, a foremost concern is the protection of the holy places of Islam, namely, the cities of Mecca and Medina, and also Jerusalem, with their principal holy sites. The sanctity of the Masjid al Haram complex in Mecca is perceived to have been violated by the Saudi government through its having allowed non-Muslim military forces to enter the complex directly or to having ceded to them control over it indirectly through the presence of non-Muslim troops in the Arabian Peninsula. The role of the Saudi regime in facilitating these alleged desecrations is also seen as proving that regime unfit to remain as the guardian of the holy places. Second, the invasion and occupation of other Muslim territories by non-Muslim forces is a territorial trigger for engaging in jihad. Instances include the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Indian control over Jammu and Kashmir, the Russian presence in Chechnya, and the later American-led foreign presence in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>18</sup> In tandem with the issue of the occupation of Muslim lands is the question of the division of the Muslim world into a collection of nation-states ruled by nominally Muslim governments but which are regarded as apostate regimes by al Qaeda and kindred Salafist groups. Third, there is the very practical need for Islamist militants to have sanctuaries and staging areas and some degree of state support from regimes even including some regimes that they may regard as being long term strategic enemies but near term tactical allies.

The "two holy places" also hold another strategic significance for all Islamic militants. The historical Caliphate controlled the holy cities of Mecca and Medina as a privileged mandate since possessing and maintaining these cities and their mosques was a mark of the legitimacy of the ruling Caliph. As the possession of the Holy Places gives the Saudi king a unique standing among the various Muslim rulers, groups opposing the Saudi dynasty have sought to wrest control of those places to embarrass the Saudi king and undercut his pretensions of pre-eminence. The attempted takeover of the Masjid al Haram by Salafist extremists in November 1979, was not just an attempt to discredit the authority of the Saudi dynasty but also was an attempt to promote one of their members as being the 'Mahdi,' a messianic figure who would enjoy all of the prerogatives of the Caliph. Although this pretender was killed, the Saudi king's reliance on non-Muslim French troops to secure the shrine nonetheless tarnished his image as its guardian. In the period 1978-1987 the Saudi king's claim to be Protector of the Two Holy Places also came under assault from the Ayatollah Khomeini, whose theory of Islamic government advocated a *de facto* revival of the Caliphate under a different name (i.e. the Vilayat-i Faqih, "The Governance of the [Just] Religious Scholar") and under Shia auspices.<sup>19</sup> Khomeini tried to de-legitimize Saudi control over the holy places by using Iranian pilgrims to incite anti-Saudi demonstrations and clashes during each Hajj pilgrimage season beginning in 1979. These demonstrations

escalated each succeeding year culminating in riots during the 1987 Hajj season that killed over 400 people in Mecca and led the Saudi regime to a temporary suspension of its diplomatic ties with Iran. Beginning in 1996, ibn Ladin had repeatedly called for like-minded Muslims to overthrow the Saudi government and to restore the Caliphate. Seizure and control over the cities of Mecca and Medina would be prerequisites for any group seeking to establish a restored Caliphate. Increased al Qaeda terrorist actions in the kingdom since 2001 were aimed at overthrowing the Saudi regime and replacing it with a Salafist regime which could proclaim itself as the restored Caliphate since it would then become the *de facto* guardian of the holy places.

The recent rise of the al Qaeda affiliated group Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen represented not simply an attempt to overthrow the Western-aligned government of Yemen but was also a threat to the Saudi government. Although al Qaeda's Salafist founders disdain the Shi'ism of the Islamic Republic of Iran, their shared hatred of the Saudi government led to a tactical alliance: Iran lent moral and material aid to AQAP and was engaged in a proxy war with Saudi Arabia which backed the Yemeni government against AQAP. After the outbreak of the Syrian civil war Iranian support shifted in favor of the Houthis, a Shia sect in Yemen, that toppled the Yemeni regime and took control of Yemen in February 6, 2015. At the same time AQAP turned its guns on their erstwhile allies, the Shia Houthis, who seized control of the government of Yemen but who were later driven out of Sana'a and Aden.

## **VI. LOSING GROUND: THE REVERSES OF SALAFISM**

The Afghan Jihad is celebrated in al Qaeda's own annals as the exemplary Salafist movement for not only did it defeat the Soviet occupation forces but also led to the creation of a model Salafist 'emirate,' the Taliban state under the control of Mullah Omar. Al Qaeda contributed its own support troops, the 055 Battalion, to help fight the Northern Alliance and eventually dispatched suicide-assassins, in the guise of Arab reporters, to Ahmad Shah Massoud, the Northern Alliance leader, whom they killed on September 9, 2001. According to Gunaratna, from 1996 until 2001 al Qaeda became the first transnational terrorist group to succeed in co-opting and controlling an entire nation-state, the so-called 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.'<sup>20</sup> The importance of this territorial control was not limited to its usefulness to pursuing the war against the Northern Alliance. It also had a demonstration effect of showing that the Salafists could remake a contemporary Muslim nation-state into their ideal of an Islamic state, one more step towards the restoration of the Caliphate. It is during this time that ibn Ladin was emboldened to issue his 1996 and 1998 fatwas declaring jihad against the United States. Also it is during this period that al Qaeda launched its most deadly strikes on U.S. military and civilian targets. The loss of this state not only cost al Qaeda a tactical base but also the credibility of al Qaeda's long-term strategy since its ally, the restored emirate of Mullah Omar, was incapable of providing very basic public security and services, much less withstanding external assault by non-Muslim forces.<sup>21</sup>

Had the other Salafist movements aligned with al Qaeda achieved even modest success in seeking to topple their targeted secularist Muslim governments and replacing them with emirates on the model of Afghanistan, al Qaeda could have claimed that the project of restoring the Caliphate was proceeding. But events in two key nations targeted by Salafists aligned with al Qaeda also brought the ibn Ladin strategy into question. Egypt, from which al Qaeda drew members of the Jihad Group, experienced its own Salafist insurgency during 1990-1997. By 1993 external observers feared Egypt might be taken over by the various Salafist groups, including the Jihad group and the Jama'a al Islamiyah. However the infighting of these groups, their killing of many innocent Egyptian Muslims, and their alienating Egyptian public opinion, led to the demise of the Salafist insurgency in Egypt. In the words of Fawaz A. Gerges, "al Jama'a and Jihad are shadows of their former selves, with their rank and file in exile or on the run, deprived of any popular support...the Islamist insurgency has been reduced to insignificance."<sup>22</sup> A similar outcome followed in Algeria, after nine years (1992-2000) of civil war between three Salafist factions and the Algerian government during which period an estimated 100,000 people were killed, most of whom were Algerian civilians and fellow Muslims. The degree of violence against Muslim civilians, which violated al Qaeda's principle of xeno-terrorism, that is, the tactic of avoiding targeting innocent Muslims but directing terrorism primarily against non-Muslims or the military-political personnel of 'apostate' Muslim governments, led al Qaeda by mid-1996 to renounce its support for the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), which had been its principal Salafist ally in Algeria. Although sporadic attacks continued and began increasing with the appearance of the group al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Salafist insurgency in Algeria is also stymied.<sup>23</sup> In short the Algerian and Egyptian cases showed that the Salafist insurgencies were failing to duplicate the Afghan model in the heartland of the Muslim world. When the Afghan model was overthrown in 2001 the next venue for proving the Salafist doctrine of jihad would be Iraq.

Until the Iraqi insurgency began, al Qaeda had sought to avoid the killing of innocent Muslims in its operations even though ibn Ladin has used theological casuistry to justify the unintended killings of Muslims caught in cross-fire or those who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, i.e. the World Trade Center on 9/11.<sup>24</sup> Apart from obedience to Quranic strictures forbidding the killing of fellow believers, the deliberate targeting of non-Muslims by Al Qaeda was part of a tactic of xeno- or exo-terrorism: by focusing

attacks on non-Muslims, al Qaeda reinforced its message to its constituent target audience of the ordinary Muslim masses that they had nothing to fear from al Qaeda, which claimed to be exacting vengeance on their behalf upon their enemies for perceived wrongs.

With the loss of Afghanistan and the failure of Salafist revolts in Algeria and Egypt, al Qaeda needed a victory in Iraq to validate its claims to be the legitimate vanguard Islamist movement for the restoration of the Caliphate. Ibn Ladin indicated he believed the U.S. and allied forces there could be worn down in the same way that the mujahidin had exhausted the Soviets in Afghanistan.<sup>25</sup> A victory would also vindicate his earlier claims to the Saudi royal family that his forces could have expelled the Iraqis from Kuwait. Moreover, the creation of a new 'emirate' in Iraq would put al Qaeda on the doorstep of the "Land of the Two Holy Places" and closer to the goal of replacing the Saudi regime with a Caliphate on the Salafist model.

However, the 2003-2006 Salafist insurgency in Iraq lacked many of the advantages that the mujahidin had during the Afghan war: In addition to the costs of the Afghan conflict the Soviet Union was already being made bankrupt by the U.S. containment policy in effect since 1947. The Afghan mujahidin then had not only the backing of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Iran, but also the backing of the rival superpower, the United States. In addition Pakistan and Iran provided sanctuary and aid whereas al Qaeda later forfeited such support. Moreover much of the al Qaeda cadre of battle-trained Afghan veterans suffered serious attrition during the U.S. assault on Afghanistan in late 2001. Like the failed Salafist insurgencies of Algeria and Egypt, the insurgency in Iraq also differed in another important respect from the Afghan war: whereas ibn Ladin could boast that the Afghan campaign had largely targeted Soviet and Kabul regime troops, and had avoided the targeting of civilians, the Salafist insurgency in Iraq disproportionately targeted Iraqi Muslim civilians rather than U.S. and allied troops. To make matters worse it was the local al Qaeda "franchise," Al Qaeda in Iraq, led by Abu Musab al Zarqawi, that decided to defy ibn Ladin's maxim of not targeting Muslims by making the Shia community in Iraq one of its primary targets. This and other acts of defiance revealed the weakness of al Qaeda and its "franchise" strategy and led it to formally cut their ties with the group started by al Zarqawi. This endo-terrorism has cost all Salafist insurgencies their legitimacy among the constituencies of Muslim publics within each affected nation and in the Muslim world at large.

In fact al Qaeda's declarations regarding Iraq carried a tone of desperation. Ibn Ladin described the insurgency in Iraq as the central battle in a "Third World War, which the Crusader-Zionist coalition began against the Islamic nation"<sup>26</sup> adding "it is either victory and glory or misery and humiliation."<sup>27</sup> Amir Taheri's analysis of an al Qaeda book, *The Future of Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula After the Fall of Baghdad*, by Yussuf al-Ayyeri, an associate of ibn Ladin killed in a shoot-out with Saudi security forces in 2003, also confirmed that the al Qaeda leadership viewed Iraq as the crucial battle-field between the Salafist goal of a restored Caliphate and "secularist democracy," which would spread throughout the Muslim world if not checked in Iraq.<sup>28</sup>

## VII. GROUND GAINED AND RETAINED: HEZBOLLAH IN LEBANON

The cases of al Qaeda and other Salafist groups contrast greatly with the successes of Hezbollah, a group that originally functioned as a covert action group from its secret formation in 1982 but which became an open political party in 1985.<sup>29</sup> Hezbollah has established its reputation of being an Islamist group able to take on the Israeli Defense Forces which withdrew from southern Lebanon in 2000 following a decade of anti-IDF insurgent activity there by Hezbollah. Although Hezbollah suffered heavy casualties in its July 2006 war with Israel its deployment of various classes of Iranian short- and medium-range missiles made it a credible tactical threat to Israel. Hezbollah has also developed a widespread social welfare infrastructure including clinics, schools, its own version of Iran's "Construction Jihad," and investments in many enterprises both legal and otherwise.<sup>30</sup> Hezbollah's rise within Lebanese electoral politics in which it has functioned as a maker and breaker of Lebanese Presidents has caused one Lebanese analyst to lament that Hezbollah had become "the non-state actor which functions as the *de facto* state versus the state non-actor which merely enjoys the status of the *de jure* state."<sup>31</sup> Hezbollah has shown that it is willing to make alliances with potential rivals in order to achieve electoral successes: In the 2004 parliamentary elections Hezbollah formed the "Resistance and Development Bloc" including as coalition partners its former rival, Amal, and the secular Syrian Social Nationalist Party. In addition, there is Hezbollah's overseas terrorist network which has proven its lethal outreach with the bombings in Buenos Aires of Israel's Embassy on March 17, 1992 and its July 18, 1994 bombing of the AMIA (Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina) building. The existence of Hezbollah's overseas covert action network makes the threat of al Qaeda pale in the eyes of many analysts.<sup>32</sup> But these advantages of organization and *de facto* control of much of Lebanon's territory were only possible thanks to Iranian military and material support now estimated to exceed \$1 billion per year.

It is simply false to assert that al Qaeda was able to thrive, however briefly, without state support and sponsorship. As Edward Mickolaus has indicated state sponsorship of terrorism can occur in various degrees ranging from the passive acquiescence of weak states or else intimidated regimes, to moral sympathy, to limited

material support, to more substantial material support and finally to a degree of support in which the non-state group functions in effect as a wholly-own subsidiary of the sponsoring state.<sup>33</sup> Although al Qaeda has been cited as proof that non-state actors can go it alone without the need for state sponsors, in fact al Qaeda has had a long history of reliance on various state sponsors. At various times al Qaeda has sought sanctuary, aid, training, or moral support from Sudan, the Taliban regime of Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and also from sub-state elements within Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. After his break with the Saudi royal family, ibn Ladin moved to Sudan in April 1991, where he developed the al Qaeda organization further, financing it through several lucrative construction contracts with the Sudanese government as well as several commercial ventures. With the knowledge and protection of Sudan's government, al Qaeda built training camps and also cultivated contacts with Lebanon's Hezbollah group, itself sponsored by the Iranian regime. Al Qaeda leaders there also held direct meetings with both Iranian and Iraqi officials.<sup>34</sup> Although ibn Ladin initially had good relations with the National Islamic Front ruling Sudan by 1996 he was asked to leave due to pressure from Egypt, whose President, Hosni Mubarak, survived an al Qaeda sponsored assassination attempt during his June 26, 1995 visit to Ethiopia. Egypt was threatening war against Sudan if they did not expel al Qaeda.

Ibn Ladin returned to Afghanistan where his base outside Jalalabad held about 600 of his followers. He developed close relations with the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, whose forces seized Kabul in September 1996. Ibn Ladin contributed over 5,000 trained men to fight alongside Taliban forces which seized all but ten percent of Afghanistan by late 1999. The alliance between the Taliban state and al Qaeda was so close and complete that it often appeared to be more of a case of co-optation of the host state by al Qaeda rather than Afghani state sponsorship of a dependent group. Although Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency, which had helped create the Taliban state, once also had al Qaeda contacts, following the September 11th attacks the Pakistani government officially aligned itself with the U.S. campaign against the Taliban and al Qaeda. After disclosures in 2002 that some quasi-governmental bodies within Saudi Arabia had financially supported al Qaeda, members of the U.S. Congress and others pressured the Saudi government to combat al Qaeda. Until then, Saudi Arabia had passively tolerated limited fund raising and recruiting activities for al Qaeda within their borders on the tacit understanding that in return al Qaeda would not directly attack them. But with al Qaeda's attacks on Saudi targets in 2002, including planned attacks within the holy city of Mecca, the question of passive Saudi support for al Qaeda became moot.

### **VIII. SALAFISM REGAINING GROUND: THE CASE OF "THE ISLAMIC STATE"**

The history of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), with its frequent changes of its name, reflects the impetuosity and arrogance of its original founder, Abu Musab al Zarqawi. Unlike the experienced jihadists of the original al Qaeda, who were highly educated men from professional backgrounds with years of jihadist experience in the Afghan War, al Zarqawi began his adult life as an ill-educated man involved in various criminal activities. Al Zarqawi arrived in Afghanistan in 1989, too late to participate in the Afghan war. In 1999 he was able to meet ibn Ladin who later gave him financial backing to start his own training camp for fellow Jordanians. He established his Jamaat al-Tawhid wal-Jihad group in 1999 which originally tried to carry out bombings and to overthrow the Jordanian monarchy but failed to do so leading him to flee to Pakistan and travel from there to Afghanistan.

After being wounded while trying to resist the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, al Zarqawi escaped capture and fled spending the next two years going between Iran and Iraq and preparing his group to resist the expected U.S. invasion of Iraq. Al Zarqawi had resisted swearing ba'ya (allegiance) to ibn Ladin until the need for more resources compelled him to do so in 2004. With his nominal submission to al Qaeda he renamed his group al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers which became better known simply as Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Through his contacts with ibn Ladin and al Qaeda's central command he gained lists of contacts, knowledge of recruiting networks, and understanding of al Qaeda's sophisticated internet and audio-visual propaganda machine, all of which he would later use to develop his own power base in Iraq to pursue his own brand of jihad contrary to the tenets of ibn Ladin's al Qaeda.

In 2004, after the start of the anti-U.S. insurgency, al Zarqawi tried to unite the various Salafist and Iraqi nationalist groups, and Sunni tribes under the banner of his Majlis Shura al Mujahideen. Yet he was extremely heavy-handed and used AQI to attack any group or individuals who questioned his leadership or tactics, justifying this by invoking "Takfir" against them: He viewed as "infidels" and "apostates" any Iraqi or foreign Muslim fighters who questioned his goals or methods. These goals included genocide of the Shia community, enforcement of harsh Shari'ah penal punishments, and forcing local tribal leaders to accept his leadership. Allegedly al Zarqawi demanded that tribal Sheikhs give their daughters in marriage to him and his lieutenants, a demand that these Sheikhs found highly insulting given the obscure lineages of al Zarqawi and other foreign "city Arabs" whom the Bedouin generally despise. Their refusals led AQI to assassinate many of these Sheikhs so turning entire tribal groups against al Zarqawi and AQI. The attacks upon the Shias,



particularly the bombing of the al Askari Mosque in February 2006, the shrine of the Tenth Shia Imam, Ali ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali, led to massive Shia reprisals against Sunni neighborhoods and mosques.

Having started a sectarian war AQI proved itself unable to protect the Sunnis from the Shia backlash. The killing of al Zarqawi by a U.S. precision air strike in June 2006 was followed by his followers renaming themselves the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), a name which they retained until 2013 when they adopted the name the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The outrages that AQI had perpetrated upon native Iraqis led to the Anbar Awakening in western Iraq in which tribal groups and former anti-U.S. insurgents joined forces with the U.S., other coalition forces, and Iraqi government troops, in suppressing and decimating AQI in the surge campaign of 2007. ISI abandoned their strong-holds in Anbar and Diyala provinces and were driven out of their former stronghold of Mosul. By 2010 U.S. military authorities considered ISI to have been severely debilitated and incapable of restoring itself to its former strength. They were wrong.

Two things contributed to the revival of ISI: First, the final withdrawal of U.S. troops in December 2011 and, second, the marginalization of Iraqi Sunnis under the Shia dominated central government in Baghdad. The U.S. withdrawal created a power vacuum which Iraqi government forces and police were unable to fill while the exclusion of the Sunnis from any meaningful participation in the politics of their own country delegitimized the central government in their eyes. Now armed not only with weapons plundered from Iraqi armories and police stations but a decade of practical fighting experience, better knowledge of effective organization, and use of insurgent tactics, ISI re-emerged as "liberators" of the Sunni-dominated areas northwest of Baghdad. Not all Sunni groups have forgotten or forgiven the insulting treatment they suffered at the hands of AQI. While Falluja welcomed ISI as liberators the city of Ramadi, whose population has close ties to the tribal groups that were key actors in the Anbar Awakening, has resisted the repeated attempts by ISI to retake this city.<sup>35</sup>

Due to ISI's disrespect for al Qaeda's admonitions against targeting innocent Muslim civilians and against invading the territorial jurisdiction of another al Qaeda franchise (by muscling in on the Jabhat al Nusra's theatre in the Syrian civil war in 2013), ISI alienated itself from the main al Qaeda group. Jabhat al Nursa refused to accede to a merger that had been unilaterally decreed in April 2013 by ISI's latest leader, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, who renamed his group as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS.) This bullying of the official al Qaeda franchise in Syria was the last straw for al Qaeda's main leadership in Pakistan which announced its dissolution of its ties with ISIS on February 2, 2014. Following futile attempts by al Nusra to effect reconciliation with ISIS the latter group attacked al Nusra in May 2014 and seized a large portion of its territory in eastern Syria and turned the city of al Raqqa into the "capital" of their self-proclaimed state.<sup>36</sup>

Other offences by ISIS included its excessive use of Takfir to denounce brother Salafists as 'apostates' and its refusal to submit itself to an independent Shari'ah court to resolve its differences with other insurgent groups. In its own hybris ISIS believes that it is in fact an independent sovereign state in 'liberated' territory and has engaged in widespread extra-judicial murders, imprisonment and harsh Shari'ah penal code punishments (often imposed without Shari'ah court rulings) directed against the native Syrian and Iraqi Sunni Muslims who are supposed to be its constituency within their zone of control. ISIS has also ethnically purged native Yazidis, Christians, and Shias as well as murdering foreign tourists and aid workers who have fallen into their hands. ISIS has repeated the mistake of accepting large numbers of foreign fighters into its territory. Those would-be jihadists who lack any combat experience, particularly Western converts to Islam, have been set to menial tasks, such as washing clothes, cleaning toilets and other humble duties. Those who have had combat experience are made part of its armed forces which were estimated to number at least 52,000 within Syria and Iraq. This does not count the numbers of Salafists in Libya, Lebanon, Nigeria and the Sinai Peninsula who have sworn ba'ya to al Baghdadi after he proclaimed ISIS to be the "restored Caliphate" on June 29th, 2014. As this pretense to the Caliphate extends beyond Syria and Iraq the official name of the organization has been shortened to "the Islamic State." Those areas outside of ISIS' main territory in Syria and Iraq, held by Salafists who have pledged ba'ya to al Baghdadi, are being designated as "wilayats" within the new Caliphate.<sup>37</sup>

In an effort to legitimize itself with the population of Iraqis and Syrians under its control ISIS attempted to provide the security and social services that are ordinarily expected of a sovereign state caring for its citizens.<sup>38</sup> Iraqi and Syrian administrators and public school teachers have been forced to continue their administrative duties with threats against their families if they should defect or flee. The imams of local Mosques who have refused to give ba'ya to al Baghdadi have been killed. The new school curriculum places an emphasis on Salafist indoctrination rather than on the arts and sciences of a more typical public school curriculum.<sup>39</sup> ISIS has been able to maintain itself due to its capture of oil and gas wells and a hydroelectric dam. The oil it sells on the black market, reputedly earning \$3 million daily, while it sells the excess hydroelectric power, ironically, to the Syrian government. With its take-over of Mosul in June 10, 2014 the branch of the Central Bank of Iraq was looted by ISIS providing the group with \$429 million in cash. Looting of the Ninevah Museum at first resulted in the iconoclastic smashing of "idols," priceless Assyrian sculptures, until ISIS realized these artifacts had great value on the world black market in stolen antiquities.

## IX. CONCLUSION

Al Qaeda could not survive simply as a transnational network of like-minded Salafist groups engaging in sporadic terrorist strikes against the West because its ultimate goal was the creation of an Islamic state embracing all of the existing Muslim nation-states. The conflicts to date involving both terrorist attacks on Western civilian targets and insurgent attacks on U.S. military forces in Iraq and elsewhere are part of a wider jihad. However, the ultimate strategic goal of this jihad has always been to restore the true Islamic socio-political order which Salafist jihadists have conceived as the pan-Islamic Caliphate. The creation of 'emirates' within countries such as Algeria or Afghanistan should count only as steps to the restoration of the pan-Islamic Caliphate. While such territories have a tactical value as staging areas and training bases they also hold immense strategic and ideological importance as beachheads for the 'liberation' of the pan-Islamic Caliphate and can also be claimed as visible proofs of God's blessing on the jihadists' organization, activities and goals. The failure to seize and hold such territory in the cases examined has always led to the demoralization and decay of the jihadist movements involved in each case. The failure in 2007 of Salafist insurgents in Iraq to dislodge the U.S. forces there or to overthrow the current U.S.-aligned Iraqi regime, presented al Qaeda not simply with another minor setback but rather constituted a major blow to its own credibility as an authentic Salafist movement.

The proclamation of the restoration of the Caliphate by al Baghdadi has led many Ulema, including many who have been mentors of the Salafists and jihadists, to denounce ISIS. Sheikh Abu Muhammad al Maqdisi, considered the most prominent jihadist proponents today, has denounced the group for its tactics and disregard for the sanctity of Muslim lives:

ISIS is a deviant organization from the path of truth, [they are] aggressors against the mujahideen . . . I also call upon the members of ISIS to join the ranks of Jabhat al-Nusra, giving ba'ya to its leaders.<sup>40</sup>

Other prominent pro-jihadist clerics have likewise denounced ISIS including Abu Qatada al-Filistini, Iyad Qunaybi, and Hani al-Sibai. Needless to say none of the clerics of al Al Azhar or of the Saudi religious establishment have accepted al Baghdadi and his declared "Caliphate" as legitimate.<sup>41</sup> To put this matter into perspective the original historical Caliphate, which ultimately spread from Morocco to India, existed from 632 c.e. until 1258 c.e. when the Mongols destroyed Baghdad and killed the last Abbasid Caliph. Although a branch of the Abbasid line maintained pretensions to be the lawful Caliphs their jurisdiction was limited to Egypt and they were largely under the control of their Mamluk slave-soldiers.

Although the Ottoman Sultan Murad I claimed the title of Caliph in 1368 c.e. it was not until the reign of Selim I, who conquered the Abbasid rump state in Egypt and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, that the Ottoman Sultan's claim to the Caliphate was finally accepted by most of the Sunni Muslim world in 1517. Again territorial control over most of the original core lands of Islam (with the exception of Shia Iran), maintaining a functioning state, and possession of the Two Holy Places conferred legitimacy on the claim by Sultan Selim to the title of Caliph. By contrast al Baghdadi controls but a small portion of the core heartland of Islam and does not control the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

The importance of the role of the Ulema in determining the legitimacy of an Islamic state cannot be overstated. The Ulema form the traditional intellectual class of Islamic scholars and doctors of the Islamic Law to whom the greater mass of Muslims look for guidance and discernment of that which is forbidden or permitted under Islamic Law. No leader of any mass movement can succeed in gaining power without the validation of the intellectual and religious leaders of the people who are the target audience of the charismatic leader. As Eric Hoffer has observed, even Jesus of Nazareth was unable to win acceptance by the majority of the Jews because he put himself at odds with the intellectual and spiritual leaders of Judaism to whom the Jewish masses looked for guidance:

Jesus Himself might not have preached a new Gospel had the dominant Pharisees taken Him into the fold, called Him Rabbi, and listened to Him with deference . . . Christianity made little headway against Judaism because the Jewish religion had the ardent allegiance of the Jewish men of words. The rabbis and their disciples enjoyed an exalted status in Jewish life of that day, where the school and the book supplanted the temple and the fatherland.<sup>42</sup>

Likewise the Ulema hold a special position in the minds of the Muslim faithful. Al Qaeda and ibn Ladin failed to create a world-wide jihad against "the Crusaders and Zionists" largely because his fatwas and pretensions of Islamic leadership were rejected by the dominant Sunni Ulema. By contrast Khomeini was able to achieve his rise to power in Iran, and Hezbollah was able to establish an Islamic mini-state within Lebanon, because the Shia Ulema in both nations accepted Khomeini's credentials as a genuine Islamic leader. By

contrast the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria has not replicated the functional state that provides security and basic needs to the population it controls. Much of its fighting forces are aliens who have engaged in wide-spread rape and pillaging of the subject population. Reports from inside al Raqqa speak of a reign of terror falling somewhere between the benign neglect of the Taliban regime and the genocidal terror of the Pol Pot regime. Allegiance given to al Baghdadi by his subjects is seemingly based on coercion rather than conviction.<sup>43</sup>

ISIS has systematically destroyed all possible tactical allegiances with other Salafist groups, except for a few groups located at some distance from Iraq and Syria. ISIS enjoys no external legitimacy in the eyes of most of the Muslims outside of the territories it controls and most decisively it does not enjoy any sanction or legitimization from the majority of the Sunni Ulema, who have largely abominated ISIS as an un-Islamic and deviant group. So although ISIS has achieved a tenuous territorial control it lacks both state sponsorship and internal and external legitimacy required to make it a viable Islamic state.<sup>44</sup>

In sum to succeed in future militant Islamist movements must possess the following: First, an organization that includes not merely a military wing and covert operations capacity but also a political-social front to maintain direct ties with the Muslim constituency the group claims to serve. The political wing should be willing to take advantage of democratic processes and institutions whenever possible. Second, such movements need to win *de facto* control over territory in which they can demonstrate not only that they are fulfilling mandates of Islam but also providing public order and socio-economic benefits to the population they are effectively governing. This will bolster their legitimacy not only among various Muslim publics but also in the eyes of the broader world community who may come to view the group not as terrorists, but more as lawful belligerents or even just normal political movements. There is also the inescapable need for state sponsorship to provide those moral and material resources which are beyond the capabilities of even the most sophisticated clandestine network. Finally, there is the issue of legitimization by the blessing of the Ulema whom the Muslim population under control of the group regards as the true arbiters of what is Islam and what is deviation from Islam.

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