

# **Islamic State: The Changing Face of Modern Jihadism**

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Quilliam is the world's first counter-extremism think tank, set up to address the unique challenges of citizenship, identity and belonging in a globalised world. Quilliam stands for religious freedom, equality, human rights and democracy. Challenging extremism is the duty of all responsible members of society. Not least because cultural insularity and extremism are products of the failures of wider society to foster a shared sense of belonging and to advance democratic values. Quilliam seeks to challenge what we think and the way we think. It aims to generate creative, informed and inclusive discussions to counter to the ideological underpinnings of terrorism, whilst simultaneously providing evidence-based recommendations to governments for related policy measures.

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## Authors' Note

This report hopes to contribute to the developing research in the ever-evolving arena of jihadism, counter-terrorism and counter-extremism. Our aim is to provide a resource for both policymakers and practitioners as well as academics and researchers concerned with the rise of Islamic State. While previous research has mapped the contemporary developments of this, seemingly, new terrorist organisation, this report differentiates itself by addressing it through a broader lens. The following research establishes how Islamic State evolved directly from al-Qaeda and, subsequently, how counter-terrorism strategies will need to evolve in the face of the threat it presents.

The authors would like to thank Sofia Patel, whose contributions as a researcher for this report were invaluable. Our research would not have been possible without the cooperation and assistance of leading counter-terrorism specialists and government officials who participated in our interviews. We would also like to thank our colleagues Dr Usama Hasan, Ghaffar Hussain and Jonathan Russell for their support, assistance and input.



“There will come a people from the east, young men with shaved heads and foolish ideas, who recite the Quran without it penetrating beyond their throats. Their speech will be attractive, but they will shoot through religion without any of its [beneficial] effects upon them. Wherever you find them, fight them”

Prophetic Tradition (Sahih Bukhari)

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## Glossary

**Caliphate:** Traditionally, the caliphate was a leadership model that was believed to facilitate the best practice of Islam. The idea evolved as political systems changed throughout history. Re-establishing a modern-day “caliphate” as a fixed political system that combines private and public life under a single interpretation of Shariah law is the goal of all extremist Islamist groups.

**Foreign Terrorist Fighter (FTF):** Foreign fighters are non-citizens of a conflict zone who join insurgencies during a civil conflict. Foreign terrorist fighters, as defined by the United Nations, are specifically those who join jihadist insurgencies.

**Islamist Extremism:** The belief that Islam is a totalitarian political ideology. It claims that political sovereignty belongs to God rather than people. Islamists believe that their reading of Shariah should be state law, and that it is the religious duty of all Muslims to create and pledge allegiance to an Islamic state that reflects these principles.

**Jihad:** Literally ‘to struggle’ but often used to refer to armed struggle.

**Jihadism:** Non-state violence used in the cause of Islamism. Just as Islamism is the politicisation of Islam, jihadists take the traditional concept of jihad and use it as a political and military tool to achieve a political end.

**Near Enemy:** Within the jihadist worldview, these are enemies of religion in the classical ‘Muslim world’ – i.e. secular states or governments in the Middle East and North Africa that do not implement.

**Far Enemy:** This refers to the so-called Crusader-Zionist alliance, the predominantly non-Muslim enemy of jihadists.

**Radicalisation:** The process by which individuals and/or groups come to adopt extremist ideologies. Scholars often distinguish between ‘radicalisation’ and ‘violent radicalisation’ to highlight differences between engagement in violent activities and radicalised non-violent thinking.

**Salafism:** A revivalist Sunni Muslim puritanical movement that believes Muslims should shed traditional theological edicts and instead derive new religious guidance directly from the sources.

**Terrorism:** The use of violence or illegal force targeted at civilians by non-state actors that seek to bring about political/societal changes.

**Ummah:** Often used to mean global community of Muslims, though the term has been used to refer to smaller political communities too.

## Foreword

Since June 2014, international media has fixated on a new phenomenon in international Islamist-motivated terrorism centred in Syria and Iraq. Whatever we choose to call it – IS, ISIL, Da'ish, Islamic State – the terrorist group's lightning advances in recent months are unprecedented, and they have not slowed even in the face of international airstrikes against it. In addition to the shocking brutality and instability Islamic State (IS) has caused in Syria and Iraq, the world has been forced to reflect on the danger posed by the number of foreigners going to join its ranks, radicalising in the comfort of their home nations and journeying to live and fight in IS' barbaric utopia.

Given how shocked governments have been in their reaction to IS' rise, one could be forgiven for thinking that it appeared out of the blue. However, this is by no means the case – it has a history and ideology that is closely interwoven with that of al-Qaeda, a group that disavowed IS in early 2014. Whatever the case, its recent gains in Iraq and Syria, which are a result of high levels of innovation and an ability to adapt to its constantly deteriorating surroundings, have forced a change in the way the world looks upon modern Islamist terrorism.

The threat that the group, presents to Western nations is obvious. Some people persist in claiming that IS has a distinctly local focus. Whilst its rampages, thus far, have been localised, it has never shied away from declaring its globalist ambitions, with regular assertions that Rome and Washington are on its list of future conquests. Furthermore, with the initiation of international coalition air strikes against it, IS is likely to focus more energy on targeting European and North American nations, something which we have already begun to see, with separate attacks in Canada, the US and Belgium.

What's more, while international audiences have been tracking the crisis abroad, fears about the potential repercussions of the IS foreign fighter problem are also, justifiably, heightened. The ideological appeal of IS is potent; more, some might argue, than that of al-Qaeda. Never before have Western states had to determine policies for dealing with returning foreign fighters in numbers as high as this, nor have there been as many home-grown extremists galvanised by global jihadist insurgence before. There is no simple answer to this, nor is there any real historical precedent set by which policy can be advised.

As jihadist efforts modernise, practitioners and policymakers must also modernise to remain relevant, let alone effective. The first step in doing so comes with understanding what we are dealing with. Right now, it is fair to say that we are in the throes of great shifts to the jihadist status quo that will have profound international geopolitical consequences. But does that mean we should forget about al-



Qaeda? Has it really been rendered redundant by its younger, more media savvy sibling, as some have claimed?

This report seeks to address these issues and argues that, while we are certainly witnessing a break from ‘traditional’ terrorism as we have come to know it over the last few decades, we should not cast aside experiences from previous years completely. It is argued that IS has not eclipsed all other jihadist groups, it is just a new manifestation of the same idea: salafi-jihadism. Al-Qaeda is still relevant. Whatever the case, though, we cannot hope to counter IS with policies wrought to fight against the likes bin Laden and al-Zawahiri. In monitoring any jihadist group, we must expect to see shifts in approach, tactics and networking. IS’ declaration of a “caliphate” state, the group’s effectiveness in foreign fighter recruitment and manipulation of social media represent a stark departure from the salafi-jihadist norm. Hence, in our response to its rise to international infamy, we must not let its advances blind us to developing a rational strategy to roll it back and challenge its seemingly bulletproof ideas.

This report is produced with the understanding that current events and international intervention taking place in Syria and Iraq are fast-moving and subject to constant change. As it was being written, international forces from the West and Middle East were combining an array of military efforts to degrade the military capacity of IS. It is unknown what the outcome in the short- and long-term will be. As such, the focus here is conceptual and draws upon historical and comparative analysis to assess the possible trajectory of both al-Qaeda and the force we have come to know as IS.

Whatever the case, we must help people in the region to correct this situation. We need to incubate and foster what is already there, help catalyse the formation of a social movement that seeks to spread a secular democratic ideal using — just like the Islamists do so successfully — ideas, narratives, leaders and goals. The trans-regional desire to remove despotism from the face of Middle Eastern politics must be harnessed. Perhaps, this could one day come in the form of a regional union based on principles of economic prosperity, freedom of religion and collective security. Certainly, there is a long way to go before this is possible, but the hope for something else, something secular, needs to be invigorated. What the Middle East needs right now is a secular force that dreams a secular dream. At the moment, the only “dream” is the caliphate. It must not be allowed to continue without competition.

## **Maajid Nawaz**

Chairman and Co-Founder of Quilliam

## Executive Summary

This report differentiates itself from other analyses of Islamic State (IS) in two ways. Firstly, it takes a broader historical and ideological lens to contextualise the rise of the terrorist organisation and understand why it has been able to amass strength so effectively. Secondly, this report assesses why IS represents something of a game-changer in the global jihadist arena and what this means for Islamist-motivated terrorism in the years to come.

### Key Findings

- Despite current enmity, al-Qaeda and IS are tied by a similar jihadist ideology and violent interpretation of Islam. However, while al-Qaeda developed an outward-looking strategy under Osama bin Laden that focussed on destabilising the West before trying to establish a “caliphate”, IS has looked inwards first in establishing a state, as part of a strategy championed by the group’s deceased spiritual ideologue, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.
- As airstrikes against IS continue, we cannot rule out future coordination between al-Qaeda and IS. The international onslaught against IS is being used by certain jihadist ideologues as yet more evidence of the global conspiracy against Islam, a rallying call to unite against the West and foreign ‘crusaders’. As a result of this it is also likely that further jihadist splinter groups will converge with IS. Hence, a longer-term strategy needs to be developed which includes prevention of further proliferation of IS and affiliates within the Middle East.
- IS was able to accelerate its rise to power in light of the Syrian war and has now positioned itself as the strongest opposition force to the Assad government. The ‘humanitarian’ angle of IS propaganda has been a leading factor in cultivating local allegiances as well as attracting a large number of foreign terrorist fighters (FTF), not to mention young women travelling to become wives of jihadists. IS is now channelling a similarly effective narrative in Iraq.
- IS has rapidly become economically resilient through a sophisticated financial model which, unlike al-Qaeda, stresses the importance of autonomy. IS has developed self-sustainability mainly through resource production and sales of oil and water reserves.
- The complexity of IS’ media strategy – using online tools to circulate multidimensional propaganda in coordination with sympathisers around the world – is something unprecedented for a terrorist organisation. The group has developed its own smart phone apps and distinctive online messaging system. It has also been benefiting greatly from a strong unofficial network of support from around the world. Counter-terrorism and counter-extremism efforts to confront IS’ online presence remain inadequate.

Based on the key findings of this report, Quilliam has developed some recommendations for counter-terrorism and counter-extremism policymakers, summarised below:

- The means by which IS has built up its oil and resource capacities for needs to be addressed and stopped. IS funding streams need to be addressed directly. In particular, the group needs to be stopped from having the ability to purchase the loyalty of the people whose territories they conquer.
- The new frontline of the crisis, the Internet, needs to be better defended. Censoring unwanted extremist content and propaganda materials is not only ineffective, but often counter-productive. It attacks a symptom rather than its cause. The online space needs to be better contested; community-led counter-speech initiatives and critical engagement strategies need to be developed and facilitated.
- Throughout Europe and elsewhere, there is a need to address the roots of radicalisation based on the ideological appeal being cultivated by violent and non-violent extremist groups, online and offline. Extremist groups that recruit and indoctrinate young individuals remain active and are not currently being effectively countered in much of the world, particularly in vulnerable environments such as educational institutions, prison systems and local communities.
- The reality of the threat posed by returning and potential FTFs needs to be better addressed and countered. Governments must identify prospective recruits and prevent them from travelling to join terrorist organisations abroad while also promoting the return of citizens. Returning FTFs should all face due process combined with a statutory de-radicalisation programme that addresses the post-traumatic stress disorder that many returnees will doubtless suffer from. De-radicalisation programmes should also provide tangible deliverables for eventual reintroduction into greater society while addressing the risk of an individual's backsliding into extremist networks.
- Al-Qaeda's recent establishment of al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) demonstrates that it has no intention of being obscured by IS. While its affiliates may have demonstrated more localist ambitions of late, this is more out of pragmatism than anything else. Hence, if circumstances allowed, al-Qaeda would likely refocus its attention west, again. Hence security forces should not consider al-Qaeda irrelevant and should remain cognisant of the fact that they will continue to target the West, regardless of the events in Syria and Iraq.

# Introduction

Since Islamic State (IS) swept into the global media spotlight in June 2014, the international community has watched in shock as the group has terrorised en masse those that do not comply with its violent and extremist worldview. Journalists, humanitarian aid workers and human rights activists have been brutally murdered, events that have been documented by the group and boasted about as part of its propaganda machine. At the time of publication, it is estimated that over 2,500 Western Europeans alone have journeyed to join in the crisis in Iraq and Syria, most joining IS.

International governments have been galvanised into action against IS and its self-proclaimed caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The group presents challenges that the international community has not before been faced with. It controls a huge amount of territory, administers the civil lives of some eight million people and rejects all norms of international law. However, in spite of its prominence, IS strategy, motivations and structure are often misdiagnosed by onlookers. Accordingly, this paper attempts to resolve some of the main misconceptions held about IS.

In order to better understand the mechanisms, which have allowed IS to develop into the terrorist organisation we see today, a broad lens of analysis is necessary. As such, this report takes a step back to look at the ideological and structural roots of IS which, as will be seen, are intrinsically linked to those of al-Qaeda. A comparative approach allows us to map where IS has developed new techniques, as well as where it has mimicked or built off of previous jihadist tactics.

## Research Structure

This report presents a qualitative analysis of IS based on long-term open source data collection, jihadist documents, interviews with acting government officials and specialists as well as the systematic tracking of a wide range of both official and unofficial jihadist news feeds and forums. While this report cannot hope to provide an absolute picture of IS due to the fluidity of the situation in Iraq and Syria, the following pages are intended to give a more nuanced, reasoned understanding of the group.

This report begins by briefly identifying the most important ideological jihadist and Islamist foundations from which both al-Qaeda and IS developed, after which it is split into three parts. Part I explains some of the fundamental tactical, logistical and doctrinal characteristics of jihadist terrorism, using al-Qaeda as its primary point of reference. The research explores al-Qaeda's background before delving into its strategy, structure and financial model, seeking to determine the main drivers of its operations in the

1990s and 2000s. The rise of IS is something of natural progression from this form of jihadism, reflecting the turbulence that has come to characterise the region's recent politics.

Part II tracks the trajectory of jihadism in the wake of the Arab uprisings, focusing, above all, on IS. A history and profile of its previous manifestations is provided. The analyses identify and discuss the ways in which IS has departed from the al-Qaeda 'norm' in terms of its ideological inclination, financial infrastructure, military tactics and recruitment efforts, not to mention its establishment of what it claims is a "caliphate".

The final part discusses the evolution of global jihadism with regards to IS and how policymakers will need to evolve with these changes. IS' declaration of a "caliphate" in June 2014 has had significant geopolitical as well as theological implications. An analysis of the threat presented by foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) and the reactions of jihadist groups across the world to the establishment of a "caliphate" is crucial for global counter-terrorism efforts. This section also offers broad recommendations on how the international community must reflect these shifts in the jihadist paradigm, in both counter-extremism and counter-terrorism terms.

## Getting our terms right

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify our terminology for this report. There has been much discussion over how we should refer to the group. Besides Islamic State, or IS, the group is also referred to as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), al-Dawlah (the State) and Da'ish, or Daesh.<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this report Quilliam has decided to use the name the organisation has given itself, translated into English - Islamic State – rather than use terms which are outdated or geographically misleading. The authors do not, however, refer to it with the definite article. It is imperative that IS is not granted the legitimacy that referring to it as "the" Islamic State would give; it is not a state, nor, arguably, is it Islamic.

It is also crucial to have a firm understanding of what exactly is being inferred with terms like Islamism and jihadism. Comprehensively tracking the historical evolution of Islamism into the known strands of jihadism is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, here, the research seeks simply to give an overview of the central tenets of both ideologies, identifying which beliefs and tactics are common to those groups most infamously associated with Islamist-motivated militancy.

Broadly, the term Islamism refers to a spectrum of political ideologies that have roots dating to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when a number of Muslim intellectuals sought to right the wrongs that they

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<sup>1</sup> The term Da'ish is based on the Arabic letters which form the acronym of the group's pre-June Arabic name, *al-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi al-'Irāq wa-al-Shām*.

believed Muslims faced because of imperialism. It was thought that by applying Islam to social and political life, removing it from its otherwise private function as a religion and using it to 'guide social and political as well as personal life', a utopian Islamic society could be brought into existence.<sup>2</sup> In essence, early Islamists believed that Islam and Muslims needed reconciling with modernity.

However, over the years, the more extremist Islamist trends were distilled in the context of authoritarianism and war. The concept of reconciliation became rejection. Currently, the majority of Islamist strands, drawing on 'Islamic referents – terms, symbols and events taken from the Islamic tradition – in order to articulate a distinct political agenda', tend to repudiate, rather than embrace, modernity.<sup>3</sup> It is from this loose spectrum of ideologies that jihadism, a form of religiously sanctioned militancy, has emerged. It is important that jihadism is not used interchangeably, or confused with, Islamism. Rather, it should be viewed as a violent subcategory of Islamism.

Despite some key differences, what all jihadists have in common – from Hamas and the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to al-Qaeda and IS – is a rigidly Manichean worldview that sanctions political violence, pitting Muslims ("Good") against non-Muslims ("Evil") and necessitating the re-establishment of the caliphate as a solution to injustice and Muslim disempowerment. Jihadist groups and their sympathiser networks view their political programmes, whatever form they take, as part of a 'struggle for God's sovereignty on earth [that] eliminates the middle ground and sets the stage for a millennial, eschatological battle between good and evil'.<sup>4</sup> All contemporary Islamists hold more or less similar beliefs to these but, unlike non-violent Islamists, jihadists' goals need to be achieved with urgency. Theirs is a zero-sum game; either they fight to try to help a Muslim utopia now, or they die in pursuit of it.

Just like Islamism, jihadism is a category of action. Al-Qaeda and IS are both part of a form of Salafi-jihadism, loosely based upon three concepts: hakmiyyah, jahiliyyah and global jihad. Broadly, hakmiyyah refers to a theological understanding of Allah's ultimate sovereignty over political, social and economic affairs as first defined by the South Asian ideologue and founder of Jamaat-e-Islami Abul 'Ala Mawdudi. The term jahiliyyah, in this context, refers to the worldview of Egyptian Islamist Sayyid Qutb, one that deems the Muslim community to 'have been extinct for a number of centuries', and have reverted to a pre-Islam state of affairs in the absence of a global leadership.<sup>5</sup> Because of this, radical and violent change to the existing order is urgently justified. Lastly, global jihad refers to an

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<sup>2</sup> Sheri Berman (2003), 'Islamism, Revolution and Civil Society', *Perspectives on Politics* 1, p. 258.

<sup>3</sup> Francesco Cavatorta (2005), 'The "War on Terrorism" – Perspectives from Radical Islamic Groups', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 16, p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz (2005), 'A Genealogy of Radical Islam', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, p. 81.

<sup>5</sup> Sayyid Qutb (2007), *Milestones*, (Damascus: Dar al-Ilm), 2007, p. 2.

understanding of jihad developed by Abdullah Azzam. In a fatwa issued in 1979, he ruled that all Muslims, regardless of their nationality, are obligated to fight defensive jihad against any enemy invading a Muslim land that cannot defend itself.<sup>6</sup> The above concepts were combined to form an ideology that could be used to justify violence against apostate regimes, and all those supporting them. Hence, jihadism, a Frankenstein's monster of an ideology, brings together three concepts that, individually, are all rooted firmly in the last century, but together, are more relevant than ever in today's world.

Many jihadist groups share the principles outlined above. However, there are important distinctions to be made over which is considered most central. Hence, even though groups like al-Qaeda and IS are, on the face of it, bedfellows, a brief historical appraisal of each shows their crucial strategic and ideological differences. As Intelwire's J.M. Berger notes, 'the two are just different branches of the same philosophy'.<sup>7</sup> As will be seen, while both draw on the same limited militant bibliography and proclaim to have the same ultimate goal – namely, re-establishing the "caliphate" and God's rule on Earth – their strategies are markedly different.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> This is the most cursory of summaries of Azzam's political thought on jihad. See Abdullah Azzam, *Defense of the Muslim Lands: the first obligation after iman*, 1979, trans. Brothers in Ribatt.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with J.M. Berger, (09-09-2014).

<sup>8</sup> Manzar Zaidi (2009), 'A taxonomy of jihad', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 31, p. 30.

## Part I: Generation Afghanistan

While its ideological roots go back much further than the 1980s, al-Qaeda, the group that was destined to become the standard-bearer of global jihadism, emerged as a largely abstract entity over the course of the Afghan War in the 1980s, during which Islamists from across the world travelled to fight “defensive” jihad against the Soviets. These foreign fighters were predominantly, but not exclusively, composed of Arabs and shared a common ideology, even though they were not one homogenous group. Most of them had been galvanised into the jihadist cause by events of the previous two years, a time of great upheaval and empowerment in the Middle East, not unlike the years that followed the toppling of the Tunisian state in 2011.

Among other things, the rise of the extremist Islamist cause was facilitated by Saudi Arabia’s investment drive into conservative forces in the region as a counterweight to the Islamic Republic of Iran’s challenges to the regional status quo in the wake of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Shortly after this, Juhayman al-Otaibi’s capture of Mecca’s Grand Mosque and the assassination of Sadat in Egypt prompted states across the Middle East, as a means of self-preservation, to jettison their most revolutionary extremists to the war in Afghanistan. These early jihadists were invariably a product of their time and, while they were relatively small in number and had a minimal impact upon the outcome of the war itself, their importance cannot be exaggerated: many of the violent Islamist mobilizations of the 1990s were led by men who had once been part of the “Afghan Arabs”.<sup>9</sup> It was from this pool of fighters that al-Qaeda emerged.

Just like IS, al-Qaeda’s emergence relied on a unique convergence of extrinsic factors: over the course of the 1980s, various state and non-state actors worked together with the Afghan mujahidin to aid them in the fight against Communism through recruitment, funding and training. One of the most prominent of these was an organisation formed in 1984 by Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and Osama bin Laden, a prominent Saudi businessman with pre-established wealth and good connections. Named Maktab al-Khadamat (MAK), the organisation successfully channeled funds to the mujahidin from donors across the world. It was from the financial and political infrastructure of MAK and the ideological melting pot of the war that the ideology and praxis of al-Qaeda was refined.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For an overview of the Arab Afghans, see: Thomas Hegghammer (2007) *Violent Islamism in Saudi Arabia, 1979-2006: the power and perils of pan-Islamic nationalism*, (Doctoral Dissertation, Paris: Sciences Po).

<sup>10</sup> Subsequently Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda’s current leader, joined MAK.



When the Soviets withdrew in 1989 from Afghanistan, shortly before Abdullah Azzam was killed in Peshawar and just after MAK fragmented, the mujahidin were left fighting the Communist government of Mohammad Najibullah. As the state collapsed and intra-mujahidin power struggles erupted, some of the Afghan Arabs decided to take their war back to the Near Enemy, defined as ‘impure society, including Shias, Christians and other sects, not to mention Sunnis deemed insufficiently Muslim’.<sup>11</sup> They were supported by senior jihadist ideologues, bin Laden among them, who wanted to ensure that Islamist extremism’s newfound momentum did not end with the collapse of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. Their destabilizing influence is undeniable, with some holding that they were the ‘first movers in at least eight’ anti-state mobilizations of years to come.<sup>12</sup>

The insurgencies in places like Egypt and Algeria served to help bin Laden become regarded as the leader of the global jihadist movement, even though they were doomed to failure.<sup>13</sup> These same failures also fortified bin Laden’s conviction that jihad against the Far Enemy (the “Crusader-Zionists” of the West) must be conducted before any large-scale initiatives in Muslim-majority states were carried out.

Through this lens, bin Laden’s brand of jihadism<sup>14</sup> was framed in defensive terms. He believed that, in order to protect Muslims and right the wrongs faced by the ummah across the world, the head of the snake had to be attacked and destroyed. The “head”, in bin Laden’s worldview, was the United States and Israel. As such, he understood the stationing of American troops in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Shield in 1990 as an attack on the ummah.<sup>15</sup> In his 1996 Declaration of War, bin Laden specifically refers to it as a betrayal by the Saudi regime, the point at which it ‘joined the apostates’.<sup>16</sup> It was at this point that bin Laden directed his attention towards initiating a holy war against the West in earnest as part of a strategy outlined succinctly in a 2010 letter to the leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), until his death in 2011:

‘The enemies of the *umma* today are like a malignant tree: it has a 50 centimetre American trunk and branches that differ in sizes, consisting of NATO members and many [apostate] regimes in the [Middle East and North Africa] region. We want to bring down the tree by sawing

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Alia Brahim, (05-09-2014).

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Hegghammer (2010), ‘The rise of Muslim foreign fighters: Islam and the globalization of jihad’, *International Security* 35, 72.

<sup>13</sup> Aaron Zelin (2014), ‘The war between IS and al-Qaeda for supremacy of the global jihadist movement’, *Research Notes: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* (20), 2.

<sup>14</sup> Also referred to as al-Qaedaism or bin Ladenism.

<sup>15</sup> Osama bin Laden (1996), ‘Bin Laden’s Fatwa’, *PBS*, (23-08).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

[its trunk], but our force and capability is limited. Thus, the sound and effective way to bring the tree down would be to focus our saw on its American root.<sup>17</sup>

It is worth noting that IS operates a reversal of the above strategy – its focus is on purging Muslim-majority states of impurities and establishing a “caliphate” first, before taking the fight to the West.

## Al-Qaeda in the 1990s

Understanding the structural, financial and ideological evolution of al-Qaeda over the last two decades is crucial if one is to comprehend where its affiliates are now. Importantly, it also provides the blueprints of the IS model. As mentioned above, while the founding document of al-Qaeda was published in the late 1980s, al-Qaeda did not come close to resembling a transnational jihadist movement until the mid-1990s.<sup>18</sup> After bin Laden left Afghanistan for Sudan at the beginning of the 1990s, he began to build his reputation as an Islamist philanthropist, investing in infrastructure, agriculture and businesses, developing populist support from the people and tribes within the region.<sup>19</sup> During this period al-Qaeda was largely dormant such that, as late as 1996, al-Qaeda was still but a shell of an organisation, bearing no more than 30 core members.<sup>20</sup>

When he arrived back in Afghanistan in 1996, bin Laden established what would become his base of operations, under the patronage of the Taliban. Until 2001, this was the central hub for all al-Qaeda operations. Because of the substantial global Islamist support he had garnered on the back of his activities in Sudan as well as his being at the forefront of resistance to the American-Saudi alliance in the Middle East, bin Laden was able to raise substantial funds from supporters in the Gulf and elsewhere. Alongside his personal wealth, this enabled him to embark upon a recruitment drive, thus transforming al-Qaeda from a loose idea into a transnational group. Its primary objective, the reversal of the global status quo, was made clear in his first “fatwa”,<sup>21</sup> in which he declared that Muslims are ‘the main target for the aggression of the Zionist-Crusaders alliance’.<sup>22</sup>

Two years later, in 1998, bin Laden established the World Islamic Front with four other jihadist ideologues from Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh, which formally waged ‘Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders’ and ruled that ‘to kill the Americans and their allies – civilians and military – [is] an individual

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<sup>17</sup> ‘Letter to Nasir al-Wuhayshi’, SOCOM-2012-0000016, 7.

<sup>18</sup> ‘8/11/1988 to 9/10/1988 – Minutes of al-Qaeda founding’, available at *Intelwire*.

<sup>19</sup> Gallab, Abdullahi A (2008) *The first Islamist republic: development and disintegration of Islamism in Sudan*, (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.), 127.

<sup>20</sup> David Rose (2002) ‘The Osama Files’, *Vanity Fair*, (January issue).

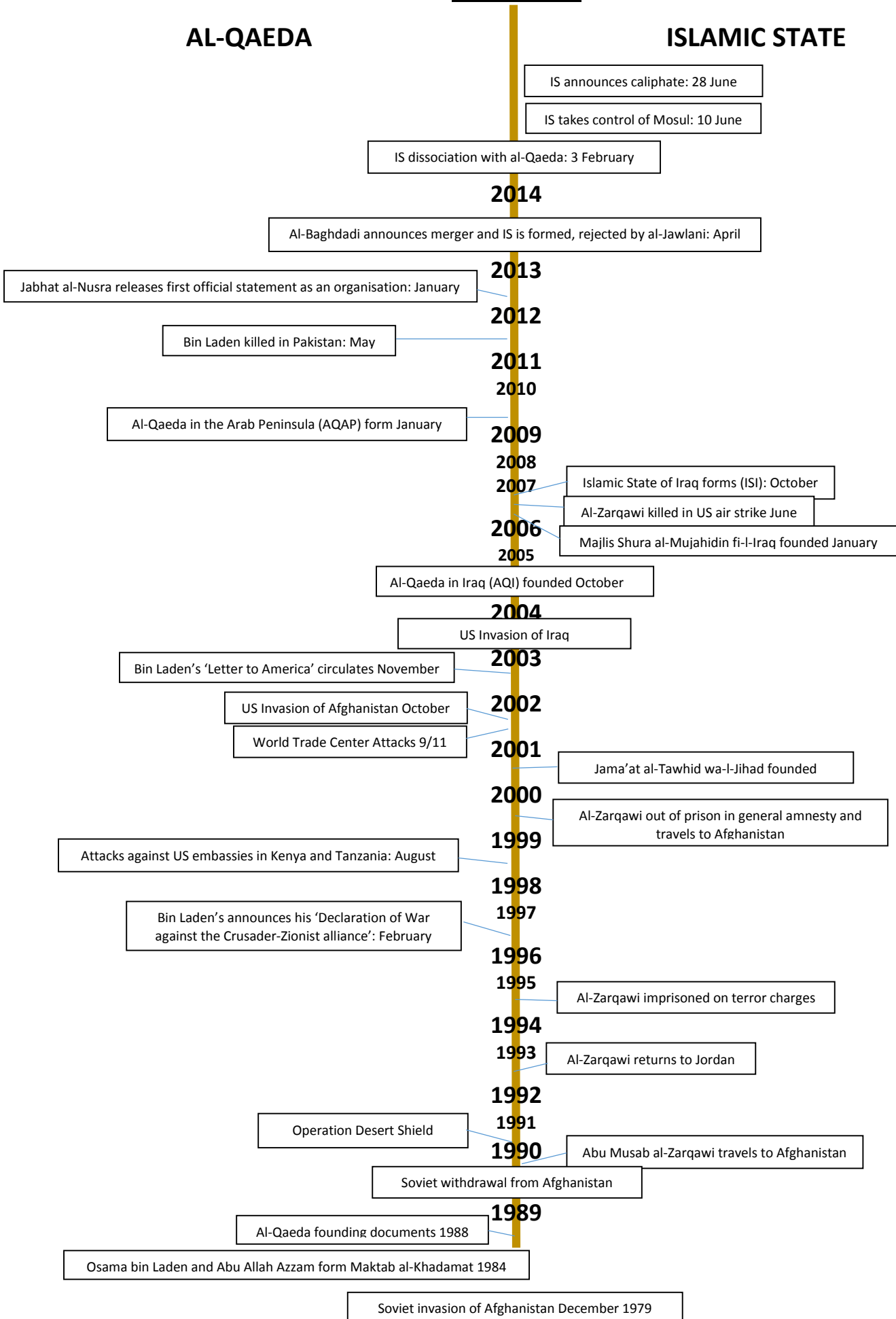
<sup>21</sup> It is a well-known fact that bin Laden did not have the level of religious authority necessary for giving fatwas.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Bin Laden’s Fatwa’, *PBS*.

# TIMELINE

## AL-QAEDA

## ISLAMIC STATE



duty for every Muslim who can do it'.<sup>23</sup> This statement was a foundation for jihadism in the years to come, as it laid down authoritatively that jihad against the Far Enemy was its most important form. It is worth noting here that the assertion that Muslims are required to wage war against "Crusaders", wherever they are, is strikingly similar to something called for by IS spokesman, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, on 22 September 2014. In light of the initiation of anti-IS coalition air strikes, he said, 'kill the disbeliever whether he is civilian or military, for they have the same ruling'.<sup>24</sup>

The three years in between the 1998 fatwa and the attacks of 9/11 were something of a golden age for al-Qaeda in terms of its prominence, not to mention the relative impunity with which it could act. By the summer of 2001, al-Qaeda possessed multiple training facilities, formal headquarters, recruitment centres around the world and thousands of sworn members.<sup>25</sup> It is thought that, by then, bin Laden had formed a contingent of around 3,000 operators comprising 'a core of about 200 people, a 122-person martyrdom brigade and several dozen foot soldiers recruited from the 700-or-so graduates of its training camps'.<sup>26</sup> Radicalised Muslim youths from all over the world travelled to Afghanistan to spend time at these camps, though in numbers not nearly as significant as those going to Iraq and Syria right now.<sup>27</sup>

While the above figures may be impressive, they are often misinterpreted. Bin Laden developed a powerful infrastructure in Afghanistan, but he did not create an organisation as coherent as many came to understand it. Even before 9/11 and the War on Terror, 'al-Qaeda functioned like a venture capital firm – providing funding, contacts and expert advice to many different militant groups and individuals from all over the Islamic world'.<sup>28</sup>

## Jihadism post-9/11

The geographical range of al-Qaeda operations towards the end of the 1990s confirms its transnational strategy. No matter where the attack was, the overall motivation remained the same: to destabilise international security and destabilise Western global economies. Despite certain al-Qaeda affiliates' deviation from it, bin Laden pursued this strategy, until his death in 2011. His successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, has implemented it too, though with less success, in light of operational difficulties. Never

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<sup>23</sup> Osama bin Laden (1998), 'Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders', *Federation of American Scientists*, (23-08).

<sup>24</sup> Translated into English: Abu Muhammad al-Adnani al-Shami (2014), 'In the Name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful: Indeed Your Lord Is Ever Watchful'.

<sup>25</sup> Marc Sageman (2008), 'The Next Generation of Terror', *Foreign Policy*, (March/April).

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Hegghammer (2006), 'Global Jihadism after the Iraq War', *The Middle East Journal* (60) Winter, 14.

<sup>27</sup> During the Afghan war between 1996 and 2001 it is estimated that 10,000 foreign terrorist fighters joined forces with al-Qaeda and other jihadist organisations to fight in Afghanistan. This number already pails in comparison to the estimated 16,000 foreign fighters that have joined in the Syrian over the last three years. See: Richard Barrett (2014) *Foreign Fighters in Syria* (The Soufan Group), p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Jason Burke (2004) 'Al Qaeda', *Foreign Policy* (May-June), p.18.

was bin Laden's objective more effectively achieved than on 11 September 2001 (9/11), when three planes, hijacked by members of al-Qaeda, crashed into the World Trade Center's Twin Towers and the Pentagon. A fourth was destroyed before it reached its intended target. The alleged motives for 9/11, outlined in bin Laden's 2002 *Letter to America*, were the US military presence in Saudi Arabia, sanctions against Iraq and the US' unconditional support of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories.<sup>29</sup>

With these attacks, bin Laden hoped to provoke a reaction from the US to bolster al-Qaeda's ranks with Muslims radicalised as a result of its disproportionality.<sup>30</sup> It is worth noting that, every time IS releases a beheading video that targets English and Western audiences, it is motivated by, among other things, the desire to provoke Western intervention.<sup>31</sup> IS wants a stronger response from the world and, as former State Department official Matthew Hoh observes, 'ultimately lure Western ground troops into the fray' so it can realise its apocalyptic vision.<sup>32</sup>

Besides provocation, the 9/11 hijackings were also a means of self-promotion for al-Qaeda, in an 'attempt to become the brand to beat'.<sup>33</sup> In essence, al-Qaeda was using violence as 'an instrument of armed propaganda' and trying to present itself as stronger than it actually was.<sup>34</sup> However, as events unfolded, it became clear that 9/11 was a gamble that did not pay off. Most Muslims condemned the attacks in the strongest of terms. Nevertheless, after 9/11, al-Qaeda appeared to be the first jihadist group capable of taking the fight to the Far Enemy in the most literal of terms and, hence, it emerged from the attacks stronger than ever, at least in terms of its support from jihadists. At this stage, at least, the same cannot be said for IS. While it has a huge amount of hubris, to date, it has enjoyed only piecemeal support from the global jihadist community.

Just as 9/11 was the zenith of al-Qaeda's international influence, it was, arguably, also the beginning of its unravelling. Indeed, since 2001, it has been forced to operate as a franchise organisation with a number of distinct parts, though it still operates with tactics still aimed at gaining international media attention, exaggerating its ubiquity and, thus, giving the impression that it constitutes a significant threat to "apostate" regimes.<sup>35</sup> Certainly, its designation as an 'umbrella organisation for a worldwide

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<sup>29</sup> 'Full Text: bin Laden's 'letter to America'', *The Observer*, 24-11-2002.

<sup>30</sup> Usama bin Laden's approach fits in with what McCormick and Giordano term the 'provocation effect of violence'. Gordon McCormick and Frank Giordano (2007), 'Things Come Together: Symbolic Violence and Guerrilla Mobilisation', *Third World Quarterly* 28, p.308.

<sup>31</sup> The Foley beheading video, for example, was the first video aimed specifically at gaining attention of Western audiences and announcing a clear threat by IS to Western powers. This strategy worked since international media attention on IS was bolstered ten-fold from this and subsequent videos.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Matthew Hoh, (04-09-2014).

<sup>33</sup> Jared Brachman (2009), *Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice*, (London: Routledge), p.39.

<sup>34</sup> McCormick and Giordano, 'Things come together', p.307.

<sup>35</sup> Brian Fishman (2008), 'Using the mistakes of al Qaeda's franchises to undermine its strategy', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (618), p.46.

network [of] Sunni extremist groups' still holds to some extent; however, in recent years, it has become more fragmented than ever before.<sup>36</sup>

## Structure

As a direct result of the War on Terror, al-Qaeda was forced to become even more decentralised and dispersed. The organisation was broadly forged of two structures: al-Qaeda "Central", based in Afghanistan and a handful of groups led by veteran combatants who had received training in Afghanistan and went on to set up al-Qaeda franchises elsewhere. These groups maintained strong links with al-Qaeda Central, like the aforementioned AQAP or al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

Broadly, this was reflective of a wider trend in post-9/11 jihadism that saw terrorists having to operate under much greater levels of scrutiny. This was more the case for al-Qaeda and its affiliates than any other group. The US invasion of Afghanistan greatly infringed upon al-Qaeda Central's ability to function as it hitherto had been. The destruction of training camps, bases of operation and personnel limited the capabilities of the organisation. Great strains were also put on its leadership. Many core members were killed while others went into hiding or fled, seeking refuge in other countries.<sup>37</sup>

In spite of this, al-Qaeda's adaptability enabled it to re-structure and continue to exist as more of 'an extremely diverse and loosely ideological movement emerged, which many continue to call al-Qaeda for lack of a better term'.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, by 2011, Western intelligence officials believed that there were fewer than 300 surviving members, based mainly in Pakistan and Afghanistan, a far cry from a peak of 3,000-4,000 fighters in the late 1990s. Some claim that the bulk of al-Qaeda's membership now comprises of cooks, drivers, bodyguards and foot soldiers.<sup>39</sup> However, that is not to say that it no longer presents a threat, as some have wrongly inferred on a number of occasions in the wake of bin Laden's death.

If we draw a comparison between the case of al-Qaeda and the current countermeasures IS faces in Syria and Iraq – namely, air strikes and, perhaps one day, a ground invasion – it becomes clear that we should anticipate a similar ability to re-structure and evolve. We have already witnessed its adaptability in the way it has changed its modus operandi since coalition strikes began in August 2014. Hence, like al-Qaeda before it, IS cannot and will not be bombed into irrelevance.

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<sup>36</sup> Eben Kaplan (2007), 'The rise of al-Qaedaism', *Council on Foreign Relations*, (18-07).

<sup>37</sup> Hossal (2012) 'Evolution of Al Qaeda's Strategy'.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>39</sup> Fawaz A. Gerges (2011), 'The Future of Al Qaeda', *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas* (22), Autumn, 30.

## Strategic Focus - From Far to Near

Since 2001, the ideological inclination of al-Qaeda has also changed. Now, its leaders act more as the preachers of global jihadism than its lieutenants.<sup>40</sup> Reflective of this decentralisation of authority, its affiliates have shifted their priorities away from al-Qaeda Central's target, the West, and onto a sort of pseudo-religious nationalist trajectory that justifies itself with globalist rhetoric. With this shift has come a vital ideological modification: the renewed use of takfir (excommunication) to justify attacks in Muslim majority societies, something that, back in the 1980s, bin Laden was reluctant to employ.

Indeed, in the past, bin Laden tried to ensure that al-Qaeda steered clear of the theological quagmire that the concept of takfir presents by ostensibly avoiding the targeting of Muslims. This was to protect its legitimacy as a Muslim vanguard waging defensive war on behalf of the ummah, fearing that the killing of other Muslims would fragment the global jihadist front.<sup>41</sup> IS, however, does not shirk from employing it, at all. This ideological nuance is worth ruminating on, because it highlights a crucial difference between bin Laden and IS' respective understanding of jihadism. That said, this is not so much the case with its affiliates, who are, reflective of wider trends in global jihadism, increasingly looking inwards, as is explored below.

While bin Laden sought to first "cut the head off the snake" by attacking on the West, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, IS' most important ideologue, regarded the need to attack the "body of the snake" as more urgent. In other words, al-Qaeda's priority under bin Laden was to focus outwards on destabilising the West before confronting internal enemies. IS has made its first priority internal purification. As Aaron Zelin, notes, al-Qaeda Central's strategy 'still focuses very much on the West'.<sup>42</sup>

## Affiliates

Without a doubt, the greatest threat al-Qaeda presents today originates from its affiliates, not the "Central" branch. Now, as it no longer has a pyramid-shaped hierarchical structure, its splinter groups can act more autonomously and unpredictably. While al-Qaeda Central's international leverage is forever depleting, that of its affiliates is steadily growing, especially in areas of instability. AQAP and AQIM, for example, have enjoyed significant gains of late, helped by the Houthi rebellion in Yemen and the continued political deterioration of Tunisia and Libya. Furthermore, since it entered the war in 2011,

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<sup>40</sup> Usama bin Laden's belief that 'the political returns from confronting the near enemy were very low' is well known. See Gerges (2005) *The Far Enemy*, p. 125.

<sup>41</sup> However, al-Qaeda's distaste for it did not preclude its being used by other jihadist groups in the 1990s, most notoriously by the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria (GIA), to justify attacks on army, police, ministers & any instruments of the state, including government-friendly imams & religious scholars.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Aaron Zelin, (05-09-2014).

al-Qaeda's affiliate in the Levant, Jabhat al-Nusra (JN), has gone from strength to strength. Its strategic exploits swiftly garnered it international recognition as a conventional fighting force. However, the rise of IS has dulled its advances and challenged its ideological appeal. That is not to say that JN has been obscured beyond recognition; after all, it was the so-called Khorasan Cell within JN that allegedly prompted international terrorist alerts in July 2014.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to this, al-Qaeda is continuing to expand. Indeed, in September 2014, Ayman al-Zawahiri stated that al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) was established as a means to revive jihadist activity in a region that was once 'part of the land of Muslims, until the infidel enemy occupied it, fragmented it and split it.'<sup>44</sup> So, one thing that we must recognise is that the group is not going anywhere.

### Official al-Qaeda Affiliate Groups

Affiliate Org.	Location	Year of affiliation	Founder/ Leader	Status
Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ)	Egypt	2001	Muhammad Abdul Salam Faraj	Fully merged
Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) <sup>45</sup>	North Africa	2007	Abu Musab Abdel Wadoud AKA Abdelmalek Droukdel	Affiliate
Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)	Yemen	2009	Naser al-Wuhayshi	Affiliate
Al Shabaab	Somalia	2011	Ahmed Godane	Affiliate
Jabhat al-Nusra (JN)*	Syria	2011	Abu Mohammed al-Jawlani	Affiliate
Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS)	Indian Subcontinent	2014	Asim Umar	Affiliate
Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) founded as Tawhid w-al-Jihad <sup>46</sup>	Iraq	2004	Abu Musab al-Zarqawi	Ties severed

**Note:** The groups listed in this table are official al-Qaeda affiliate groups. A number of other groups exist which have formally or informally pledged their support for al-Qaeda. However, the groups listed above have direct contact with al-Qaeda Central and receive financial and/or logistical assistance from al-Qaeda. Academics and specialists argue over whether we can term groups as 'affiliates', 'franchises' or 'branches' but, for simplicity's sake we have chosen to label the above as al-Qaeda 'affiliates'.

<sup>43</sup> Barack Obama, 'Statement by the President on the Airstrikes in Syria', The White House, 23-09-2014.

<sup>44</sup> Ayman al-Zawahiri (2014), 'On the establishment of al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent'.

<sup>45</sup> Camille Tawil (2011), 'How bin Laden's death will affect al-Qa'ida's regional franchises', *Combating Terrorism Center: CTC Sentinel* (May), 7-8.

<sup>46</sup> Lucas Scott (2014), 'Iraq and Syria Q&A: Where does Islamic State get its funds?', *EA World View*, (11-07).



While it may appear to be on the back foot right now because of the international media focus on IS, there is no ignoring the fact that al-Qaeda – a group that has the same end goal as IS, if not, at this juncture, the same infamy – is deeply entrenched in Syria, just as it is in North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Its latest foray in global jihadism, its expansion of operations into the Indian subcontinent, is significant not only because of what it could hold for the region, but because it indicates that al-Qaeda has no intention of disappearing passively.

## Finances

Just as it is right now with regards to IS, at the heart of all efforts to bring on the disintegration of al-Qaeda and its affiliates is money. Many jihadist organisations – in particular, those affiliated with al-Qaeda – are well-funded, and have been for a long time. Indeed, at its peak, al-Qaeda's financial network was approximated at over \$300 million in value.<sup>47</sup> In this report, it is especially important to consider the intricacies of al-Qaeda's finances because they differ so much from those of IS. The financial infrastructure upon which al-Qaeda is built remains focused on decentralisation, untraceability and fluidity, a system perhaps best described in a UNT Libraries report as:

‘an elusive network [...] and unconventional web to support itself, its operations, and its people. Al-Qaeda has demonstrated the ability, both before and after 9/11, to raise money from many different sources [that are] resilient, redundant, and difficult to detect.’<sup>48</sup>

Before and after 9/11, al-Qaeda received most of the funds for its activities, which, the CIA estimated, cost \$30 million per year to sustain, from donations.<sup>49</sup> Generally, jihadist groups have, over the last couple of decades, tended to raise funds from two primary sources: donations and revenue-generating activities such as fraud, drug trafficking, kidnapping and extortion in addition to running legitimate businesses.<sup>50</sup>

As will be seen below, the means by which IS is funded is another, very significant, point of departure from the al-Qaeda norm. However, that is not to say that its relative autonomy came completely out of the blue. Indeed, as the US Department of Treasury has increasingly targeted the group directly throughout the 2000s, al-Qaeda and its affiliates have had to act more independently. Along with

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<sup>47</sup> Mark Basile (2004), ‘Going to the Source: Why al Qaeda’s financial network is likely to withstand the current war on terrorist financing’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (27), 169-185, 170.

<sup>48</sup> John Roth, Douglas Greenburg and Serena Wille (2004), ‘Al Qaeda’s Means and Methods to Raise, Move and Use Money’, *Terrorist Financing Staff Monograph*, UNT Libraries: Cyber Cemetery, 17.

<sup>49</sup> A recovered document from the Benevolence International Foundation [BIF] listed 20 top al Qaeda financiers, known as the Golden Chain. See: Basile, ‘Going to the Source’, 172. See also: Roth, Greenburg and Wille, ‘Al-Qaeda’s Means and Methods’, 19.

<sup>50</sup> Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (2002), ‘Guidance for Financial Institutions in Detecting Terrorist Financing’.

almost all other jihadist groups, they had to finance themselves as much as is possible using methods akin to a criminal gangs. Of course, there is still a sizeable amount of funding filtering into the organisation through a number of channels, from charitable organisations and private donors in particular.<sup>51</sup> Individuals who have funded al-Qaeda have been, primarily, located in the Gulf – particularly Saudi Arabia.<sup>52</sup>

The US Treasury Department has asserted that, by the end of 2009, al-Qaeda was in its weakest financial position yet.<sup>53</sup> However, upheaval in the region has presented an opportunity for jihadists. Indeed, because of the turmoil in Libya and the war in Syria, there has been a significant rise in fundraising for jihadist groups acting as anti-state militias, none more so than JN. In addition to this, as states have been torn apart by war, such groups have been able to implement self-funding structures reminiscent of those of states, administering the sale of goods, resources and services. Hence, just as military tactics become more conventional in the right circumstances, so do economic strategies.

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In presenting a somewhat generalised picture of the main trends in global jihadism in the 1990s and 2000s, Part I has explored the background of al-Qaeda, following its trajectory from centralisation to enfranchisement. In discussing its principal motivations, strategic objectives and logistical structures in the context of our rapidly changing world, it has been made resolutely clear that al-Qaeda remains relevant. Indeed, as recent Quilliam reports note, al-Qaeda has undergone a resurgence in recent years.<sup>54</sup> In August 2013, for example, its activities led to the closure of twenty-one US embassies and, more recently, the imposition of new airport security measures across the world.<sup>5556</sup> Besides this, what has been rendered most apparent is that adaptability is at the heart of the group, whether it is in light of the War on Terror, economic pressure or the instability that is rocking the Middle East right now. What we can be sure of is that the failed uprisings in places like Syria and Libya have laid fertile ground for a sort of renaissance for al-Qaeda-linked jihadism. However, this same instability has also been an incubator for something else, a new adaptation of Islamist-motivated terrorism and what is best described as a departure from the al-Qaeda norm, an evolution from it – IS. Below, we will explain why this is so.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 169.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

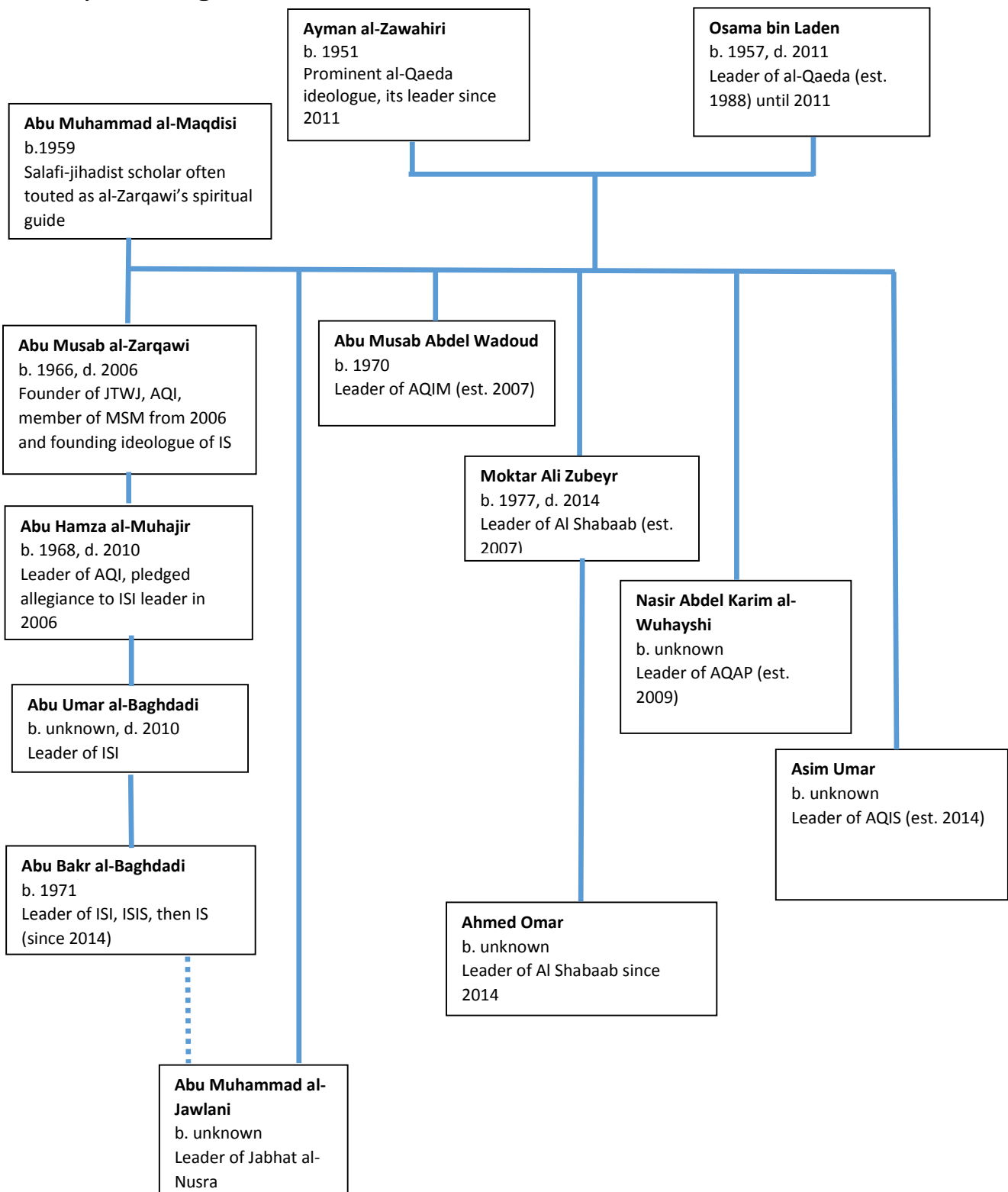
<sup>53</sup> David S. Cohen, (2009), 'Remarks to the ABA/ABA Money Laundering Enforcement Conference', *US Department of the Treasury*, (12-10).

<sup>54</sup> Noman Benotman and Jonathan Russell (2013), *A new index to assess the effectiveness of al-Qaeda*.

<sup>55</sup> (2013), 'US embassy closures extended over militant threat fears', *BBC News*, (05-08).

<sup>56</sup> Tom Whitehead, (2014), 'Airport security: you won't fly to the US if your mobile phone battery is dead', *The Telegraph*, (07-07).

# Key Ideologues<sup>57</sup>



<sup>57</sup> This by no means an exhaustive list of key ideologues within the spectrum of al-Qaeda and Islamic State ideologues, rather it is designed to give an overview of the most important individuals involved.

## Part II: Islamic State

As has already been mentioned, in the latter half of the 2000s, al-Qaeda's focus shifted towards 'defending' Muslims values from local regimes, as fighting the West became more strategically difficult. To an extent, this was pragmatism at work. It allowed al-Qaeda to preserve its image as a 'protector' of Muslims, rather than look like a group that was on the offensive. With the rise of IS, though, there has been a shift from defence to offence in the global jihadist movement, a shift which is now making al-Qaeda and its affiliate groups seem, in the eyes of many analysts, almost outdated. In a sense, jihadism has been manipulated by IS into something that is more about empowerment than defence, something that brings together preoccupations with the Near and Far Enemy, thus 'posing a combined threat to society, regional states and the West as well'.<sup>58</sup> Below, we will expand upon the emergence and consolidation of this strand of jihadism, one that has similar roots to al-Qaeda but, in many ways, is distinct from it.

### Al-Zarqawi's rise to prominence

A common misconception that has circulated in the media discourse on Syria and Iraq is that IS appeared out of nowhere at the beginning of June 2014, when Mosul, a city of some two million people, fell to its militants. Many have peddled the view that, before it took over Mosul, IS was not worth worrying about, just another obscure group of militants on the periphery of the global jihadist movement. Such a belief is profoundly and categorically incorrect. On the contrary, the group has been a long time in the making and has very deep roots in Iraq, if not Syria.

Another misconception is that the rivalry between IS and al-Qaeda is a new phenomenon. It is not. Indeed, as researcher on jihadism Alia Brahimy notes, relations between IS' forerunners and al-Qaeda have 'never been harmonious, as internal correspondences from the past decade show'.<sup>59</sup> While most analysts and practitioners have grasped this fact, it has taken some time for policymakers to take it into consideration. To reiterate the distinctions between al-Qaeda and IS, below we give an overview of the emergence of IS and its forebears, as well as a brief assessment of its tempestuous relationship with al-Qaeda over the last decade.

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<sup>58</sup> Interview Alia Brahimy, (05-09-2014).

<sup>59</sup> Zelin, 'The war between ISIS and al-Qaeda', 1.

The legacy of IS' chief ideologue, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, is still starkly visible today. His worldview and interpretation of Islamism, even more rejectionist and exclusivist than even bin Laden's, can be traced directly to the current methodology and ideological outlook of IS today. As such, any overview of IS' background must first touch upon al-Zarqawi.

Born in Jordan in 1966, he was a petty criminal who is said to have struggled with alcoholism in his youth.<sup>60</sup> By the end of the 1980s, though, al-Zarqawi was looking for an alternative to his haphazard existence, something that resulted in his travelling to Afghanistan to fight the Afghan state in the wake of the Soviet withdrawal. His time there was important, for it was in jihadist training camps that he would come to meet figures like Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, arguably the most important figure in contemporary jihadist scholarship, and a man to whom he owed much.<sup>61</sup> By 1993, al-Zarqawi was back in Jordan, where he was to be imprisoned on terrorism charges after being found in possession of guns and explosives.

During his six years in prison – much of it spent with al-Maqdisi – his ideological inclination was refined, departing from what had become the salafi-jihadist norm into something that was more austere, stressing the need for piety in praxis, not knowledge in theology. This difference, while it may appear slight, is significant in understanding the shift in jihadism we are witnessing today and is one of the things that encapsulates the crux of the current enmity between al-Qaeda and IS. With the 'inflexible interpretation of the Salafi-jihadi doctrine' that IS inherited from al-Zarqawi, the group has focused on urgently establishing an Islamist state to help 'purge Muslim societies of immorality and non-Islamic practices', first, before attacking Western targets.<sup>62</sup>

Whatever the case, after al-Zarqawi was released from prison in Jordan at the end of the 1990s, he returned to Afghanistan, where he established a training camp in Herat, receiving logistical assistance from bin Laden.<sup>63</sup> Importantly, while his Herat initiative is believed to have received seed funding from what had, by 1999, become al-Qaeda proper, it was not an al-Qaeda camp but al-Zarqawi's own. It was

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<sup>60</sup> Anthony Celso (2014), *Al-Qaeda's post-9/11 devolution: the failed jihadist struggle against the near and far enemy*, (London: Bloomsbury), 106.

<sup>61</sup> For more on al-Maqdisi, Joas Wagemakers' book is well worth a read. (2012), *A quietist jihadi: the ideology and influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>62</sup> Eli Alshech, (2014), 'The doctrinal crisis within the Salafi-Jihadi ranks and the emergence of neo-Takfirism', *Islamic Law and Society* 21, 8.

<sup>63</sup> It goes without saying that, at this early stage, doctrinal differences between the al-Qaeda leader and al-Zarqawi were not too big an issue.

not long, though, before he left Afghanistan for good to set up a camp in Iraqi Kurdistan region, a place from which he planned attacks against the Jordanian monarchy and Israel, respectively.<sup>64</sup>

### From Jama'at al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad (JWTJ) to Majlis Shura al-Mujahidin (MSM)

In Iraq, al-Zarqawi continued to lead his al-Qaeda-assisted (but not affiliated) group, Jama'at al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad (JWTJ), until late 2004, when he finally solidified his relations with al-Qaeda and pledged *bay'ah*, a promise of full allegiance except where this entails disobedience to God, to bin Laden.<sup>65</sup> After this, JWTJ was renamed the al-Qaeda Organisation in the Land of the Two Rivers, otherwise known as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). However, in spite of the name change, al-Zarqawi continued to push his particular jihadist agenda. Indeed, his and bin Laden's relationship was, more than anything else, a marriage of convenience, a union made primarily for pragmatic reasons: al-Zarqawi clearly needed access to al-Qaeda Central's finances and global infrastructure and, to get this, subordination to bin Laden was necessary.

Over the next few years, AQI waged a campaign of terror across Iraq, kidnapping and beheading foreign workers, targeting Shi'ites and government workers with suicide operations, and generally trying to dispense irreparable instability upon Iraq.<sup>66</sup> AQI tactics in Iraq – focused as they were on instigating internal chaos and instability – are reflected in the current strategy of IS which, as noted by Pieter van Ostaeyen, itself resembles those ideas outlined by an unknown jihadist strategist under the pseudonym Abu Bakr Naji, in *The Management of Savagery*.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, al-Zarqawi's focus on bringing institutional stability and governance to regions that he himself deliberately plagued with destruction fits well into this idea, which will be revisited later.<sup>68</sup>

AQI did not last. Shortly before al-Zarqawi's death in June 2006, he established, along with the leaders of five other Iraqi jihadist groups, Majlis Shura al-Mujahidin (MSM). Following the airstrike that killed al-Zarqawi not long after MSM's formation, his successor, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, carried on the trajectory that his predecessor had been following and, in October 2006, it was announced that the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) had been formed of the MSM coalition. Strikingly, al-Muhajir used this as an

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<sup>64</sup> Something which was a pretext for the invasion of Iraq. He did not, however, have links with Saddam Hussein's regime, as declassified Pentagon documents show. R. Jeffrey Smith (2007), 'Hussein's prewar ties to al-Qaeda discounted', *Washington Post*, (06-04).

<sup>65</sup> 'Zarqawi's pledge of allegiance to al-Qaeda: from Mu'asker al-Battar, Issue 21', trans. Jeffrey Pool, *Terrorism Monitor* 24 (2004).

<sup>66</sup> For a closer look at this strategy from within the jihadist worldview, refer to 'From hijrah to khilafah' in the first issue of *Dabiq*, the IS propaganda magazine.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Pieter van Ostaeyen, (04-09-2014).

<sup>68</sup> William McCants' excellent 2006 translation of Naji's *The management of savagery: the most critical stage through which the umma will pass*.

opportunity to crystallize a symbolic shift away from al-Qaeda by pledging allegiance not to bin Laden, as his forebears had, but to the emir of ISI, Abu Umar al-Baghdadi (not to be confused with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi). As Zelin writes, this choice of allegiance meant that ISI 'and its subsequent incarnations have not technically been subordinate to al-Qaeda in eight years' and has thus been able to pursue a degree of autonomy from bin Laden and al-Zawahiri.<sup>69</sup>

However, while al-Muhajir's shift in allegiance is symbolically significant, it did not constitute a full separation from al-Qaeda, either theoretically or practically. The true break between IS and al-Qaeda did not solidify until February 2014, when Ayman al-Zawahiri announced officially that 'the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham is not a branch of the al-Qaeda group [which] has no organisational relationship with it and is not responsible for its actions'.<sup>70</sup> As mentioned above, this powerful rebuttal was many years in the making, but it was during the period from 2011 to 2014, as the Syrian Civil War raged, that AQ-IS cohabitation turned into bitter enmity and, ultimately, rejection.

## IS and the Syrian War

In 2011, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the current leader of IS, sent a contingent of what were then ISI militants, led by Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani, across the Iraq-Syria border to fight the Assad regime under the banner of Jabhat al-Nusra (JN). Al-Jawlani, an effective military commander, rapidly led his faction to become the most effective rebel fighting force in Syria, something which brought it to the forefront of the war. Seeking to reap the ideological and practical benefits of JN's successes, al-Baghdadi made an announcement in April 2013 that ISI would be no more; rather, its activities were extending into Syria and hence its name would be changed to Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). In doing so, JN would be absorbed back into its parent organisation, something that al-Jawlani rejected soon after, affirming his allegiance to al-Zawahiri, not al-Baghdadi, thereby effectively rejecting the latter's legitimacy. His repudiation of the merger was backed by the al-Qaeda leader, who attempted to mediate this rapidly deteriorating tussle by nullifying al-Baghdadi's claims and dispatching a top al-Qaeda figure to Syria to mediate between the two groups.

In the months that followed al-Zawahiri's statement, the infighting between IS and JN continued to escalate, with thousands of jihadists dying as a result.<sup>71</sup> Due to its vehement rejection of all those who were not outspoken allies, IS soon became regarded as the more extreme of the two groups, something

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<sup>69</sup> Aaron Zelin, (2014) 'The war between IS and al-Qaeda', *The Washington Institute*, 3.

<sup>70</sup> Ayman al-Zawahiri (2014), 'Statement concerning the relationship between the al-Qaeda group and the Islamic State in Iraq and ash-Sham group', (02-02).

<sup>71</sup> It is estimated that by March 2014, over 3,000 fighters had been killed in battles between ISIS and al-Nusra. See: Associated Press. (2014) 'ISIL says it faces war with Nusra in Syria' *Al Jazeera*, (8 March).

made evident by its execution of other jihadists – notably its beheading of a leading figure of Ahrar al-Sham in November 2013 and the killing of Abu Khalid al-Suri, the al-Qaeda ideologue sent to mediate the IS-JN dispute, in January 2014.<sup>7273</sup> The latter’s death was the straw that broke the camel’s back – al-Zawahiri’s official excommunication of al-Baghdadi from al-Qaeda came shortly after, in February 2014.<sup>74</sup>

If nothing else, what the above events demonstrate is that understanding the respective histories of al-Qaeda and IS is imperative if one is to grasp the particulars of the current rift between al-Zawahiri and al-Baghdadi. The cleavage between the two groups, something that has only been solidified since the beginning of this year, owes itself not just to on-the-ground developments in Syria and Iraq, as is commonly misconceived. Rather, the split has much deeper roots that can be found in the ideological differences of bin Laden and al-Zarqawi, and thus go back as far as the 1990s.

In many ways IS does not represent a new form of terrorism. The brutal violence exhibited by it – beheadings, crucifixions, torture – are, unfortunately, not new. However, there are some aspects to IS that do make it distinct from other groups, a result of evolution rather than a clear break from past jihadist strategy. They have led some to claim it has driven AQ into obscurity, redefined Islamist-inspired terrorism and irreparably changed the game for counter-terrorism and counter-extremism practitioners. Whether this is fair to say will be discussed below.

## The IS “Caliphate”

One of the most striking features of IS, something which renders it distinct from other jihadist organisations is that, not only does it lay claim to a contiguous territory that stretches over a thousand miles across Syria and Iraq, but it has established within this terrain a “caliphate”, ‘the first real jihadist state’.<sup>75</sup> In stark contrast to other jihadist groups that have, in the past, taken over swathes of land but then continued to operate more or less covertly, like AQIM in the Sahel and AQAP in Yemen for example, IS has operated openly.<sup>76</sup>

Hence, while the sheer amount of land that IS controls is significant, it is not the most important thing to take into account. Rather, what is more striking is the fact that it is a de facto state. Its actions are not underground; it seeks – and, to an extent, has – popular legitimacy. Of course, this is possible only

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<sup>72</sup> Pieter van Ostaeyen (2013), ‘A strategic mistake – ISIS beheads a member of Harakat Ahrar al-Sham’, (13-11).

<sup>73</sup> Aron Lund (2014), ‘Who and what was Abu Khalid al-Suri?’, *Carnegie Endowment*, (24-02).

<sup>74</sup> See ‘The relationship between the al-Qaeda group and the Islamic State in Iraq and ash-Sham group’.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Aaron Zelin, (05-09-2014).

<sup>76</sup> Aaron Zelin (2014), ‘The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria has a Consumer Protection Office’, *The Atlantic*, (13-06).



because of the unprecedented level of regional destabilization brought on by the Syrian civil war and Iraq's crippling sectarian politics.<sup>77</sup> In this climate of instability, IS was able to quietly enlarge its sphere of influence, collect funds, train its fighters and consolidate its popularity like no other group before it.

That the IS 'state' has purported, since 29 June 2014, to be a "caliphate" is of profound importance. In doing so, it is asserting itself as the vanguard of Islam, the *only* legitimate jihadist movement, and one that all other 'emirates, groups, states and organizations' are subordinate to.<sup>78</sup> This comes as a direct challenge to the legitimacy of al-Qaeda, which, because it shares IS' salafi-jihadist ideology, also has the establishment of a "caliphate" as its ultimate goal. In effect, al-Baghdadi has seized the initiative and made an enormous affront to al-Zawahiri, something from which he will take time to recover from.

IS' hubris has, largely, paid off. While there have been relatively few pledges of allegiance to al-Baghdadi from other jihadist groups, its claim to the "caliphate" has, at the time of writing, only been weakly contested. Hence, it has gone from being a terrorist group to a terrorist state that purports to be a pristine Islamic utopia, something which renders it ever more appealing to extremists in the outside world who adhere to the extremist Islamist cause.

Clearly, IS propagandists recognise this fact. Indeed, the group's promise of an Islamist utopia is a theme that permeates throughout much of its propaganda.<sup>79</sup> While the vast majority of Muslims vehemently reject the idea of al-Baghdadi's proto-state being at all legitimate, there is a tiny minority that do not. For these extremists, IS rhetoric is as persuasive as it is pervasive; they consider al-Baghdadi to be the leader of all Muslims and deem emigration to the lands that he rules over obligatory. As such, its claim to be a "caliphate" is one of the most powerful drivers of recruitment for IS, with people succumbing to its appeal in their thousands.

Its focus on millenarianism is another aspect of its appeal that renders it distinct from other jihadists. While apocalyptic themes do certainly play a role in other jihadists' propaganda – indeed, the name of AQAP's media branch, Malahem Media, is a direct reference to the End of Days – none use them as much as IS, which is forever alluding to the apocalypse. Its adherents subscribe to the myth that events in Iraq and Syria are the realisation of the Malhamat al-Kubra, the prophesised battle at the end of times shortly before Judgement Day.<sup>80</sup> Almost any important development, on or off the battlefield, is

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<sup>77</sup> Michael Holden (2014), 'Syrian conflict putting al-Qaeda militants closer to Europe – UK', *Reuters*, (03-10).

<sup>78</sup> Abu Muhammad al-Adnani (2014), 'This is the promise of Allah', (29-06).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Fitan w-al-Ashrat al-Sa'ah*, Chapter 9: Conquest of Constantinople and emergence of the Dajjal and the descent of Jesus, Book 54:44.

used as a sign that the end is near, not least the capture of towns like Dabiq, mentioned in a number of particularly eschatological hadiths.

The importance of the above must not be understated. While it may not have caused a massive dissension among the world's jihadists away from al-Qaeda and its affiliates, it gives IS theological weight that it would not otherwise have had. Furthermore, it is worth nothing that, because IS has gone ahead and established a "caliphate", there is a chance that things could be different when the current leader of al-Qaeda dies. At that point, all current bay'at (pledges of allegiance) to him (and thus al-Qaeda) will become void. Therefore, the jihadists who have come out in favour of al-Qaeda in its ideological battle with IS will face a choice, whether to give bay'ah to the new leader of al-Qaeda or al-Baghdadi.

## Territorial Rule

Through the careful distribution of manpower and resources in both Syria and Iraq, as well as sophisticated ideological manoeuvring, IS has managed to build momentum and grow both sustainably and gradually. As such, a significant proportion of the civilian population living under al-Baghdadi's rule, provided they are Sunni and coalesce to the IS programme, has become accustomed to the group. Indeed, while it may baffle people in the West, many living under it claim to prefer the situation as it is now, and have done so for some time.<sup>81</sup>

This should not come as a surprise. IS is where it is today because of the chaos that has racked the region over recent years. It has removed any influence from Baghdad in the areas it controls in Iraq, and many of the areas it administers in Syria are far more stable than they were in its absence. As the aforementioned jihadist ideologue Naji observes in his exploration of how to bring about the establishment of a "caliphate", by ushering in *relative* stability in a region brought to the brink of collapse, its population will be made to accept the imposition of even the harshest Islamist order. He writes that the population of 'a region submitting to the law of the jungle in its primitive form [yearns] for someone to manage its savagery'.<sup>82</sup> It does not necessarily matter who this "someone" is, provided the chaos that they "manage" is bad enough. This seems to be what IS is doing, and is exactly 'the thing that has allowed it to consolidate control in such a large area', something that must be recognised if one is to attempt to put together a realistic strategy for tackling it.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Max Fisher (2014), 'Iraqis under IS control say their lives have gotten better', *Vox*, (03-10).

<sup>82</sup> Abu Bakr Naji, *The management of savagery: the most critical stage through which the Umma will pass*, trans. William McCants (2006), Harvard: John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, (23-05), 12.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with Pieter van Ostaejen, (04-09-2014).

Another thing that has come to characterise IS' ascent is the speed with which it made its most recent gains, something only made possible because of its network of alliances. Supported by its tribal, Baathist and jihadist allies, IS pushed out in almost all directions from Mosul – east towards Kirkuk and Erbil, west as far as Sinjar and the border with Syria, south as far as Tikrit and Haditha. Furthermore, just when it seemed that IS' activities were becoming almost exclusively rooted in Iraq, the strategic focus moved to Syria, where it made somewhat unexpected advances. In July 2014, for example, the bases of Assad's Brigade 93 and Division 17 fell to the IS onslaught, leaving the group in control of yet more military hardware, something that has had a profound effect on the military balance either side of the border.<sup>84</sup>

In August 2014, it looked like IS' advances across Syria and Iraq had been obstructed, and this was primarily because of international intervention by arming its opposition and carrying out air strikes against it. However, the group has adapted accordingly. At the time of writing, air strikes from both local and international forces have not stopped IS from spreading, only slowed it at times. Luay Jawad al-Khateeb states, in order to be successful when implementing a strategy like this, 'you would need to have people on the ground to give information'.<sup>85</sup> That the international community does not have adequate human intel has become eminently clear of late, with air strikes spectacularly failing to blunt IS offenses in Iraq's Anbar province, in particular.

## Alliances

The regional status quo and, hence, the support of similarly motivated groups is at the heart of how IS has managed to make its huge territorial advances. To think otherwise – that IS controls the areas it does simply through military might – is naive. IS would not be where it is today without its closely colluding with other political actors in Syria and Iraq. The group may well be adept in military strategy, hugely well-financed and well-equipped, but its need for alliances is easily apparent. Without its network of sympathisers in Iraq, in particular, IS would still be a militant group, not a de facto state. Instead, it has been able to act as the spearhead of a wider Sunni-led rebellion against the region's largely Shi'ite rulers.<sup>86</sup>

It is a common misconception that those living under the rule of al-Baghdadi are one homogenous entity. It is not even true to say that those fighting to expand the rule of al-Baghdadi are all IS ideologues

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<sup>84</sup> Jeffrey White (2014), 'Military implications of the Syrian regime's defeat in Raqqa', *Washington Institute*, (27-08).

<sup>85</sup> Deborah Amos (2014), 'How the Islamic State smuggles oil to fund its campaign', *NPR Parallels*, (09-09).

<sup>86</sup> That is not to say that there has been no resistance, though, or that all Sunnis in the region have coalesced behind the group, as has been well-documented by Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi in 'Sunni opposition to the Islamic State', *MERIA* 18 (2014), 1-13.

– rather, the insurgents also include unaffiliated jihadists and even secularists. As Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi notes, even the jihadists are not strictly loyal to IS – Jaish al-Mujahidin, for one example, has had to be forcefully subjugated by IS in some cities and, back in June, a founding member of the Islamic Army of Iraq said that his group opposes ‘the distorted version of Shariah that [IS] endorse’.<sup>87</sup>

Even more striking is the marriage of convenience established between IS and neo-Baathists acting under the banner of the Army of the Order of the Naqshbandi Men, a group that is forged from the remnants of Saddam Hussein’s Iraq and led by his second-in-command and, since 2007, leader of the Iraqi Baath Party, Izzat Ibrahim ad-Duri.<sup>88</sup> That someone who once had a reputation for being outspoken and often militantly secularist is fighting alongside a group that is the most outspoken and militantly Islamist of its kind is a sober reminder that this conflict is not simply a zero-sum game of jihadists versus non-jihadists.

In Iraq, then, IS is riding on the back of a popular feeling of hostility towards Baghdad. Its political motivations, while they may be shrouded in jihadist rhetoric, are – at the moment, at least – loosely in line with those of other similarly motivated groups, but this is always subject to change; it is important to keep in mind that, ‘people are fighting for the same thing as IS does not mean that they have formally pledged allegiance to it’.<sup>89</sup>

In Syria, the situation is similar, in that those living under IS rule are not just one homogenous entity – there are different tribes and militias who have subordinated themselves to IS rule because it makes strategic sense to. As it stands at the time of writing, IS is easily the most powerful force fighting against Assad (and, for that matter, everyone else) in Syria, having made substantial territorial gains since July 2014. However, the situation here is markedly more complicated by the many jihadist factions that have avoided aligning themselves with IS, choosing instead to fight it.

That said, there has been a slow trickle of dissent from groups like JN and Ahrar al-Sham, a trend that has notably accelerated in light of coalition air strikes. Indeed, there has even been an initiative by Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi – a man who has expressed the greatest of hostilities towards IS in the past – aimed at establishing a ceasefire between all warring jihadist factions in Syria in light of the “Crusader campaign”.<sup>90</sup> The full text of this can be found in Appendix III.

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<sup>87</sup> Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi (2014), ‘Jaysh al-Mujahideen Iraq Statements: Clashes with the Islamic State: Translation and Analysis’, *Blog*, (26-08). See also: Sheikh Ahmed al-Dabash, interviewed by Ruth Sherlock (2014), ‘Islamic Army of Iraq founder: IS and Sunni Islamists will march on Baghdad’, *The Telegraph*, (20-06).

<sup>88</sup> Thomas Gibbons-Neff (2014), ‘ISIS: not alone in their conquest of Iraq’, *Washington Post*, (20-06).

<sup>89</sup> Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, personal interview, 10-09-2014.

<sup>90</sup> See appendix III.

Whatever the case, it is immediately apparent from propaganda that IS needs its alliance network, especially regarding the region's tribes. Indeed, IS' position is only sustainable if it comes at the behest of Iraq and Syria's Sunni tribes. It would not be able to handle a repeat of the Sahwa resistance formed in 2005 to battle al-Qaeda in Iraq, a fact recognised by governments across the world. A new Sahwa could be a possible one day, but only if the tribes can be convinced that they would not be losing out in doing so. After all, it is not simply a question of money (which, incidentally, IS is buying their loyalty with too). Because of years of sectarian-based rule in both Iraq and Syria, these tribes suffer from a skewed sense of inferiority, and are hence motivated by vengeance, something which means that they will only coalesce behind an anti-IS initiative if they can be certain that they will not be re-securing the previous status quo.<sup>91</sup> It is unrealistic to think otherwise. That said, while there has been some resistance from the likes of the Syrian Shu'aytat and the Iraqi Albu Nimr tribes, but both were rapidly crushed by IS, which reacted disproportionately, killing many hundreds.<sup>92</sup>

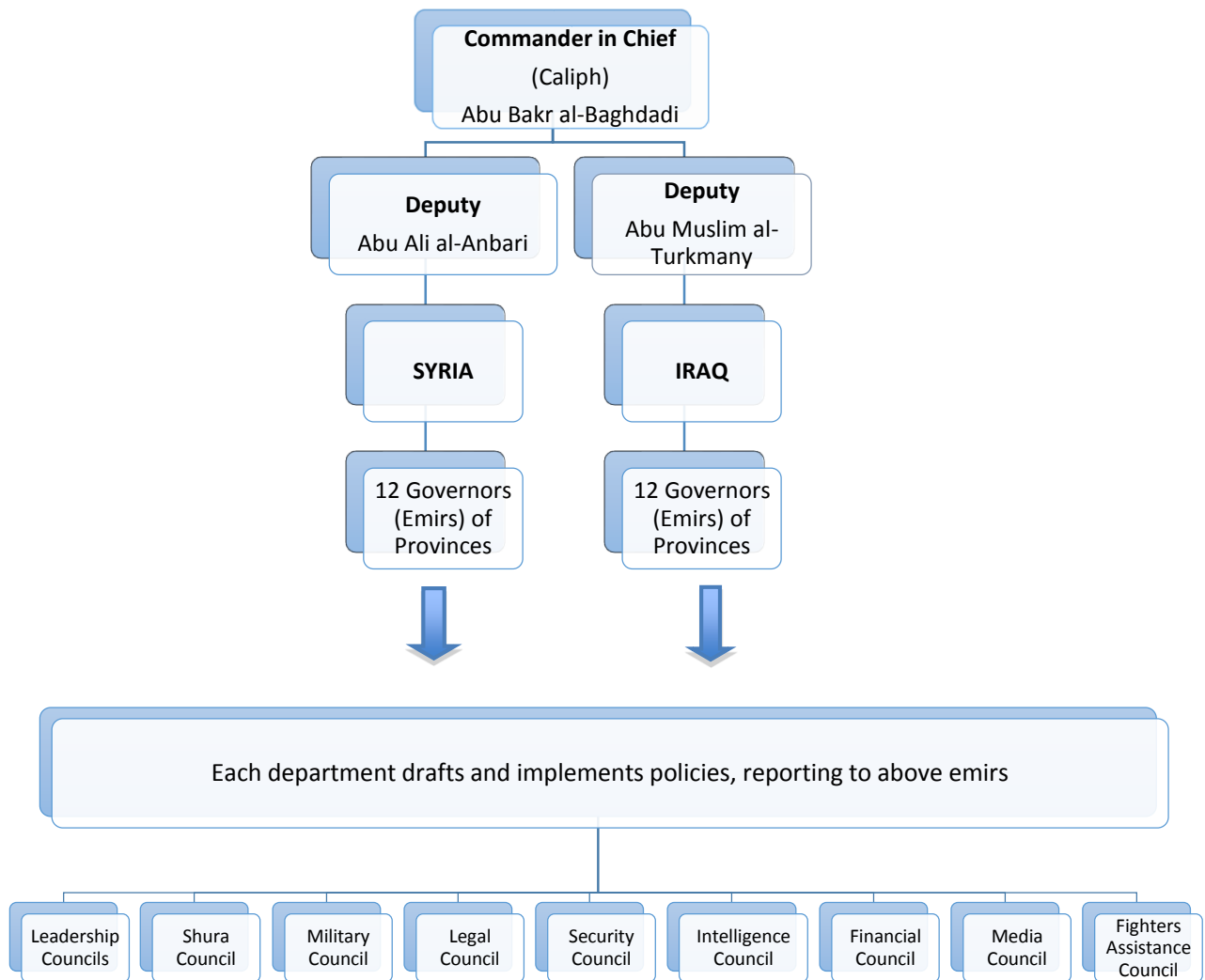
The crisis in Iraq and Syria is not simply an "IS versus everyone" equation; rather, it is "IS and its Sunni allies versus the status quo". Whereas the situation is more clear-cut with al-Qaeda and its affiliates, which have historically relied on coercing local populations, the IS cause undeniably has real traction for a great many people.

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<sup>91</sup> Hassan Hassan (2014), speaking at 'Syria's conflict and the impact on its neighbours: the long view', (14-09), *Chatham House*.

<sup>92</sup> Attempts to theologially justify the massacre were made in August's issue of *Dabiq*.

## Hierarchical Structure of IS<sup>93</sup>



## Use of Online Tools

It should not come as a surprise that social media is being used by IS. Nearly all jihadist groups use YouTube and Twitter to disseminate messaging and spread word of their exploits. Indeed, al-Qaeda set the precedent for using online tools to circulate its propaganda and galvanise support through publications like *Inspire*, its official, multi-language magazine, which was in circulation long before IS' counterpart, *Dabiq*. However, the efficiency with which IS is currently using the Internet is something unprecedented and, in many ways, a sign of the times. As Ambassador Alberto Fernandez, the

<sup>93</sup> Chart data from the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC), 21-09-2014.

Coordinator for Strategic Counter-Terrorism Communications at the US Department of State, notes, IS material is 'the gold standard for propaganda in terms of its quality and quantity'.<sup>94</sup>

There is no question that IS' ability to use the Internet marks a clear departure from the al-Qaeda norm. Broadly, there are four main areas of innovation with regards to IS' use of the Internet that deserve our attention:

- Centralised propaganda
- Global dissemination of threats
- Developing new coding and apps
- Decentralised messaging

Just like al-Qaeda, IS has a number of official outlets that produce propaganda videos and publications. However, it has raised the bar when it comes to their circulation and production value – indeed, IS' centralised network of propaganda disseminators has flourished through online platforms and, accordingly, 'can make a seriously big noise'.<sup>95</sup> Using social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Kik, Ask.fm, VK and Facebook, the network delivers a high definition IS view of events in Syria and Iraq to an audience of millions.

Broadly, IS propaganda serves two purposes. The first, best encapsulated with a case study of Al-Hayat Media, is focused on recruiting, and centres on the utopian ideals of the "caliphate". In order to get these messages across, IS has also developed a range of media initiatives that are exceptionally easy to access and highly attractive to their target audiences – primarily, but not only, young Islamists between the ages of 16 and 25 who are interested in, or feel emotionally sympathetic towards, the crisis taking place in Syria and Iraq. The second category of propaganda that we analyse below, with a study of Mu'assassat al-Furqan, serves as a means for intimidation and dissemination of threats; its target audience is, primarily, anyone hostile to IS. It is important to note that this distinction is not totally clear cut, nor is IS propaganda limited to these two outlets – other agencies include Mu'assissat al-I'tisam, which tends to produce off-the-battlefield interviews with jihadists, and Wakalat al-A'maq, the output of which is primarily composed of in-battle footage.

On 5 July 2014, Al-Hayat Media released its first issue of the online magazine *Dabiq*,<sup>96</sup> a well-produced, well-written publication released in a number of different languages simultaneously including Albanian,

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<sup>94</sup> Interview with Ambassador Alberto Fernandez, (11-09-2014).

<sup>95</sup> Interview with J.M. Berger, (09-09-2014).

<sup>96</sup> 'Dabiq' is an town located in north Syria and is mentioned in a hadith describing events of the Malahim (Armagedon) where the greatest battle between Muslims and the crusaders (the West/ the enemy) takes place. In other words, Dabiq represents a story of Muslim unity against the Romans (the West).

English, French and German.<sup>97</sup> At the point of publication there have been four issues of *Dabiq*, all released and distributed by Al-Hayat Media to a global audience. Besides their detailed articles on theology, *Dabiq* publications have reaffirmed key themes, strategic exploits and ideological constructs, as well as speeches from IS leaders. In the first issue, for example, it relayed the full text of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi first sermon as “caliph”, in which he said, ‘[IS] is a state where the Arab and non-Arab, the white man and black man, the easterner and westerner are all brothers’.

This strong emphasis on the idea that the portions of Syria and Iraq controlled by IS are a place for all Muslims, regardless of their nationality, is present throughout most Al-Hayat Media releases. Its features tend to hark on esoteric ideas and themes of brotherhood, and are always steeped in religious rhetoric.

Besides *Dabiq*, its output has also included videos, such as “The End of Sykes-Picot” and “The Flames of War”, both of which document IS fighters and their daily lives in an overwhelmingly positive light. To someone that buys into the extremist Islamist ideology, these ideas – ‘a seductive model of grievance plus agency plus victory’ – are extremely effective, and often enough to sway them into joining IS.<sup>98</sup>

The other side of IS propaganda, the one that does not boast of utopian ideals and pious governance, tends to be produced by Mu’assassat al-Furqan, which is behind the string of gruesome beheading videos of James Foley, Steven Sotloff and David Haines. It also produces other videos, like “The Clanging of the Swords” and “On the Methodology of the Prophet”, the latter of which includes footage of mass Khmer Rouge-esque executions. More recently, Mu’assassat al-Furqan has released a series of videos using British war photographer and journalist, John Cantlie, as a conduit to mock the alleged hypocrisies of the countries involved in air strikes against IS. These videos, in particular, are intended to disseminate threats and provoke, reminiscent of bygone al-Qaeda strategies.



Above are the al-Hayat Media and Mu’assassat al-Furqan logos. ‘Hayat’ translates to ‘life’ and is often linked to a passage in the Qu’ran calling people to respond to the ‘call of that which gives them life’. ‘Furqan’, on the other hand, means ‘arbiter’ and is another name for the Qu’ran.

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<sup>97</sup> Harleen Gambhir (2014), ‘Dabiq: The Strategic Messaging of the Islamic State’, *Institute for the Study of War: Backgrounder*, (15-08).

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Ambassador Alberto Fernandez, (11-09-2014).



Another thing that renders IS' manipulation of social media distinct to that of groups before it is the efficiency with which it circulates and popularises its propaganda. All releases are tagged with hashtags that, first, identify them as an IS production and, second, allow them to hijack trending topics that are unrelated. During the football world cup, for example, hashtags like “#Brazil\_2014” were attached to new propaganda, as part of a strategy that allowed the group to tap into otherwise untouched audiences.

IS' social media innovation does not stop there: the terrorist group has proven capable of developing complex coding and supporters have even created IS apps. Easily the most prominent of these was a Twitter app called the ‘Dawn of Glad Tidings’. Available through the Google Play store, subscribers downloaded the app onto their smartphones and, once installed, a centralised body could post tweets from the subscribers' personal Twitter account, synchronising them with other IS supporters without the user having to do anything. In an effort to get IS topics trending, tweets were then dictated by IS social media operations and included links, hashtags and images and, to avoid triggering spam-detecting algorithms, the centralized tweets were spaced out over time.<sup>99</sup> Shortly after Google was notified of its existence, the app was removed. However, its influence in disseminating IS propaganda until then was immense; indeed, as J. M. Berger reported, it was responsible for posting almost 40,000 tweets in a single day as IS marched into Mosul. Al-Qaeda, while it may be somewhat sophisticated when it comes to propaganda, simply cannot compete with this.

Official propaganda aside, IS' online presence is hugely magnified by unofficial pro-caliphate activists, people who support al-Baghdadi's political programme not physically, but verbally. As well as constantly circulating official propaganda, these people, known as tweeps or fanboys, track developments in Iraq and Syria through the IS lens, serving as a living archive of its exploits. Often, tweeps will produce their own pro-IS propaganda, which, while it is invariably of a lower standard, permeates across the Internet all the same. For example, in September 2014, footage of IS-style videogames emerged. In the “trailer” for this fanboy-produced game, called *Grand Theft Auto: Salil al-Sawarim* (a reference to the ultraviolent Mu'assassat al-Furqan production, ‘The Clanging of the Swords’), players are seen dressed as IS fighters and tasked with shooting police and blowing up military targets.

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<sup>99</sup> J.M. Berger (2014), ‘How IS Games Twitter’, *The Atlantic*, (16-06).



This decentralised network of propagandists, coupled with the real-time messaging from IS fighters actually on the ground, has had profound success in intimidating, recruiting and fundraising.<sup>100</sup> Instantaneous and widespread, these channels of communication are able to target a broad range of audiences from younger, early-level sympathisers to pre-existing extremist networks who can be subordinated.<sup>101</sup> Because of them, we can follow individuals in real time, and get a sense of their daily lives, their convictions and their experiences, something as beneficial to counter-terrorism practitioners as it is to tentative IS recruits.

As part of Quilliam's research into the inner workings of IS' online propaganda structure research tracked a number of Twitter accounts linked with IS, the specifics of which can be seen in Appendix I. We broke these down into four distinct categories:

- Official News Accounts: Centralised propaganda streams that are not linked to a particular individual, streaming coordinated IS news and propaganda.
- Unofficial News Accounts: Informal news feeds supporting IS aimed at informing wider audiences.
- Regional Accounts: Official information streams linked to a particular IS-run territory,
- Individuals: Individual supporters and fighters giving a running commentary of events in Syria and Iraq.

Following these feeds, we were able to track the rate of new follower uptake and output frequency, analyse the nature of their content as well as track when they were suspended by Twitter. Almost invariably, accounts that we tracked were blocked, only to reappear within days with a different handle; for example, @truthsmaster reappeared as @truthszmaster, then @truthzsmaster and so on. As

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<sup>100</sup> Richard Barrett (2014), *Foreign Fighters in Syria*, London: The Soufan Group, (02-06).

<sup>101</sup> On 6 September 2014 an online conference took place through the website <authentictauheed.com> where radical preachers united online to praise IS and give justifications to the "caliphate" state that IS had announced. See also: Shiv Malik (2014), 'Radical preachers praise IS in online conference', *The Guardian*, (08-09).

jihadism researcher Pieter van Ostaeyen notes, 'IS supporters on social media are like mushrooms in a moist meadow – you pluck one, only for four to replace it'.<sup>102</sup>



The above image shows the 21<sup>st</sup> Twitter account recreated by one account user who had been blocked 20 times previously. The user was easily able to re-amass 20,000 followers. This highlights the ineffectiveness of negative measures, such as blocking or filtering, to counter extremist and terrorist-related content online.

As can be seen in Appendix I, the number of followers that each account had, as well as their productivity, was highly varied. Some accounts, often tweeting more than 200 times a day, manage to attract tens of thousands of followers, whereas others remained in the hundreds. What we can be absolutely certain of is that, despite their variation, these accounts have turned one of the frontlines of the crisis in Syria and Iraq into something that can be engaged with online. Indeed, if we consider the Vietnam War the first televised war and the Gulf War the first 24-hour news war, then the IS crisis as the first social media war.

At this stage, it is important to note that any online propaganda material – whether official or unofficial – is not solely responsible for radicalising the individuals that watch it. Indeed, as a recent Quilliam report lays down, the Internet is not the “first spark” of radicalisation; “lone wolf” theories that individuals radicalise online in isolation of outside factors are, quite simply, false. Invariably, individuals are introduced to extremist ideologies offline, first, and only then are they guided to online extremist networks.<sup>103</sup> Instead of being the cause of radicalisation, the Internet is a catalyst to the process, providing as it does easy access to streams to indoctrinate, educate and socialize.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Pieter van Ostaeyen, (04-09-2014).

<sup>103</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the nature of online extremism see: Ghaffar Hussain and Dr Erin Marie Saltman (2014) *Jihad Trending: A Comprehensive Analysis of Online Extremism and How to Counter It*, (Quilliam: London).

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

Unlike anything before it, IS has given the world access, willingly, into the daily lives of its jihadists, something we have not seen before. Decentralized actors on social media platforms are humanising the jihadist experience, lowering the threshold for potential recruits to feel comfortable, and find comradery, with IS members. More important than anything else, though, it is facilitating the recruitment process of foreigners, something that we look at in greater detail below.

## Redefining ‘Global Jihad’

Both al-Qaeda and IS have channelled the concept of global jihad to facilitate the realisation of their respective goals and broaden international support for their ideologies. However, the two groups have taken different strategies in achieving their goals. Al-Qaeda’s reading of global jihad now revolves around the proliferation of affiliate groups across the world while at the same time promoting decentralized, so-called lone wolf attacks to destabilize target states and ‘enemy’ infrastructure as far as *‘ayn* (individual Islamic obligations). IS, on the other hand, has devoted most of its efforts to state-building, calling on Muslims across the world to come to it, rather than set up shop in their home countries. In a sense, this marks a reimagination of global jihad, one which sees the migration of Muslims to the “caliphate”, from whence they can help expand its borders, as more important than carrying out terrorist operations.

IS’ declaration of the reestablishment of the “caliphate”, discussed above, is unprecedented. Some have suggested that its state-building efforts – in particular its attempts at governance, social service provision, media and outreach – are likely to become a new model for current and future jihadist movements, because they have clearly worked as a means of consolidating control in unstable political environments.<sup>105</sup> The contrast is stark: whereas al-Qaeda and its affiliates tend to stay underground in the areas it rules, IS has overtly declared sovereignty over a territory with the explicit aim of expansion.

When the spokesperson for IS, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani al-Shami, made the announcement that the “caliphate” had been restored on 29 June 2014, he commanded Muslims to flock to Iraq and Syria, not just to fight, but to live and work.<sup>106</sup> Shortly after this, on 1 July 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi reinforced this command, urging people to come to the “caliphate”, stating the following to Muslims the world over: ‘So raise your ambitions, O soldiers of the Islamic State! For your brothers all over the world are waiting for your rescue, and are anticipating your brigades!’<sup>107</sup> This theme is returned to again, later in

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<sup>105</sup> Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi (2014) ‘The Dawn of the Islamic State in Iraq and ash-Sham’, *Hudson Institute: Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* (6).

<sup>106</sup> See al-Adnani, ‘This is the promise of Allah’.

<sup>107</sup> Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (2014), ‘A Message to the Mujahidin and the Muslim Ummah in the Month of Ramadan’, (Al-Hayat Media Center).

the same speech: 'Therefore, rush O Muslims to your state. Yes, it is your state. Rush, because Syria is not for the Syrians, and Iraq is not for the Iraqis. The earth is Allah's.'<sup>108</sup>

These calls did not fall on deaf ears. Indeed, large numbers of foreigners have journeyed, and continue to journey, to Syria and Iraq. Over the last three years, it is estimated that more than 16,000 foreigners have travelled to join the fight and, because IS is easier to join than other groups and its online presence much greater, most of these foreigners are now among its ranks.<sup>109</sup> The sheer figures we are dealing with here greatly overshadow the number of foreigners involved in any past crisis that has involved foreign jihadists, such as the war in Afghanistan.

The table on the next page shows current estimations of foreign fighters from around the world. While the greatest number of FTFs have come from Middle Eastern and North African countries (just over 11,000), more than 2,500 of them are believed to be from Western Europe.

While FTFs are present in the ranks of almost all the jihadist groups in Syria and Iraq, they have been central to IS strategy in two main ways. Broadly, they are valuable because of their ability to propagandise, or their ability to fight. Usually, Westerners fall into the former category. For example, an eighteen year old Briton who has never experienced a war is of negligible value on the battlefield. On the contrary, his symbolic importance, as a means of intimidating the West and encouraging potential recruits to join up, is profound. Likewise, while the propaganda value of a former soldier from Libya could be relatively low, the fact that they are battle-hardened renders them a great asset to IS. It goes without saying that individuals can be of value in both ways simultaneously. Umar al-Shishani, one of the most prominent IS military commanders and someone who has been touted as its most potent forces on the battlefield, is one such individual. He has repeatedly appeared in IS propaganda as a rallying figure for Chechen jihadists and reportedly led a great many successful offensives in Syria and Iraq.

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<sup>108</sup> Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (2014), 'A Message to the Mujahidin and the Muslim Ummah in the Month of Ramadan', (Al-Hayat Media Center).

<sup>109</sup> Interview with Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, (10-09-2014).

Estimates of Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Syria and Iraq<sup>110</sup>

Region	Country	Foreign Fighters	Totals
Middle East/North Africa	Tunisia	3000	
	Saudi Arabia	2500	
	Morocco	1500	
	Jordan	1500	
	Lebanon	900	
	Libya	600	
	Egypt	360	
	Algeria	200	
	Israel/Palestine	120	
	Yemen	110	
	Sudan	100	
	Kuwait	70	
	Qatar	15	
	UAE	15	
	Bahrain	12	11002
Western Europe	France	700	
	Britain	500	
	Germany	400	
	Belgium	300	
	Netherlands	150	
	Sweden	100	
	Spain	100	
	Denmark	100	
	Austria	60	
	Italy	50	
	Norway	50	
	Ireland	30	
	Finland	30	
	Switzerland	10	2580
Rest of Europe	Russia	800	
	Turkey	400	
	Kazakhstan	150	
	Albania	140	
	Kosovo	120	
	Bosnia	60	
	Ukraine	50	1720
Rest of World	Pakistan	330	
	Australia	250	
	China	100	
	Canada	100	
	United States	100	
	Somalia	70	
	Indonesia	60	
	Afghanistan	25	1035
			16337

Note: The above table gives some of the most recently updated estimates of foreign fighters. It is likely the above numbers have subsequently increased and, thus, they should be considered a rough estimate of the current foreign fighter forecast. Numbers are given in descending order for each region to better see the largest countries with foreign fighter concerns.

<sup>110</sup> Data for the above table comes from estimations calculated by The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR).

Dealing with the threat FTFs pose demands a multidimensional policy approach. Not only are governments and communities concerned with how to stop their citizens from joining the war in Syria and Iraq, but there are rising fears about the potential threat they could pose upon their return. Already, there have been a number of terrorism operations planned against Western targets, most of them obstructed. The attack on Brussel's Jewish Museum in 2014 by Mehdi Nemmouche along with attempted attacks in Switzerland and the UK and three successful "lone wolf" attacks in Canada and the USA are examples of decentralised IS-affiliated attacks on the West. Counter-terrorism efforts must be heightened in light of this, but they alone will not resolve the problem of people going out to join the "caliphate". Rather, the long-term answer lies in counter-extremism.

IS' ability to draw foreigners into its ranks has left states floundering, somewhat, and has illuminated the failures of their attempts to undermine its ideological attraction, something which must be dealt with. At the moment, IS ideologues have all but monopolised the civil society-level discourse on Iraq and Syria – there are too few voices challenging their extremist assertions. Despite their strong rhetorical stance and threats to confiscate the passports of those hoping to travel to Iraq and Syria, governments are increasingly at a loss of what to do.

It is imperative to recognise at this stage that we must redouble our efforts against non-violent extremism. Support for the ideology of Islamist extremism is not new. IS is just party to more foreign recruit support than other groups have been in the past. Its ideologues have tapped into youths across the world like none before them, except, perhaps, al-Qaeda's Anwar al-Awlaki.<sup>111</sup> The British preacher Anjem Choudary and Australia's Musa Cerantonio are two of the more prominent examples of Islamist preachers who have been outspoken in their support for the IS "caliphate".<sup>112</sup> Besides them, though, there are countless others who, even if they have disavowed IS, support the establishment of a "caliphate" and, even if they deny IS' legitimacy, they still serve to provide the mood music to jihadism and make a fertile environment for recruitment to IS. As such, the initial radicalising force for all recruits does not need to be pro-IS. Indeed, it rarely is.

In stark contrast to most other jihadist groups, IS recruiters work hard to bridge the gender gap. Indeed, its appeal is not, like most others, gender-biased. Over the last few months, there has emerged a limited but growing network of female IS supporters. Indeed, at least 200 European females are thought to have travelled to Syria and Iraq.<sup>113</sup> Easily visible on social media, with almost all referring to themselves

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<sup>111</sup> Sharon Cardish, Frank Cilluffo and Jean-Luc Marret (2013) 'Foreign Fighters in Syria: Still Doing Battle, Still a Multidimensional Danger', *Fondation pour la Recherche Strategique*, Note No. 24/13.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Estimates from Melanie Smith of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR). See: Homa Khaleeli (2014) 'The British women married to jihad', *The Guardian*, (06-09).

as muhajira (migrant, in Arabic) and taking the moniker of “Umm” (mother, in Arabic), they work assiduously to persuade others to join them. Many of them claim to have travelled to become the wives of jihadists, and are radicalised by the very same narratives that allure young men. Usually in their late teens and early twenties, they are drawn in by a combination of factors: the call to support the humanitarian cause in Syria, the religious imperative to join the “caliphate”, the desire to marry a “real man”, an IS jihadist, and the sense of adventure travelling abroad.

Some women from Western Europe, that are residing in IS territories, have embraced their role, further radicalising and proselytising off and online, calling for more women to join the “caliphate”. Indeed, others have created roles for themselves in women-only brigades, assisting in upholding morality dress-codes among women as well as exposing men who might be disguised as women in order to cross IS checkpoints.<sup>114</sup> In early 2014, for example, it emerged that IS had created two women-only brigades in Raqqa – al-Khansaa and Umm al-Rayan – to assist at border check-points.<sup>115</sup> Importantly, these women are not fighting for IS, as some misleading reports have suggested; rather, their role is strictly non-military.

Women within IS territories are subjected to strict medieval interpretations of Shariah law, and are forced to take on a limited and traditional role of wife and mother. While this is usually expected by women travelling to Syria and Iraq, in theory, the reality of their position within IS-run territories is often still shocking. Reports of abuse and violence against women at the hands of jihadist husbands in the region are widespread. Unfortunately, many young recruits have not been exposed to counter-narratives which discuss the many negative aspects to the role they might play.

Despite the brutal realities for both men and women choosing to venture to Syria and Iraq and give allegiance to IS and other terrorist organisations, the steady flow of FTFs continues. This section has given an outline of the structure of IS governance systems and alliances, its sophisticated propaganda machine and the way it lures foreigners to join its ranks according to its reinterpretation of global jihad.

## Financial Autonomy

Since June 2014, the international community has grown accustomed to claims that IS is ‘light years ahead’ of other jihadist groups.<sup>116</sup> This is most true with regards to the means by which the group is financed. Previously, the groups’ financial model greatly mirrored that of most other terrorist organisations, namely al-Qaeda. However, early on, attempts were made to forge a level of autonomy

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<sup>114</sup> Erin Saltman (2014) ‘Why are British women leaving the UK to join ISIS and in Iraq and Syria?’, *The Independent*, (10-09).

<sup>115</sup> Information on: ‘Al-Khansaa Brigade’, *Tracking Terrorism*.

<sup>116</sup> Michael Stephens (2014), ‘Islamic State: where does jihadist group get its support’, *BBC News*, (01-09).



from wealthy patrons, in case their operations were obstructed by security services. Hence, finances were dependent, first and foremost, on capital generated from kidnapping and extortion, something facilitated by the unique situation of instability in post-war Iraq. From this income stream, al-Zarqawi enjoyed millions of dollars a month in revenue for very little effort. Most importantly, though, it meant that he was not reliant on al-Qaeda's established donor network.

At the same time, we must keep in mind that IS' forebears used to receive, like any al-Qaeda affiliate, millions from private financiers primarily in the Persian Gulf. It is worth noting that such donations have not dried up, and continue to support groups such as JN and Ahrar al-Sham, as well as IS. However, of late, IS has cast aside the shackles of patronage. While the international community continues to work to identify and stop individuals and networks which finance terrorist organisations, IS has developed a relative independence from relying on second- and third-party funding.

As such, IS' economic autonomy is unlike any other group before it. There is much speculation as to why IS has the financial clout it does, much of it misplaced. For example, when Mosul fell to IS, reports of an enormous bank heist in which over \$425 million was seized from the central bank spread like wildfire.<sup>117</sup> It later elapsed that, after weeks of sensationalist reporting, Iraqi officials had serious doubts as to whether this was true.<sup>118</sup> However, whether or not such reports are accurate is, in a sense, arbitrary – bank robberies are by no means one of IS' primary income streams.

Claims abound that IS receives much of its funding from wealthy patrons in the Gulf, similar to al-Qaeda. While this may be somewhat true, patronage networks do not provide the bulk of its finances and, a lot of the time, accusations are levelled against states and individuals because of political motivations more than anything else. The donations that IS does receive form 'at most only a tiny percentage of the total income that flows into IS coffers', a proportion that continues to fall as states like Kuwait – historically home to a disproportionately large number of pro-jihadist patrons – wake up to the fact that some of its nationals are supporting a group that hopes for its annihilation.<sup>119</sup> It is also worth noting that, for many jihadist patrons, IS is simply too extreme; they are reluctant to assist a group that has excommunicated them from Islam.

However, while patronage may be only a proportionately small source of income for IS, it would be unwise to completely discount its influence completely. In September 2014, for example, the US Treasury Department designated twelve foreign fighter facilitators, including a man named Tariq bin al-

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<sup>117</sup> Terence McCoy (2014), 'ISIS just stole \$425 million, Iraqi governor says, and became the "world's richest terrorist group"', *Washington Post*, (12-06).

<sup>118</sup> Borzou Daragahi (2014), 'Bank robbery that "never happened" - \$400m IS heist', *Financial Times*, (17-07).

<sup>119</sup> Reuters (2014), 'Kuwait markets authority endorses UN terror financing rules', (29-09).

Tahar bin al-Falih al-Awni al-Harzi who, it claimed, helped 'raise funds from Gulf-based donors for ISIL [sic]. In September 2013, he arranged for ISIL to receive approximately \$2 million from a Qatar-based financial facilitator'.<sup>120</sup> There are sure to be other such individuals operating under the noses of states which claim to be part of the anti-IS coalition and, as coalition strikes work to degrade IS' resource production, these individuals will become more important. It is imperative that they are not allowed to act with impunity.

Another source of IS' economic strength is the revenue it gathers from kidnappings, a lucrative practice honed by its former incarnations over the 2000s, as mentioned above.<sup>121</sup> Indeed, as Charles Lister, visiting fellow at Brookings Doha, notes, IS was making as much as \$12 million a month from extortion and kidnapping in the city of Mosul alone, before its capture in June 2014.<sup>122</sup> In the wake of James Foley's beheading, for example, it emerged that IS demanded \$132 million in exchange for his release.<sup>123</sup> Similar sums have been demanded for the release of other hostages. While, at the time of writing, the most high profile hostages taken by IS – James Foley, Steven Sotloff, David Haines and Alan Henning – have been used for their propaganda value, there are many other hostages who have been exchanged for sizeable ransoms.

Unlike the US or UK, both of which have a policy of not making financial concessions for hostage negotiations, other European Union countries do. Germany, France, Italy and Spain, on the other hand, are known to have paid millions to secure the release of their nationals. It is a moral quagmire that is exceptionally difficult to navigate, but there is no question that, if governments unanimously agree not to pay ransoms of any sort, kidnapping would lose its financial incentive for IS.<sup>124</sup> However, even in this unlikely scenario, IS would take hostages for the sake of propaganda.

Looting, patronage and kidnappings together produce substantial revenue for IS. However, the smuggling of oil and gas from Iraq and Syria is its largest and most resilient income stream. As it has expanded over the last few years, IS has systematically consolidated control over some of the largest oil fields in the region and 'supports hundreds of black-market refineries' at any one time.<sup>125</sup> Many of the smuggling networks established over the course of the 1990s and early 2000s because of the anti-regime sanctions have been reactivated by IS, which has well-known links to Hussein-era facilitators. In

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<sup>120</sup> Press Center (2014), 'Treasury designates twelve foreign fighter facilitators', *US Department of the Treasury*, (24-09).

<sup>121</sup> Jean-Charles Brisard and Damien Martinez (2005), *Zarqawi: the new face of al-Qaeda*, (Cambridge: Polity), 139-144.

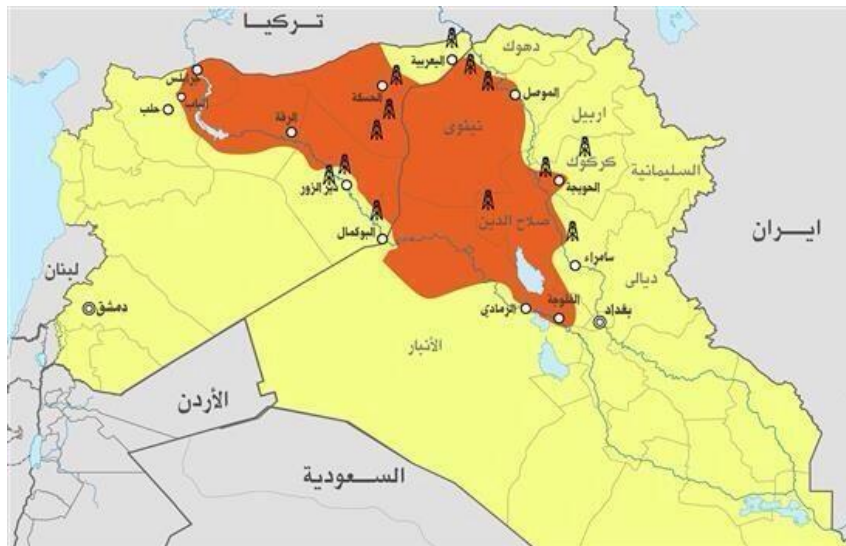
<sup>122</sup> Charles Lister (2014), 'Cutting off ISIS' cash flow', *Brookings*, (24-10).

<sup>123</sup> Rukmini Callimachi (2014), 'Before killing James Foley, IS demanded ransom from US', *The New York Times*, (20-08).

<sup>124</sup> It is important to note that, were ransoms not paid, IS would still kidnap people for their propaganda value.

<sup>125</sup> Amos, 'How the Islamic State smuggles oil'.

addition to this, IS has also been selling oil and gas from Syrian wells back to, of all customers, the Assad regime, in deals allegedly brokered by a man named George Haswani.<sup>126</sup> Reportedly, these sales are made with a mutual understanding that the Assad regime will not bomb certain areas in exchange for the cheap oil that they produce.



The above map from 2006 shows IS territorial ambitions which includes a number of Syrian and Iraqi oil fields.<sup>127</sup>

Estimates of just how much IS makes from the sale of oil and gas vary significantly, fluctuating from \$1 to \$3 million a day but, either way, it forms a very steady, very sizeable source of income, one that is much more reliable than that received from any other stream. Hence it should come as no surprise that, as part of the US’s attempts to ‘degrade and ultimately destroy’ IS, oil refineries are among the chief targets, something which could have troubling, but perhaps necessary, blowback.<sup>128</sup> Restricting IS extraction and distribution of fuel, which has been sold at a cost of a little as \$25 a barrel, will have a serious impact upon the eight million or so people living under IS through the winter and, in the worst case scenario, could cause a ‘rally around the flag’ effect.

Analysts and practitioners alike are still coming to terms with IS’ financial infrastructure. It is more resilient than that of any other jihadist group, and therefore not easy to act against with conventional mechanisms of statecraft like targeted sanctions. That IS has an oil economy renders it particularly well-equipped to resist efforts against it. The above map, according to Brian Fishman, first surfaced from IS

<sup>126</sup> Unknown (2014), ‘Who is George Haswani, the man who facilitates the buying and selling of oil between Daesh and the Syrian regime?’ [Arabic], *All4Syria*, (02-09).

<sup>127</sup> The image was circulated on Twitter, originally produced by ISI and circulated on jihadist forums back in 2006: From [www.twitter.com/azelin](http://www.twitter.com/azelin), (11-06-2014).

<sup>128</sup> Barack Obama (2014), ‘Statement by the President on ISIL’, The White House, (10-09).

supporters in 2006, which demonstrates the centrality of oil to the group's cause has been long established, and for good reason.<sup>129</sup> Oil and gas revenue allows the group to budget, rather like the state it claims to be, and provides it with substantial economic leverage over the local population. Hence, before there can be any hope of a repeat of the 2000s' tribal uprising against AQI, it is imperative that IS is stopped from being able to purchase the loyalty of its conquered peoples. The longer it is able to act as a de facto state in Iraq and Syria, and the greater the level of co-dependency it can build with the population it is ruling over, the harder rolling it back will be.

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In the above pages, research has endeavoured to give a primer on IS, while also situating it on the global jihadist spectrum. Its ideological and historical roots have been explored, and the many similarities it has with al-Qaeda have been noted. However, what is most apparent is that IS has progressed beyond the al-Qaeda model such that, in many ways, it resembles a state with a growing immigrant population, increasingly conventional army, formidable propaganda apparatus and sophisticated, largely autonomous financial structure. As such, just as IS is a departure from the terrorism norm, it requires a departure from the counter-terrorism norm to challenge it.

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<sup>129</sup> From [www.twitter.com/azelin](http://www.twitter.com/azelin), (11-06-2014).

## Part III: Policy Recommendations

This report has sought to analyse the changing nature of global jihadism through a comparative analysis of al-Qaeda and Islamic State (IS). It explored each group's ideological foundations and structural developments in order to better understand the challenge faced in countering these groups. It has been shown that while both groups have common ideological roots and share certain strategic behaviours, they are in many ways distinct. While IS does present many new challenges, it has by no means pushed al-Qaeda into obscurity, nor removed the threat it represents; indeed, as one US official noted, the threat 'is not decreasing, but it is changing'.<sup>130</sup>

Moving forward, key areas that the international community should focus its efforts on have been identified.

- We should not discount the medium and long-term evolution of IS to brand itself as the icon of global jihadism, broadening its affiliate and allegiance-based networks. As such, a longer term strategy needs to be developed which includes prevention of further proliferation of the group within the Middle East and beyond. This approach needs to address ways of decreasing the group's appeal within the region, particularly among those that have experienced barbaric and violent treatment as well as those that have been left alienated by the sectarian and nepotistic nature of the Syrian and Iraqi governments.
- Counter extremism initiatives must be implemented in parallel with counter-terrorism and conventional military efforts against IS. Preventing future generations from becoming beholden by extremist solutions to regional and socio-political crises will depend on programmes that provide ideological and institutional alternatives. Decreasing the incentive for foreign terrorist fighters and devising strategies for their reintegration back into society upon return is also crucial.
- The means by which IS has built up its oil and resource capacities needs to be addressed and stopped. Particularly, the terrorist group needs to be stopped from having the ability to purchase loyalties from the people whose territories they conquer.
- The new online frontline of the current crisis needs to be better defended. Censoring unwanted extremist content and propaganda materials is not only ineffective, but often counter-productive, it attacks a symptom, but not the root cause. The online space must be better contested.

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<sup>130</sup> Interview with Ambassador Alberto Fernandez, (11-09-2014).

- International governments must tackle the roots of radicalisation in order to more effectively deter individuals from being attracted by extremist Islamism, something which leaves them vulnerable to joining jihadist causes.
- Al-Qaeda's recent establishment of AQIS demonstrates that it has no intention of disappearing. While its affiliates have demonstrated more localist ambitions of late, this is more out of pragmatism than anything else. Hence, if circumstances allowed, al-Qaeda would likely refocus its attention west, again. Security services must remain vigilant to this very real possibility.

The above points are elaborated on in the following sections.

## International Jihadist Support

In the wake of IS' declaration of the re-establishment of the "caliphate", there was much speculation as to how al-Qaeda would react. Many assumed that al-Zawahiri and his lieutenants would be quick to repudiate the claim, while others suggested that al-Qaeda's adherents would most likely pledge allegiance to al-Baghdadi en masse. On the contrary, the reaction from the global jihadist community was weaker than expected. Al-Zawahiri's silence persisted for nearly three months after the declaration, until he announced the establishment of the aforementioned franchise of al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). Strikingly, he did not refer to Iraq or al-Baghdadi once, suggesting that he intended either to act as if nothing had changed, or the statement was produced pre-June 2014. Furthermore, in the first issue of al-Qaeda's most recent publication, *Resurgence*, there is no mention either.<sup>131</sup>

In light of al-Zawahiri's reaction, or lack thereof, it can be assumed that IS' declaration was a serious ideological blow to al-Qaeda, one that left its leaders unsure of how to proceed. That does not, however, mean that the group is now redundant, as some have argued. As recent events in Syria have confirmed, it is still a clear and present threat, and a key fulcrum of the international terrorist network. To discount it simply because IS appears to currently present a greater threat to the international status quo is nonsensical. Further, that both are now competing with one another in an effort to be the standard-bearer of jihadism could have serious security implications of one lashing out in an attempt to seize the prerogative from the other.

It is worth noting that al-Qaeda affiliates have also been ambiguous in their reaction to IS's "caliphate". Indeed, as Aymenn al-Tamimi notes, 'in terms of resonating globally, the "caliphate" announcement has not had a huge amount of traction'.<sup>132</sup> Both AQIM and AQAP released statements that come out

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<sup>131</sup> as-Sahab Media, (2014) *Resurgence*, (20-10).

<sup>132</sup> Interview with Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, (10-09-2014).

neither in support of or against the “caliphate” in the weeks that followed its declaration. On 30 September 2014, though, AQAP released an important statement (see Appendix II) in which it was outspoken in its support for IS, but stopped shy of declaring allegiance to it. In the context of al-Zawahiri’s continued silence, the significance of such an announcement is profound.

As mentioned, Jabhat al-Nusra (JN), al-Qaeda’s Syria affiliate, has been the most clear-cut in its opposition to the rise of IS. The group has been at loggerheads with IS since al-Baghdadi’s attempt to subordinate it in May 2013. However, this relationship is also subject to change in the fast-moving environment we are currently witnessing. The re-establishment of coordinated IS and JN relations is plausible in light of the international anti-IS coalition formed in September 2014. Since then, a number of separate efforts have been made to unify, or at least impose a truce between, the different jihadist groups in Syria, most prominent among them al-Maqdisi’s initiative. There have even been some reports that the two groups are conducting war-planning meetings together.<sup>133</sup> If true, this is an exceptionally important development.

Furthermore, given the immense fluidity of the situation right now in Iraq and Syria, we should not discount the possibility that, if IS is militarily coerced into disintegration without adequate political preparations in place, many of those currently fighting for it could well abandon it for the “next best” option – namely al-Qaeda. While such an occurrence may appear unlikely at this stage, that does not mean security services can dismiss the likelihood of its happening for, while al-Qaeda may appear less strong operationally right now, it has ideological roots and is, hence, better entrenched.

## **Beyond al-Qaeda**

Even when we look beyond al-Qaeda, the international reaction to the IS declaration has been extremely mixed. While each and every pledge of allegiance to IS makes a big propaganda splash, the reality is that very few groups have given bay’ah to al-Baghdadi. Those that have tend to be smaller splinter groups, like the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) splinter Jamaat-ul-Ahrar and AQIM’s Jund al-Khilafah fi Ard al-Jaza’ir, that have been rejected by their peers. Whatever the case, the global jihadist reaction to IS has not been as dramatic as IS might have hoped – most jihadists have not renounced their sovereignty in favour of pledging allegiance to al-Baghdadi though, of course, those that have should not be discounted.

The above is indicative of the fact that IS is currently branding itself as the *only* conduit for jihadism the world over. According to its leaders, all groups are obligated to subordinate themselves to it. They are attempting to establish IS as the new standard-bearer of international Islamist terrorism, just as al-

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<sup>133</sup> Martin Chulov, (2014), ‘Isis reconciles with al-Qaeda group as Syria airstrikes continue’, *Guardian*, (28-09).

Qaeda did in the 1990s and 2000s. It is imperative that governments track and monitor all allegiance-building between IS and other jihadist networks. Tracking the discourse taking place on informal networks suggests that significant portions of AQIM and AQAP are more sympathetic to IS' cause than their official positions dictates.<sup>134</sup> IS have proven capable of quickly evolving their position and alignments to suit their growth which will likely involve communication and joint-efforts with broader global jihadist networks in the future. If its ranks are bolstered globally, then the threat will be transformed. It is very important that practitioners have as accurate a picture as possible of this phenomenon.

Furthermore, it is important that counter-extremism efforts are redoubled alongside military and counter-terrorism initiatives against IS in the Middle East. Support for IS must be challenged at its ideological roots, at the same time as logistical support. Critical engagement programmes in the region's schools are just as necessary as they are in the West, in order to ensure that forthcoming generations are more immune to the allure of extremist Islamism.

## **Tackling Islamic State's Financial Sustainability**

We need to recognise that IS has developed a complex and fully functioning financial structure which has given the group a higher level of resilience, security and sustainability compared to other jihadist organisations. Whereas groups like al-Qaeda predominantly functioned through patronage, IS have developed its own sub-economy based on the smuggling of oil and extortion. Hence, to obstruct IS' financial independence, it is necessary for international governments to work against these smuggling networks. If there is no one to facilitate the sale of IS oil, then the group will lose its most substantial income stream.

At the same time, international efforts must be renewed to coordinate responses to kidnapping and hostage extortion situations. If governments unanimously reject the paying of ransoms then the incentive to kidnap will be restricted to its propaganda value, something which has deterred, more than encouraged, young extremists to join IS. European Union member states such as Germany, France, Italy and Spain have legislation that allows them to negotiate financial settlements for the release of nationals taken hostage by terrorist organisation. However, it is imperative that states recognise that IS is not to be negotiated with, not least because it rejects all norms of international law and has

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<sup>134</sup> In the extensive tracking of IS-affiliated social media accounts alongside accounts of other al-Qaeda affiliate groups, we witnessed mixed reactions to the establishment of a "caliphate". Reactions online by both centralised affiliate networks as well as Jihadists on the ground show both anti-IS rhetoric as well as pro-caliphate rhetoric with some strands of IS sympathy.



consistently professed its globalist ambitions. To negotiate with it gives the organisation legitimacy which it is not owed.

While it has been noted that IS does not need patronage to fully function, there are numerous instances of wealthy individuals and charities from across the world donating funds to IS, notably in Gulf countries. This activity must be discontinued as a primary priority of the states involved. Turning a blind eye to the financing of terrorism is no longer tenable.

## **Foreign Terrorist Fighters**

While IS (at the time of writing, at least) has not profoundly altered the jihadist status quo or caused tectonic shifts within already-established groups, it has certainly galvanised Islamist extremists internationally who are not yet affiliated with a given organisation. In the past few years, we have seen an unprecedented mobilization of individuals from across the world go to fight in Syria. However, since IS' "caliphate" declaration, thousands more have left their home countries to travel to live, and fight, there.

That FTF have flocked to Iraq and Syria in the thousands has been something of a litmus test in showing weaknesses and ineffective infrastructures of national and regional counter-extremism efforts. It is the most emblematic representation of the need to better deter the allure of violent extremist ideologies. The concerns we now face with regards to foreign fighters is two-fold – firstly, how do we stop them from going and, secondly, what do we do when they return. On the one hand, states are having to rapidly develop legislation and inflate legal measures around deterring and preventing individuals from travelling abroad to participate in terrorism. On the other, we are now witnessing the return of many FTF, and are thus recognising that we lack clear legal structures and judicial procedures to handle this influx.

In attempting to deter individuals from traveling to join terrorist organisations, it is crucial that governments recognise the need to target the roots of radicalisation. Preventing extremist ideologies from having appeal is fundamental. This is a battle of ideas and currently an extremist minority have hijacked the discourse. In some countries, such as the UK, loose preventative strategies have been incorporated into localities to try and flag extremist trends and curb its appeal. These structures need to be clarified, rebranded and broadened. Further, governments must recognise that the initial introduction to extremist ideologies remains offline and, as such, areas of vulnerability, such as universities and prisons, deserve extra attention in deterring the spread of extremist ideologies.

Education systems need to better incorporate critical consumption skills so that young audiences are able to assess information they come across. These skills are also crucial online. Although the initial

introduction to extremist ideologies remains offline, once that first spark has been lit, the online world provides an abundance of material and contacts to facilitate and expedite the radicalisation process. Censorship measures and filtering mechanisms in an attempt to eradicate the online space of unwanted extremist content will always target a symptom rather than attack the cause of its appeal. The extremist ideology needs to be contested both off and online by a range, including community leaders, youth activists, religious figures and even government bodies. Certainly, we are beginning to see civil society become emboldened in its anti-IS stance. These efforts are commended and should be expanded upon.

The reality of the threat posed by FTF needs to be better addressed and countered. Governments should be preventing individuals from traveling to join terrorist organisations abroad while also promoting the return of their citizens. Returning FTFs should all face due process combined with a robust de-radicalisation programme that addresses the traumas that returnees will have inevitably experienced and provides more tangible deliverables for eventual reintroduction into greater society, while addressing the risk of backsliding into extremist networks. Prisons should have mandatory de-radicalisation programmes for individuals that have been incarcerated for extremist and terrorist-related charges. De-radicalisation programmes should not only include processes which deconstruct the narratives espoused by violent extremists, but also challenge the ideological principles behind extremist organisations which divide society along binary lines.

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While rejuvenating counter-extremism efforts the world over is, without doubt, imperative, one must also consider how best to go about removing one of IS' greatest attractions, its success. Somehow, IS must be rolled back. It cannot be allowed to continue existing in either Iraq or Syria – the implications of its presence are profoundly destabilizing for the region. It has, in general, been accepted that this is the case, which is a positive development. However, to date, international efforts against IS have proven to be ineffective. Air strikes simply do not work in this context, even if they may have had some success in the fight against al-Qaeda. In a sense, it is unhelpful, at this stage, to understand the fight against IS as “counter-terrorism”. At least in the short term, the international community must fight fire with fire, conventional warfare with conventional warfare. And yes, this does mean ground troops. However, it is imperative that these ground troops are not American or British – IS' ideology would thrive off that. Rather, it is upon Sunni Muslim-majority countries like Turkey, Jordan and Saudi Arabia to fulfil this role.

A military strategy will not be enough, though. To bring an end to IS' advances, we must ensure that the focus is on politics, in both Syria and Iraq. Now, things have reached a stage in which instability in one cannot be solved unless it is in the other as well. The world must reinvigorate its efforts to bring

about a solution to the civil war in Syria. Similarly, in Iraq, the political system must change profoundly. As the fact that IS operates on an alliance network renders evident, it is not just ideology that is driving the crisis. Hence, the only long-term solution for this is political.

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## Appendix I: IS Twitter Accounts

The following tables display a sample of the data results that were collected in tracking both centralised and decentralised Twitter accounts associated with IS. The tables show 31 of the IS accounts Quilliam has been following over a five week period to visualise the differences being seen in account types, output fluctuations (how much are users tweeting), follower accumulation and account suspensions. As to not tamper with the subject matter being analysed, Quilliam chose to only display accounts in these tables which have now been suspended or blocked for this report.

As discussed in this report, account types were broken into four primary categories.

- **Official News Accounts:** Seemingly centralised propaganda streams unlinked to a particular individual, streaming coordinated through IS media bodies.
- **Unofficial News Accounts:** Individuals or groups running news feeds supporting IS meant to inform a wider audience.
- **Regional Accounts:** Information streams seemingly linked to a particular IS-run territory.
- **Foreign Terrorist Fighters/IS Operatives:** Individuals that are residing in IS-run territories that are giving information about their experiences as well as sharing IS propaganda.

Accounts highlighted in **Orange** show that the account was blocked or suspended during the time-period shown. Accounts highlighted in **Green** were blocked or suspended after the time period shown.

The yellow highlighted columns show the number of followers on a given day, tracked weekly, to assess the influx of followers. As can be seen, some of the larger accounts are able to accrue a few thousand new followers per week. This number has been increasing with new informal, internal authentication methods where new accounts created after user accounts have been blocked are promoted among IS followers so that original follower number can be amassed quickly.

Data collection also showed that the suspension or blocking of Twitter accounts often came in waves where, it is thought, Twitter would do en masse take-downs of IS-affiliated accounts all at once. As discussed in the report, these negative measures seem ineffective overall since most suspended or blocked accounts could be traced as reappearing shortly after under a slightly altered name. Some accounts would also post gruesome or explicitly terrorist related content, only to take down their own posts later so that they could not be censored under Twitter regulations.

Sample of IS Centralised and Decentralised Twitter Accounts

Account Type	Account		Since	Followers	Tweets							Followers
Official news				07-Jul	07/07/14	08/07/14	09/07/14	10/07/14	11/07/14	14/07/14	15/07/14	(16/7)
	<a href="#">al_e3tisam</a>			18K	-	1	-	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	
	<a href="#">e3tesamo</a>			3,316	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4,116
	<a href="#">en_alhayat</a>			Sus/Bloc	-	-	-	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	
	<a href="#">albaraka_news</a>		01/12/13	30.4K	-	-	-	1	7	-	-	34.5K
Unofficial news	<a href="#">AIDawhlislam</a>		01/03/12	10.2K	60	20	33	28	43	29	2	11.7K
	<a href="#">News Aldolh</a>			4,957	45	104	67	50	75	65	94	6,587
	<a href="#">isisnews3</a>	EN		3855	12	17	26	7	21	11	20	4,959
Regional news	<a href="#">Wilaiat_Halab</a>			33.3K	2	-	-	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	
	<a href="#">homs_isis</a>			11K	-	7	-	2	2	-	-	17.9K
	<a href="#">SalahaddenNew</a>			11.5K	11	-	-	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	<a href="#">Sus/Bloc</a>	Sus/Bloc	
	<a href="#">ragqaa</a>			16.7K	1	5	2	2	3	3	9	23.7K
	<a href="#">Dwhomess</a>			5,999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,334
	<a href="#">Kirkuk ISIS7</a>			12.3K	1	1	5	6	3	1	2	19.6K
	<a href="#">JnoubISIS</a>			7131	-	27	2	1	-	9	9	13.4K
	<a href="#">Nynwa_news</a>			20K	-	1	2	1	-	2	1	26.5K
Individual supporters	<a href="#">baghdadfawares</a>			10.4K	5	2	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	
	<a href="#">pp_s2013</a>			21.9K	-	-	2	1	4	-	-	23.4K
	<a href="#">truthsMaster</a>	EN		2219	300+	150	200+	200+	300+	152	300+	2,567
	<a href="#">mujaahid4life</a>	EN		3635	65	50	33	64	23	60	32	4,651
	<a href="#">AbuBakrAl_Janab</a>	EN		4470	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	
	<a href="#">KufrBitTaghout</a>	EN		3187	53	38	14	4	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">muhajirbritanni</a>	EN	01/07/14	294	4	-	-	-	2	8	1	494
	<a href="#">dawlat islam1</a>	EN		2,044	60	73	87	65	125	95	47	2,302
	<a href="#">ALshamariya</a>		01/05/12	28.2K	-	-	-	-	-	-	42	29.4K
	<a href="#">HBHIB2</a>			1938	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1938
	<a href="#">lashkegah09</a>			9806	-	-	-	-	-	26	-	12.5K
	<a href="#">aziz_g268</a>			7211	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	7,702
	<a href="#">al_khansaa2</a>			32.6K	25	60	44	47	42	48	30	34.6K
<a href="#">Alhezbr</a>		01/09/11	30.5K	75	35	37	30	50	46	44	32.6K	

Account Type	Account								Followers			
		16/07/14	17/07/14	18/07/14	19/07/14	20/07/14	21/07/14	22/07/14	(22/7)	23/07/14	24/07/14	25/07/14
Official news	<a href="#">al_e3tisam</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">e3tesamo</a>	3	5	4	5	4	4	5	4327	5	4	5
	<a href="#">en_alhayat</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">albaraka_news</a>	2	2	-	-	-	1	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
Unofficial news	<a href="#">AlDawhislam</a>	3	15	27	21	7	19	12	12.4K	9	12	25
	<a href="#">News_Aldolh</a>	52	70	80	100	54	100	75	7147	80	78	83
	<a href="#">isisnews3</a>	24	18	15	18	9	7	11	5287	19	15	11
Regional	<a href="#">Wilaiat_Halab</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	-	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">homs_isis</a>	-	-	5	1	-	1	Sus/Bloc	-	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">SalahaddenNew</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	-	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">raggaa</a>	3	3	7	3	2	4	Sus/Bloc	-	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">Dwhomess</a>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6517	-	-	-
	<a href="#">Kirkuk_ISIS7</a>	1	7	16	12	1	14	Sus/Bloc	-	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">JnoubISIS</a>	2	12	3	5	2	5	11	15.9K	17	12	6
	<a href="#">Nynwa_news</a>	1	3	3	1	-	3	-	29.7K	1	1	2
People	<a href="#">baghdadfawares</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	-	-	-	Sus/Bloc	-	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">pp_s2013</a>	-	-	4	-	1	-	-	24.1K	1	1	1
	<a href="#">truthsMaster</a>	200+	150	200+	200+	200+	200+	150	2716	150	200+	200+
	<a href="#">mujaahid4life</a>	14	54	47	37	20	24	26	4961	46	45	59
	<a href="#">AbuBakrAl_Janab</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">KufrBitTaghout</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">muhajirbritanni</a>	2	11	14	8	-	-	3 [del]	643	1	-	-
	<a href="#">dawlat_islam1</a>	79	90-100	60	80	31	75	120	2392	60	45	38
	<a href="#">ALshamariya</a>	-	54	36	7	-	35	23	30K	45	32	18
	<a href="#">HBHIB2</a>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1948	-	-	-
	<a href="#">lashkegah09</a>	1	-	9	18	6	-	13	13.9K	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">aziz_g268</a>	1	1	12	7	-	-	2	7981	-	-	-
	<a href="#">al_khansaa2</a>	38	-	-	23	-	45	42	35.3K	-	-	-
<a href="#">Alhezbr</a>	39	29	70	40	20	55	75	33.3K	35	-	-	

Account Type	Account			Followers							Followers	
		04/08/14	05/08/14	(05/08)	06/08/14	07/08/14	08/08/14	11/08/14	12/08/14	13/08/14	(14/08)	14/08/14
Official news	<a href="#">al_e3tisam</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">e3tesamo</a>	3	3	4988	4	3	4	4	5	5	5174	4
	<a href="#">en_alhayat</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">albaraka_news</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">AlDawhIslam</a>	2	8	14.6K	11	4	8	-	-	-	16K	4
Unofficial news	<a href="#">News_Aldoh</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">jisnews3</a>	4	12	6197	18	25	20	19	22	18	7119	25
	<a href="#">Wilaiat_Halab</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
Regional	<a href="#">homs_isis</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">SalahaddenNew</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">raqqaa</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">Dwhomess</a>	-	-	7008	-	-	-	-	-	-	7178	-
	<a href="#">Kirkuk_ISIS7</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">JnoubISIS</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">Nynwa_news</a>	1	1	39.3K	1	1	3	3	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">baghdadfawares</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
People	<a href="#">pp_s2013</a>	1	-	25.8K	-	4	1	1	-	3	27.1K	-
	<a href="#">truthsMaster</a>	26	69	2997	150+	150+	200+	200+	200+	200+	3386	200+
	<a href="#">mujaahid4life</a>	41	-	5681	42	17	50	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">AbuBakrAl_Janab</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">KufrBitTaghout</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">muhajirbritanni</a>	-	-	798	-	-	4	-	-	-	954	1
	<a href="#">dawlat_islam1</a>	28	7	2675	8	54	65	50	58	60	2854	50
	<a href="#">ALshamariya</a>	20	3	31.7K	19	75	28	55	52	48	33K	-
	<a href="#">HBHIB2</a>	-	-	1971	-	-	-	-	-	-	2009	-
	<a href="#">lashkegah09</a>	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc		Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc	-
	<a href="#">aziz_g268</a>	-	-	8409	-	3	10	3	2	8	8821	3
	<a href="#">al_khansaa2</a>	36	-	37.2K	-	-	45	60	30	Sus/Bloc	38.6K	Sus/Bloc
	<a href="#">Alhezbr</a>	10	13	35.4K	-	100	38	55	30	34	Sus/Bloc	Sus/Bloc

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

لا إله إلا الله

رسول الله

قاعدة الجهاد

في جزيرة العرب

رقم البيان: «٨٦»

التاريخ: ٢٣ ذو الحجة ١٤٢٥ هـ

## « بيان بشأن التحالف الصليبي »

الحمد لله القائل: "ولايزالون يقاتلونكم حتى يردوكم عن دينكم إن استطاعوا"، والصلاة والسلام على الصادق المصدوق المبعوث بالسيف بين يدي الساعة صلى الله عليه وعلى آله وصحبه والتابعين لهم بإحسان.

أما بعد،

فضمن الحرب الصليبية على الإسلام قام التحالف العالمي بحملة شرسة على المجاهدين في العراق والشام خصوصاً على إخواننا في الدولة الإسلامية، كان فيها القصف والقتل، دون مراعاة للحرمات، ولما رأى الأعداء أن الحملات الجوية لن تجدي عنهم -بإذن الله- بدأوا بالحديث عن حملات برية يريدون ليطفنوا نور الله بأفواههم.

وفي هذه المناسبة نؤكد نصرتنا لإخواننا ضد الحملة الصليبية العالمية، وأننا في عدوتهم ضد هذه الحملة، كما نؤكد على حرمة المشاركة في حربهم تحت دعوى أنهم خوارج، وليسوا كذلك، ونوصي جميع المجاهدين أن ينسوا خلافاتهم وأن يوقفوا الاقتتال فيما بينهم، وأن يجتهدوا في دفع الحملة الصليبية التي تستهدف الجميع إن هذه الحملة حملة صليبية ضد الإسلام، ضد تحكيم شرع الله، حملة يراد منها أن يبقى المسلمون تبعاً لأعدائهم ليس لهم من أمر أنفسهم شيء، ولأجل هذا تواطأ على هذه الحملة النصارى والمجوس والحكام الخونة المرتدون.

إن نصرته المسلم واجب على أخيه كما قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: (المسلم أخو المسلم لا يظلمه ولا يخذله) رواه مسلم ولأجل ذلك ندعو جميع المسلمين أن يجتهدوا في نصرته إخوانهم ضد الصليبيين بما يستطيعون بالنفس والمال واللسان.

كما نؤكد الدعوة لكل من يستطيع الإثخان في الأمريكان أن يجتهد بالإثخان فيهم عسكرياً واقتصادياً وإعلامياً، فهم قادة هذه الحرب، وأساس هذه الحملة.

والعاقبة للمتقين، وصل اللهم على عبدك ورسولك محمد بن عبد الله وآله وصحبه وسلم تسليماً كثيراً.

قاعدة الجهاد في جزيرة العرب

الجمعة الثالث والعشرون من ذي الحجة ١٤٢٥ هـ

السابع عشر من أكتوبر ٢٠١٤ م



## بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

### مبادرة ودعوة إلى الهدنة بين الفصائل في الشام

الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على المصطفى الذي عظم أجر العمل الصالح في أيام العشر حتى قال: (أفضل أيام الدنيا أيام العشر) أما بعد ..

فبسبب الهجمة الصليبية على إخواننا المسلمين في الشام والعراق بل على عموم أهل الإسلام وعلى الإسلام نفسه كما صرح أعداؤنا ، وآخر تصريحاتهم المعلنة بذلك ما قالته السيناتور الأمريكية وسط التصفيق والهتاف والتأييد أن الحرب التي تخوضها أمريكا هي: (على الإسلام وليست على تنظيم معين)

نسذكر وسط هذه الهجمة موقف معاوية رضي الله عنه لما راسله طاغية الروم أثناء القتال الدائر بينه وبين علي رضي الله عنه فراغمه معاوية وهدده بالصلح مع ابن عمه والمسير إليه .

وعليه فحقتا لدماء المجاهدين وعسى الله أن يكف بأس الذين كفروا ويدفع عدوانهم على عموم المسلمين ندعوا جميع الفصائل في الشام والعراق إلى كف القتال فيما بينها على أن يبدأ ذلك في موعد أقصاه ليلة عرفة لعل الله تعالى ينزل رحماته على الشام وأهله بدعاء حشود المسلمين في هذا اليوم العظيم على أن يتولى الإخوة في أنصار الدين الرباط على الحدود بين الطرفين لتضبط تلك الحدود وتهدأ نقاط التماس

وطلب من جميع الفصائل أن تعلن موقفها من هذه المبادرة بطريقتها خلال ثلاثة أيام من تاريخ صدور هذا البيان (ليعرف ويتبين الرفض لهذه المبادرة المباركة المعطل لها)

فهلهم إلى حقن دماء المجاهدين وإغاظة الكافرين وإدخال السرور على عموم المسلمين ولتتفرغ المجاهدون بذلك لنصد العدو والصائل عليهم وعلى ديار المسلمين فقد توحدت وتآلفت على حربهم أربعون دولة وحدثتهم عدوانهم للإسلام وأهله .

**أفلا يدعوننا ولاؤنا للإسلام وأهله إلى وقف الاقتتال تحت قصف هذه الحملة الصليبية على أقل تقدير إن لم يكن للوقف النهائي سبيل ؟ !**  
فنسأل الله تعالى أن يصلح النيات ويهدي القلوب ويسدد الأقوال والأعمال بين يدي عيد الأضحى المبارك الذي يذكر بالضحية والفداء .

وندعوا إخواننا إلى أن يوافق ذلك إطلاق لسراح الأسارى ممن لم تلتخط أيديهم بدم حرام عند كافة الفرقاء .

اللهم انصر المجاهدين وألف بين قلوبهم ووحد صفهم وارفع راية التوحيد ونكس رايات الشرك والتبديد وأنج عبادك المستضعفين من المسلمين وصلى اللهم وسلم على نبينا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين ..

صدر في ٦ من ذي الحجة ١٤٣٥ هـ

الموقعون على مبادرة الهدنة بين الفصائل

- ١- الشيخ المجاهد أبو محمد الداغستاني (أمير القوقاز)
- ٢- الشيخ أبو محمد المقدسي
- ٣- الشيخ أبو قتادة الفلسطيني
- ٤- الشيخ د. هاني السباعي
- ٥- الشيخ د. طارق عبد الحليم
- ٦- الشيخ عمر الخدوش
- ٧- الشيخ محمد سالم بن محمد الأمين الجلسي
- ٨- الشيخ أبو الوفاء التونسي
- ٩- الشيخ عبد الله الحيسني
- ١٠- الشيخ أبو عبد الله صادق بن عبد الله الهاشمي
- ١١- الشيخ عمر بن عبد الله بن عبد الرحمن
- ١٢- الشيخ متار بن رمضان الملاسي
- ١٣- الشيخ أمين جعفر

**هام :** لضييق الوقت فلم يتمكن القائمون على المبادرة من استيعاب عدد كبير من العلماء والذين سيتم التواصل معهم تباعاً بإذن الله كما نرجوا من كل عالم وطالب علم يؤيد هذه المبادرة المباركة أن يرسلنا أو يغرد بأيديهم لتتم إضافته لقائمة الموقعين على هذه المبادرة والله الموفق