ABSTRACT

Al Qaeda changed the terrorism movement with aspirations of a global jihad. Following the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York, Washington DC, and Pennsylvania, al Qaeda rose to the top of America’s threat list. After the invasion of Iraq in 2003, al Qaeda responded by expanding its influence into the newly restructured Iraq, establishing al Qaeda in Iraq. Differences in organizational focus and strategy led to the split of al Qaeda and al Qaeda in Iraq in 2014. The organization we now know as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria was born. The entity transitioned from a terrorist organization to an insurgency group, capturing key cities, like Mosul in northern Iraq, and declaring the reestablishment of the Islamic Caliphate, a theological empire. The civil war in Syria facilitated the spread of the group into Syria. The withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Iraq left the Iraqi government weak, and religiously divided, the government was unable to support or protect its people. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria has arguably become the strongest and richest jihadist organization. Their global recruitment showcases the effectiveness of their technological capabilities and skills. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the conditions that explain the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.
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The Perfect Storm | 1
Introduction

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is arguably the most powerful and profitable jihadi organization seen in modern times. ISIS has been able to accomplish what other jihadi organizations like al Qaeda, founded in the late 1980s, have only dreamed of doing. In less than ten years, ISIS has transitioned from terrorist group to insurgent group, establishing a self-governing caliphate, harshly ruling over the people living in the territory the group controls. After the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, Saddam Hussein’s government party, the minority Sunnis, were ousted from power and replaced by the majority Shia. The Shia then had control of Iraq’s security forces and institutions. Centuries of Sunni-Shia tensions were surfacing. The sudden loss of power for the Sunnis, after being in control for more than 20 years under the reign of Saddam was a tough pill to swallow. Initial violence in Iraq during this transitional time had sectarian dimensions, but after the 2004-2005 appointment of interim government and subsequent elections, the attacks turned political. The Sunnis felt underrepresented, even though they elected to not participate in the interim government, which was responsible for writing Iraq’s constitution.

The withdrawal of U.S. military forces left a power vacuum. After the reelection of Prime Minister Maliki, the repression of Sunnis sharply increased. Security forces in Iraq were seemingly targeting Sunnis. The Iraqi government appeared to be unresponsive to the blatant targeting and attacks on Sunnis, proving Maliki was not able to protect all of the people of Iraq. The political situation and internal conflict in Syria blossomed into a civil war. ISIS capitalized on the disarray in Syria, requisitioning control of large portions of the country and naming Raqqa as the capital after the declaration of the caliphate in June 2014.

The focus of my research has been to thoroughly describe the establishment of ISIS beginning with its founder, Abu Musab al Zarqawi. After his death in 2006, subsequent ISIS leaders continued with Zarqawi’s original vision for ISIS, best captured and carried out by Abu Bakr al Baghdadi. I wanted to understand why ISIS leaders have been able to achieve their goals, surpassing al Qaeda, ISIS’ “parent organization,” on all fronts. I chose to explore the conditions explain the rise of the ISIS. I examined and gathered commonly identified reasons behind the rise of ISIS in both scholarly and news articles.

I hypothesized that the combination of political instability, in the context of the new Iraqi government and the Syrian Civil War coupled with Sunni-Shia religious tensions in Iraq, and the withdrawal of U.S. military forces explain the rise of ISIS. In my paper, I argue that there is not one condition, but a culmination of multiple conditions, a “perfect storm” of sorts, that explains the rise of ISIS.

Background

The Beginning

Abu Musab al Zarqawi was born Ahmad Fadhil Nazzal al Kbalaylab in Zarqa, Jordan in 1966.1 Born into a large family, Bedouins from the Bani Hassan tribe, Zarqawi grew up

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modestly in a rough neighborhood known for its heavy influence of drugs and gun crime. Zarqawi dropped out of school when he was seventeen, after the death of his father, and became violent, turning to drugs and alcohol. Known for being a bully and a thug, his first prison stint was in 1984 for drug possession and sexual assault. Zarqawi was released from prison in 1988 and made his way to Afghanistan in 1989, to fight against the invasion of the Soviet Union. Showing up too late to participate in the fighting, he became involved with Abu Muhammad al Maqdisi, a fellow Jordanian and well-known radical Salafist. It is unclear where Zarqawi began his path to radicalization, prison or his time in Afghanistan, but Maqdisi magnified Zarqawi’s radical beliefs and broadened his terrorist contacts. Together they formed Bayat al-Imam, Zarqawi’s first jihadi group.

Both men returned to Jordan in 1992 and quickly found themselves on the radar of Jordanian authorities due to their public criticism of the king and the treaty Jordan signed with Israel. Zarqawi and Maqdisi were sentenced to fifteen years in prison in 1994 after a raid on Zarqawi’s house produced a weapons cache. They flourished in prison, Maqdisi playing the part of religious adviser and Zarqawi fulfilling the role of enforcement and recruitment into Bayat al-Imam, which ultimately failed to take off in the way Zarqawi had hoped. Maqdisi began writing religious pieces and family members smuggled them from prison for publishing. Soon Zarqawi was also publishing. His violent, radical beliefs and declaration that anyone who disagreed with him was an infidel caught the attention of Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda’s leader, in 1998. Zarqawi was released from prison in 1999 in general amnesty.

Zarqawi left Jordan almost immediately, and ultimately returned to Afghanistan where he purportedly met with bin Laden, who distrusted Zarqawi for his outward criticism of al Qaeda’s support of the Taliban, his intense hatred for Shiites as well as his criminal background, and his stance on targeting everyone, including other Muslims, who disagreed with him. It is alleged that bin Laden asked for Zarqawi to join al Qaeda, but he refused, and desiring his own training camp, Zarqawi committed to training other Jordanian prisoners, who were also released in general amnesty. With a small amount of money to start the camp from bin Laden, Zarqawi set up shop in western Afghanistan in 2000. It was also around this time, Bayat al-Imam began transitioning itself to Jamaat al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad (JTWJ).

**Jamaat al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad**

In response to the September 11, 2001 attacks, the U.S. invaded Afghanistan in shortly after the attacks, forcing Zarqawi to relocate. He found himself moving between Iran, Iraqi Kurdistan, Syria, and the Sunni Triangle in Iraq. Using this to his advantage,
Zarqawi continued to make connections and recruit for JTWJ.\textsuperscript{8} Up until Colin Powell’s February 2003 speech to the United Nations Security Council, Zarqawi was an undistinguished jihadi fighter.\textsuperscript{9} Powell’s speech, meant to make the case for the U.S. invasion of Iraq as well as garner allied support, launched Zarqawi into the spotlight on an international platform. Zarqawi was falsely named as the link between al Qaeda and the Saddam Hussein regime.\textsuperscript{10}

With the invasion of Iraq, Zarqawi became a household name. JTWJ had relocated to northern Iraq and continued to grow their forces, most of which were foreign fighters from Jordan, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Kurdish regions.\textsuperscript{11} The group had a four-part plan after their relocation. First, they worked to drive out U.S. and coalition forces. Second, JTWJ hindered the governmental transition and Iraqi support of the new government. Third, their focus turned to stopping the reconstruction of Iraq. JTWJ began kidnapping civilian contractors, humanitarian aid workers, and other foreigners in Iraq. Soon beheading videos were being circulated across the Internet, a practice JTWJ initiated, the most infamous being the execution of American Nicholas Berg in May 2004. The beheading is believed to have been carried out by Zarqawi himself. At least ten other murders conducted in a similar manner were posthumously linked to JTWJ. The fourth part of JTWJ’s plan was the placement of car bombs outside Shiite mosques and religious sites. Hundreds of worshippers were killed. JTWJ was quickly becoming known for their violent methods and targeting of non-combatants, aid workers and Iraqi civilians for example.\textsuperscript{12}

In October 2004, Zarqawi pledged his allegiance to bin Laden and JTWJ changed their name to al Qaeda in the Land of Two Rivers or al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). The merger put Zarqawi in control of AQI and thus the flow of foreign fighters into Iraq. This would later prove to be important with the conflict in Syria and repositioning forces there through contacts and connections Zarqawi previously made.\textsuperscript{13} Tensions between AQI and al Qaeda were becoming apparent. AQI continued to conduct extreme and violent attacks, which once garnered Sunni support, was starting to dissuade current supporters as well as alienate potential supporters.\textsuperscript{14} Top al Qaeda leaders sent multiple letters to Zarqawi in 2005, reminding him of al Qaeda’s long-term goals and asking him to work towards fostering sympathetic relationships with all Iraqis.\textsuperscript{15}

Iraq’s national elections in 2005 and the creation of the constitution were seen as failures for AQI and other jihadi groups, which resulted in an increase in suicide attacks and violence throughout the year. Many of these attacks were aimed at Shiites and occupying collaborators. Support for Zarqawi was waning because of the indiscriminate, brutal tactics and the influx of foreign fighters, including Zarqawi himself. Al Qaeda warned Zarqawi about targeting Shiites and recommended minimizing the collateral damage. Ignoring al Qaeda’s advice to tone down the violence, AQI organized the bombings of three hotels in Amman, Jordan in November. Jordanian’s protested and the backlash from those

\textsuperscript{10} Weaver, Mary Anne. "Inventing Al-Zarqawi," 88.
\textsuperscript{11} Stanford University. "The Islamic State."
\textsuperscript{12} Gambill, Gary. "Abu Musab al-Zarqawi: A Biographical Sketch".
\textsuperscript{14} Stanford University. "The Islamic State."
attacks diminished Zarqawi’s significance.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{Majlis Shura al-Mujahedin}

In early 2006, Zarqawi brought together a number of Iraqi jihad factions under AQI administration and renamed the coalition Majlis Shura al-Mujahedin (MSM), his last ditch effort to redeem his stature. However, Zarqawi was killed in a drone attack in June 2006, and MSM ended with Zarqawi’s death.\textsuperscript{17} Al Qaeda immediately replaced Zarqawi with Abu Ayub al Masri (aka Abu Hamza al Muhajir), an Egyptian bomb maker with training experience in Afghanistan. On October 15, a statement was released announcing the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), a rebranding after Zarqawi’s fall from grace and the group’s declining favor. Abu Omar al Baghadi was named the new leader.

\textbf{Islamic State of Iraq}

The rebranding and renaming of AQI to ISI after Zarqawi’s death was intended to gather more support, locally and regionally. Instead, it created significant confusion not only for its fighters, but intelligence analysts tracking the group.\textsuperscript{18} Local Iraqi Sunnis were increasingly dissatisfied with the significant presence of foreign fighters and leadership, the organization’s insistence of enforcing their own brand of Islam, and use of extreme violence, which also affected innocent civilians. By placing an Iraqi into power, Abu Omar al Baghadi, Masri hoped to regain strength in numbers. Masri shifted to the position of ISI war minister, although it is believed he retained a significant amount of control over the organization.\textsuperscript{19}

The rebranding efforts were ineffective as ISI lost major support and the group became relatively inoperative from 2006 to 2010. Early in 2007, jihadi fighters were abandoning ISI and joining forces with local tribes to combat ISI in the Sahwa or Awakening Movement. Frustrated by ISI seeking to govern their territory and forcing ISI rules upon them, the Awakening Movement coordinated with U.S. and coalition forces to considerably reduce ISI fighters in the western Iraq.\textsuperscript{20} “By early 2008, coalition and local security forces had killed 2,400 AQI members [AQI and ISI were used interchangeably due to the rebranding confusion] and taken 8,800 prisoners. By spring 2009, the U.S. was funding around 100,000 local Sunnis to fight AQI.”\textsuperscript{21}

Between June 2009 and August 2010, the majority of the U.S. military withdrew from Iraq.\textsuperscript{22} ISI appeared to have been defeated and Iraq was on its way to being stable and secure. The Iraqi military began taking over and maintaining security in Iraq. Iraqi Security Forces, trained by U.S. forces, had developed significantly. Between August and October 2009, ISI had regrouped and attacked government infrastructures, killing hundreds of civilians. In April 2010, both Masri and Abu Omar al Baghadi were killed in an Iraqi counterterror operation and by June 80 percent of ISI’s 42 leaders were killed or captured.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{16}Kirdar, M. J. "Al Qaeda in Iraq," 3-4.
\bibitem{17}Zelin, Aaron Y. "The War Between ISIS and al-Qaeda for Supremacy of the Global Jihadist Movement," 3.
\bibitem{18}Kirdar, M. J. "Al Qaeda in Iraq," 5.
\bibitem{19}Stanford University. "The Islamic State."
\bibitem{20}Kirdar, M. J. "Al Qaeda in Iraq," 5.
\bibitem{21}Stanford University. "The Islamic State."
\end{thebibliography}
Abu Bakr al Baghdadi promptly assumed control of the weak ISI, a position he was suited to handle as co-founder of Jaysh Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l-Jamah, a jihadist group that operated in Iraq after the U.S. invasion of Iraq and merged with AQI in 2004. As a sub-commander within the ranks of ISI since 2004, Baghdadi was perfectly able to take charge of ISI. Baghdadi’s first steps were to reiterate the group’s goals, focusing on weakening and destroying the Iraqi government, and creating an Islamic caliphate.

Baghdadi then set out to restructure ISI. He envisioned a disciplined, hierarchical structure: Baghdadi formed governing and policymaking bodies, removed foreigners from leadership positions and placed them into combat roles, many fulfilling outreach, propaganda, recruitment, and donation collection functions. Baghdadi sought out members of Saddam Hussein’s former Baathist regime to fill ISI’s military or security leadership positions. U.S. forces located and killed bin Laden in Pakistan in May 2011 putting bin Laden’s second in command, Ayman al Zawahiri, in control of al Qaeda and its affiliates, which included ISI.

The outbreak of the Syrian civil war opened a door for ISI movement. Baghdadi sent ISI operatives to Syria to gather support and prepare for ISI advancement. ISI was committing to fight against the Bashar al Assad regime, an Alawite (a Shia sect) dominated government that ISI viewed as non-Muslim infidels trying to suppress Muslims. During this expansion time, by December 2011, U.S. and coalition forces were gone, and with less pressure and security, ISI attacks increased, targeting the Iraqi government and Iraqi Security Forces. The Sunni and Shia divide deepened as the Iraqi government marginalized the minority Sunni group. The group of ISI operatives Baghdadi sent to Syria emerged as Jabhat al Nusra in 2012, effectively fighting against the Assad government. The group was growing in popularity and support in Syria, due to the distribution of food and medicine to war-torn areas, which other Syrian opponents of the regime did not accomplish.

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

In April 2013, Baghdadi announced the expansion of ISI operations in Syria and the merger of ISI with Jabhat al Nusra (JN), an al Qaeda affiliate in Syria. To recognize their expanded vision, ISI changed their name to Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). JN and al Qaeda leadership disputed the unification and Zawahiri dictated that ISIS’s influence should remain in Iraq. Rejecting Zawahiri’s mandate, ISIS continued to operate in Syria, sometimes clashing with other Islamist groups. JN was and had been willing to work towards a common goal and fought against the Syrian government with other jihadist groups. ISIS leadership did not share their enthusiasm and preferred to establish control of more territory.

In October 2013, Zawahiri demanded that ISIS disband, return operations to Iraq

26 Stanford University. “The Islamic State.”
27 Stanford University. “The Islamic State.”
29 Stanford University. “The Islamic State.”
only and leave JN to command the Syrian jihadis. Baghdadi argued it would be a sin to dissolve the union on the basis of Islamic law and was not within the best interests of ISIS. He also refused to accept the Sykes-Picot boundaries created by the French and British after World War I. After months of fighting, al Qaeda disowned ISIS and officially severed all connections in February 2014. ISIS had disobeyed al Qaeda leadership too much and too often. ISIS was operating under its own conditions.

Comparison of al Qaeda and ISIS

Bin Laden and Zarqawi came into their roles during the war with the Soviets in Afghanistan in the late 1980s, bin Laden in his role as al Qaeda leader and Zarqawi, a jihadi fighter, dedicated to attacking all infidels and nonbelievers, and future AQI leader. After the death of Zarqawi, Masri, and Abu Omar al Baghadi, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi picked up where Zarqawi had left off ideologically. These beliefs remained in line with al Qaeda ideology, both organizations wishing to spread Islam over as large of a geographical area as possible, removing secular state institutions. Both groups also sought to establish a central Islamic government, the Caliphate, enforced by Sharia law with the Caliph giving orders and leading the followers politically and religiously. However, their differences were drastic.

Al Qaeda pioneered the global jihad, advocating attacks on all infidels, particularly Americans at home and abroad. Al Qaeda sought out American and European targets as the group’s immediate priority. Al Qaeda has claimed responsibility for multiple attacks against the U.S. and its allied forces including 1998 bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the attack on the U.S.S. Cole in Yemen in 2000, and the most infamous attacks, the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania. By focusing on targets outside of the region, the September 11 attacks and the London bombings for example, al Qaeda was able to bring the fight and inflict their ideology on people of other countries, outside their immediate sphere of influence.

ISIS on the other hand, is waging jihad at home, most ISIS attacks have occurred in Syria, and Iraq. In 2014, ISIS added a partner organization in Lebanon, and now is affiliated with more than 40 groups in 16 countries like Libya, Nigeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Afghanistan. ISIS has tight central leadership and does not coexist well within their seized communities, as most are fearful of ISIS members and are against their extreme tactics and violence. ISIS has been mostly concerned with local sectarian

31 Hashim, Ahmed S. "The Islamic State: From al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate," 77-78.
33 Hashim, Ahmed S. "The Islamic State: From al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate," 77-78.
38 Ibid., 206.
fighting. ISIS does not seem to have placed particular emphasis on the global jihad in the same way al Qaeda has.  

Unlike al Qaeda, ISIS welcomes foreign fighters to increase numbers in rank and help govern occupied territory. ISIS now heavily recruits foreign fighters from around the world to establish the caliphate as their religious duty. Foreigners, in the thousands, have traveled to Syria to train and fight with the expectation they will return to their respective homelands and carry out jihad. This has been especially relevant in Europe with the attacks in France and Belgium. Multiple attacks in Germany, the United Kingdom, and Spain have been thwarted. ISIS has also capitalized on inspiring attacks around the world, calling on “true” Muslims to join the caliphate and carry out homegrown attacks. Many Muslims have radicalized through propaganda on the Internet, which is meant to inspire individuals, who cannot travel to Syria to fight, but want to do so in the name of ISIS and the Caliphate. The San Bernardino and the Orlando nightclub attacks are examples of this.

ISIS desires to create a pure Sunni state and thus much of their violence has been sectarian in nature, against private property in Shia populated areas or religious centers. Zarqawi believed in order to save the Islamic community it would need to be purged. Al Qaeda does not support the opinion that Muslims are the problem, but recognize the institutions are what need to be changed. Al Qaeda has maintained that by aliening those who support them, the Sunnis only, the long-term goal of global jihad would be hurt.

Al Qaeda has never possessed or attempted to create its own state and they have not committed the organization to a domestic insurgency, instead choosing to respect the regime of the country where they are located. In June 2014, Baghdadi began referring to ISIS as the Islamic State, declaring the territory occupied by the organization as their caliphate. Abu Bakr al Baghdadi was named the caliph or ruler and called for Muslims around the world to join the caliphate. Al Qaeda was unimpressed with Baghdadi’s announcement, asserting he not only did not have the right to declare a caliphate, but that the timing was not appropriate. ISIS has fulfilled Zarqawi’s dream, to create and govern a state. The biggest difference between al Qaeda and ISIS is this: al Qaeda has a network approach, building support and forces through communicative outreach versus ISIS’s thug tactics, forcing individuals to join their ranks or be killed. These differences ultimately led to al Qaeda severing ties with ISIS.

Expert Views

There are many opinions behind the comeback and expansion of ISIS. Explained below, this list is by no means comprehensive. It is not the intention of this paper to claim these perspectives are right or wrong, and that they did not contribute to the rise of ISIS,

45 Brown, Cody McClain. “Mobilizing the Caliphate: ISIS and the Conflict in Iraq and Syria,” 206.
47 Stanford University. “The Islamic State.”
49 Stanford University. “The Islamic State.”
51 Brown, Cody McClain. “Mobilizing the Caliphate: ISIS and the Conflict in Iraq and Syria,” 206.
but I believe three specific conditions, the sectarian divide, political instability in Iraq and later Syria, as well as the withdrawal of U.S. military and coalition forces from Iraq, together created the ideal environment for ISIS to flourish.

Globalization

In the article “Regionalization of Political Violence: Arab Levant and Rise of Islamic State” by Saima, A. Kayani Raja Qaiser Ahmed, and Muhammad Shoaib, the authors allude to globalization as the condition growing terrorism in the form of non-state actors in the Middle East, using ISIS as their example. Already plagued with regional issues, such as sectarian divisions, authoritarian regimes, poor governance, and religious extremism, ISIS has been able to rise due to regional political, social, and economic situations in the context of globalization. By exploiting the situations in Iraq and Syria, ISIS was able to fill the power vacuums and attracting foreign fighters with dreams of uninhibited freedom and wealth.53

Income inequality

According to an article posted by the Washington Post, Thomas Piketty, author and professor at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences and at the Paris School of Economics believes inequality, specifically income inequality, is the driver behind terrorism in the Middle East. In the original article, published in the French newspaper Le Monde, Piketty states Western nations are to blame and the regional political and social systems are fractured due to a high concentration of oil wealth with relatively small populations. The oil wealth is shared with a small portion of the population and is also controlled by few, asking the distribution unequal. Piketty criticizes the unequal distribution creates a distressing economic conditions, providing justification for jihadi fighters. The regional wars perpetrated by the Western nations are also mentioned as validation for jihadist actions as these nations support the governments controlling the oil wealth.54

Sectarian Divide

The Sunni and Shia divide is nothing new. Islam has been divided for fourteen centuries, Sunnis and Shias coexisting peacefully together, for the most part. While their rituals and interpretations of Islamic law may differ, they still read from the Quran and follow the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed. Modern day sectarianism in the region can be partially linked to the 1979 Iranian Revolution, where Shia cleric, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, implemented an Islamic ruled government. Khomeini encouraged Muslim unity between the sects, but many countries in the region regarded Iran’s Shia ruled government as an opportunity to push a Shia agenda, especially Saudi Arabia, who began asserting Wahhabism, a puritanical brand of Sunni Islam into the region. Shia are the minority, roughly fifteen percent of the worlds almost two billion Muslims, however, they are the majority in Iran. It is believed that many of the groups responsible for sectarian violence in


the region are linked to Saudi and Arabian tensions. The Iraq-Iran War occurred from 1980-1988. Saudi Arabia backed Iraq with militants, who also went to Afghanistan to help fight against the invading Soviet Union, were suppressing Shia movements backed by Iran. These actions validated Sunni suspicions of Shia antagonism towards them.55

Saddam Hussein and his Baathist party were mainly Sunnis, the minority in Iraq. With the overthrow of Saddam in 2003 and the placement of a majority Shia led government in 2004, the formerly oppressive minority Sunnis became the oppressed. The new Iraqi constitution provided for religious freedom. The bombing of the Shiite shrine, Al Askari Mosque, in February 2006, escalated the previously politically charged attacks into sectarian violence.56 The sectarian conflict between 2006 and 2008 was partially fueled by Shiite militants responding to Sunni attacks.57

After the U.S. withdrawal at the end of 2011, sectarian violence increased exponentially. December 2011, the Iraqi government announced an arrest warrant was issued for Sunni Vice President Tariq al Hashimi and his security team amid allegations of plans to assassinate Maliki. This was perceived as a move to concentrate all of the power with Maliki. U.S. officials intervened with political factions and a conference to reach a political agreement between all factions was scheduled for March 2012. It never happened. In December 2012, Maliki arrested the bodyguards of the Finance Minister, Rafi al Issawi, also a Sunni. Sunni tribal leaders held anti-Maliki demonstrations in Sunni cities demanding the release of prisoners arrested under antiterrorism and de-Baathification laws as well as improved government services in Sunni majority areas.

By January 2013, small amounts of force were being used against Sunni demonstrators. This worsened the discontent. Iraqi Security Forces killed nine Sunni protesters on January 25th, which led to an increase of ISI attacks on security forces. On April 23, Iraqi Security Forces attacked a Sunni protest camp. This time, about 40 people had been killed. The Iraqi government did not respond propelling Sunni demonstrators and tribal leaders to take up arms, overthrowing regional government buildings. Sunni parliamentarian, Ahmad al-Alwani, was ordered to be arrested by Maliki, and by the end of 2013, Sunni unrest had sharply escalated. More attacks by ISI followed, which killed 17 Iraqi Security Forces.58 Under Maliki’s order, Iraqi Security Forces began invading Sunni protest camps and when Iraqi Security Forces attempted to clear a protest camp in Ramadi at the end of 2013, Protestors rebelled, driving out security from the region, providing ISI the perfect location to takeover and gain territory. ISI fighters were joined by some Sunni protesters,59 Sunni attacks against Shiite targets increased, doubling the civilian death toll in 2013 from what it was in 2012.60

“...This conflict is less about Islam and Islamism than it is about sectarian divisions between Sunni and Shia in Iraq and Syria.”61 The Syrian civil war transitioned to a more

58 Ibid., 22-24.
59 Ibid., 24.
60 Stanford University. "The Islamic State.”
61 Brown, Cody McClain. "Mobilizing the Caliphate: ISIS and the Conflict in Iraq and Syria,” 204.
sectarian battle as ISI began fighting with other Sunni supports against Bashar al Assad, a Alawite Shia.\textsuperscript{62} Sectarian tensions shaped by Maliki’s marginalization of Sunni leaders and citizens, and the conflict with ISIS has caused limitations in religious freedom and fueled discrimination in Iraq. Iraq’s domestic political situation saw support for ISIS contributing to its growth in Iraq from 2012-2014. The Sunni-Shia strife in Iraq adds further weight to the argument that the ongoing conflict can be described as “sectarian civil war.”\textsuperscript{63}

\textbf{U.S. Military Withdrawal}

The intervention and invasion of Iraq in 2003 steered Zarqawi toward an alliance with al Qaeda. Many religious and tribal leaders played out the invasion as an unprovoked attack from the West and an aggressive attempt against all Muslims. The call to defend Iraq was sent out to all members of the Muslim community, encouraging fighters to travel and defend the resistance. Many of these foreign fighters were absorbed into AQI and fell in step with Zarqawi’s organizational goals.

The disbanding and barring of former Saddam regime members from holding office or government positions encouraged them to assist and house foreign fighters. However, as the AQI goals transitioned to occupying territory versus freeing it from occupying forces, local tribes began fighting against AQI. Zarqawi’s death in 2006 in combination with the Awakening Movement collaboration and the surge in U.S. troops in early 2007 saw a significan reduction in ISI fighters.\textsuperscript{64} ISI’s capabilities declined, however, the organization was never defeated.\textsuperscript{65} U.S. officials and public support for the war was waning and with Iraqi Security Forces appearing to be relatively well trained and disciplined, and anti-government groups, ISI in particular, showing low levels of activity with sectarian violence reasonably under control, although slightly increased, it was time to withdraw and allow Iraq to come into its own. By the end of 2011, U.S. and coalition forces were gone.\textsuperscript{66}

Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki’s perceived targeting of Sunnis holding positions within Iraq’s government with charges of assassination plans or terrorism offenses caused Sunni uprisings against the government all over Iraq. In 2013, the protest movement camp near Ramadi stimulated a rebellion that spread throughout the Anbar Province in western Iraq leading Maliki to remove armed forces from the area. This security vacuum paved the way for ISI to hold territory and organize major jihadi efforts all over the province.\textsuperscript{67}

\textbf{Political Instability}

ISIS holds the most territory in Iraq and Syria, two countries plagued with internal conflict. Instability evolved first in Iraq. Since the creation of the new Iraqi government after the 2003 invasion, the government has experienced difficulty in supporting and protecting its people. Many security forces personnel were either paid very little or not at all and subsequently some of them left government services to support ISIS. The volatility in Syria originated in early 2011 from protests and has since evolved into a civil war, killing


\textsuperscript{63} Brown, Cody McClain. “Mobilizing the Caliphate: ISIS and the Conflict in Iraq and Syria,” 208.

\textsuperscript{64} Kirdar, M. J. “Al Qaeda in Iraq,” 5-9.


and/or displacing hundreds of thousands of people, to refugee camps in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan as well as seeking asylum in Europe.

**Iraqi Government**

In 1988, Iraq’s leader, Saddam Hussein, used chemical weapons on the Kurdish people of northern Iraq, killing tens of thousands for access to the oil rich region, creating conflict and resentment. His authoritarian regime favored the Sunni minority in government appointments, employment opportunities, and military positions over Iraq’s Shia majority as well as the Kurds.\(^{68}\) In significant debt from the eight-year long Iraq-Iran War, Saddam invaded Kuwait in August 1990 over oil disputes.\(^ {69}\) The invasion led to U.S. and United Nations (UN) imposed sanctions. Iraqi troops were forcibly removed from Kuwait by U.S. military force. The sanctions were never removed and Iraq’s failure to comply with UN enforced measures added to the laundry of list of reasons for the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Saddam and the Sunni-led government lost power in April 2003. By May 2003, Ambassador L. Paul Bremer was appointed by the Bush administration as the leader of the Coalition Provisional Authority, overseeing Iraq’s internal affairs until a new government was appointed. Members of Saddam’s Baath party were banned from ever serving in a government position and all of the defense and interior ministries were disbanded. In June 2004, an interim government with a moderate Shiite leader was appointed.\(^ {70}\) Based on the agreement by all Iraqi factions, the upcoming elections would determine future political outcomes, ending the occupation. Elections were held on January 30, 2005, which produced a 275-seat transitional parliament and government meant to write a new constitution to be publically voted on before the full-term elections were held. With a proportional election system, the Sunnis boycotted and only won 17 seats.\(^ {71}\)

The committee formed to write the constitution consisted of 55 members, the majority of them being Shiite and one of which was Sunni. After calls for more Sunni inclusion, four Sunnis were assassinated days into the writing process. The Sunnis protested to no avail. By October 15, 2005, the constitution was approved\(^ {72}\) and national elections were held on December 15, 2005. Again, the Shiites and Kurds were the majority leaders placing a Shiite, Nuri al Maliki as Prime Minister.\(^ {73}\) With the loss of power politically, the Sunnis sought authority elsewhere, rationalizing their violence, car bombs, political assassinations, and election violence for example, as a way to disrupt the new Iraqi government, which they saw as illegitimate since they were under represented.\(^ {74}\)

In February 2006, in the Sunni-dominated city of Samarra, the bombing of the Shiite shrine, Al Askari Mosque, set off major Sunni-Shiite violence above and beyond political grievances. Fast-forward to the national elections on March 7, 2010. A series of appeals were filed after the Justice and Accountability Commission invalidated almost 500 candidates. Ultimately, Maliki and the Shiite party won even though Maliki’s image as the

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\(^{70}\) Ibid., 21.


protector of Iraq was smeared with several prominent attacks and bombings in 2009. With the second full-term Iraqi government in place, the U.S. began to withdraw its troops.\footnote{75} After the withdrawal, however, these groups began increasing attacks in opposition of the Maliki government, resentment of Shiite dominated government.\footnote{76} The 100,000 Iraqi Sunnis fighters who had cooperated with U.S. and Iraqi forces against ISI during 2006-2011 as part of the Awakening Movement were promised integration into the Iraqi Security Forces or government jobs by the Iraqi government. Only about two-thirds received these benefits and the rest retained their positions at checkpoints in Sunni areas, never formally being indoctrinated into Iraqi Security Forces by the time U.S. forces had left. This allegedly resulted in some joining the Islamic State offensives in 2014.\footnote{77}

Iraqis were losing trust in their government, as Maliki appeared to continue to be self-serving, making false promises. The vice president and his security team were either arrested or had arrest warrants issued for allegations of plans to assassinate Maliki. This was a perceived power play to concentrate all of the power with Maliki. U.S. officials intervened with political factions and a conference to reach a political agreement. The conference did not occur. Later in December, Maliki arrested the bodyguards of the finance minister continuing his sensed bid for dominance.\footnote{78}

Former Prime Minister Nuri al Maliki’s regime engaged in campaigns of violence and harassment towards Iraqi Sunnis. Extrajudicial killings, air strikes, and torture have been documented.\footnote{79} U.S. officials blamed him for marginalizing Sunni leaders and citizens, creating further tensions throughout Iraq while he was serving in public office. The ISIS offensive in Mosul, in June 2014, leading to the city’s capture due to Iraqi Security Forces either surrendering or deserting the city resulted in Maliki losing his third term as prime minister to Haydar al-Abbadi.\footnote{80}


Syrian Civil War

The civil war and overall political situation in Syria has allowed for ISIS to expand there. Like Iraq, Syria is facing significant internal conflict.\footnote{81} What started out as protests following the arrest and torture of teenagers for writing political graffiti on a school wall, in March 2011, prompted protests to erupt in the southern city of Daraa. When security forces opened fire on and killed demonstrators, more protestors took to the streets. Demanding President Bashar al Assad step down, campaigns against the Syrian government broke out nationally. By July 2011, the opposition supporters had taken up arms, escalating the violence, throwing Syria into civil war as battles for control of cities ensued around the country. The fighting reached the capital, Damascus, and Aleppo by 2012.

The Assad regime has been criticized harshly for their use of force. The UN has documented evidence of war crimes, such as murder, torture, rape and enforced disappearances, being committed by other sides. The government is being accused of blocking access to food, water and health services as a method of war. Capitalizing on the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[76] Ibid., 12.
\item[77] Ibid., 16.
\item[78] Ibid., 22-23.
\item[79] Brown, Cody McClain. “Mobilizing the Caliphate: ISIS and the Conflict in Iraq and Syria,” 208.
\end{footnotes}
chaos in Syria, ISIS has taken control of large portions of the country as part of their declaration of a caliphate in June 2014, naming the Syrian city of Raqqa as its capital. Under this pretext, ISIS has been inflicting severe punishments on those who refuse to accept its rules, including hundreds of public executions and amputations. ISIS fighters have also carried out mass killings of rival armed groups, members of the security forces and religious minorities, and beheaded hostages.

The Syrian civil war has taken on sectarian overtones although it started as a political uprising. Syria has a Sunni majority with a Shia president, from the Alawite sect, and the rise of the Sunni jihadist group, ISIS, has shifted the emphasis of the fighting. ISIS has grown in size and power with its military offensives in Syria and Iraq. ISIS is not only fighting against both governments, but with various rebel groups in Syria as well. ISIS has found a safe haven and access to weapons in Syria. While the Syrian government is working to push back and extinguish rebel forces specifically fighting against them, ISIS has been focusing its efforts on claiming additional territory, distributing of food and medicine in war torn areas in an effort to gather additional support.

### Tipping Point Theory

Malcolm Gladwell first introduces the idea of the “tipping point” in a 1996 article in the *New Yorker* magazine. In the article, Gladwell suggests the tipping point is “the point at which an ordinary and stable phenomenon...can turn into a...crisis.” He argues that every epidemic has a tipping point and to fight it, that point needs to be understood. Gladwell states that epidemics don’t behave the way we think they will and social scientists have begun relating the theory of epidemics to human behavior. Gladwell also uses the “broken window” hypothesis to imply that disorder invites more disorder and in the context of vandalism or criminal activity, a broken window can be the tipping point. The author finalizes his supposition by indicating that it is the “nature of nonlinear phenomena that sometimes the most modest of changes can bring about enormous effects” and in the framework of infectious disease epidemics, one small change can cause the epidemic decrease significantly.

In his book, published in 2000, he further develops the Tipping Point theory by describing it as “moment of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point.” Gladwell continues to use the spread of infectious diseases to illustrate his theory and ascertains an epidemic is tipped because of a change or multiple changes. What Gladwell calls “agents of

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85 Stanford University. “The Islamic State.”
86 “Islamic State and the Crisis in Iraq and Syria in Maps.” BBC News.
88 Ibid., 35-36.
89 Ibid., 38.
90 Ibid., 34.
change,” are defined as Law of the Few, the Stickiness Factor, and the Power of Context.92 These Rules of Epidemics provide the basis for how the Tipping Point of all epidemics is reached.93

Law of the Few
The Law of the Few rule suggests “the success of any kind of social epidemic is heavily dependent on the involvement of people with a particular and rare set of social gifts.”94 It also signifies that there are certain people who are perfectly positioned to start an epidemic: Mavens, Connectors, and Salesmen.95 Gladwell describes Connectors as those who bring the world together and link us to our social circles.96 Mavens have the ability to connect us with new information, typically through word-of-mouth in epidemics.97 Salesmen are characteristically irresistible and by drawing people in, they ascertain group agreement with the tone of the conversation based upon their cadence and mood.98

Stickiness Factor
Gladwell proposes a critical factor for the spread of a social epidemic is not the messengers, but the nature of the message itself. To be successful, the message needs to be of certain quality to stick.99 The Stickiness Factor suggests there are specific ways of making a message memorable. The simplest changes in the structuring and presentation of the information can make a huge difference and impact. A memorable message will then likely be more contagious and invoke action.100

Power of Context
For epidemics, the conditions, timing, and place where they occur must be precise, which allows for an epidemic to be transmitted.101 “The Power of Context says that human beings are a lot more sensitive to their environment than they may seem.”102 We are also “powerfully influenced by our surroundings, our immediate context, and the personalities of those around us.”103 Gladwell details that size and composition of the group or groups of people around us matter. Using the Rule of 150, below this number people mingle and meld together easily. Too many people and personalities to manage and people become alienated, splitting the group up.104

Gladwell says the “Broken Windows theory and the Power of Context are one and the same. They are both based on the premise that an epidemic can be reversed, can be tipped, by tinkering with the smallest details of the immediate environment.”105

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92 Ibid., 18.
93 Ibid., 11.
94 Ibid., 33.
95 Ibid., 13.
96 Ibid., 37.
97 Ibid., 58-60.
98 Ibid., 83.
99 Ibid., 91-92.
100 Ibid., 25.
101 Ibid., 138.
102 Ibid., 28.
103 Ibid., 258.
104 Ibid., 181-186.
105 Ibid., 144.
The paradox of the epidemic: that in order to create contagious movement, you often have to create many small movements first.”  

Analysis: Elements of the Perfect Storm and The Tipping Point

“In 2008, it [ISI] was describing itself as being in a state of ‘extraordinary crisis’.”

As stated previously, between 2006 and 2010, ISI was relatively inoperative. In 2007, the Awakening Movement, an alliance of approximately 100,000 former ISI fighters and local tribes, were fighting against ISI, reducing their area of operation as seen in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: AQI/ISI Operating Area Comparison

ISI was beaten, but not defeated. The United States began reducing its forces in 2009, leaving Iraqi Security Forces in charge of security, but by the end of the year, ISI was slowly reemerging with attacks against the government, meant to undermine its infrastructure

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106 Ibid., 191.
and strength. Early 2010, Masri and Abu Omar al Baghdadi were killed, leading to a further reduction in forces. Abu Bakr al Baghdadi took control of ISI and began reorganizing the group, creating a disciplined, hierarchical structure with multiple governing bodies. Iraqis were skeptical of and upset by the number of foreign fighters within the organization, and to combat this hesitation, Baghdadi removed foreign fighters from leadership positions.

Osama bin Laden was killed in May 2011, ushering Ayman al Zawahiri in as al Qaeda and it’s affiliates, ISI included, new leader. After the withdrawal of U.S. and coalition forces in December 2011, ISI began a gradual comeback with calculated steps taken to return to their former glory. Sectarian violence began to increase in Iraq as Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al Maliki, a Shiite, started targeting and arresting Sunni leaders in high-level positions in Iraq’s government days after U.S. and coalition forces were out of Iraq. This created a power vacuum in Iraq.

In March 2011, just before bin Laden’s death, protests erupted in Syria. The response of security forces, killing demonstrators provoked the nation to order President Bashar al Assad to step down from his position as president. His refusal to leave office and the escalation of violence threw Syria into a civil war. The situation in Syria also created a power vacuum. From 2012 to early 2014, the area ISIS controlled is fairly unknown. In an effort to remain relevant, ISIS leadership appears to have inflated the number of supporters and organizational growth, both in fighters and territory controlled.

In April 2013, ISI operations expanded into Syria, capitalizing on the crisis and chaos there. The transition into Syria prompted the group changed their name to ISIS. By taking control of cities in both northern Syria and western Iraq, ISIS has been able to maintain official border crossings between Iraq and Syria and the only border crossing between Iraq and Jordan. As an affiliate of al Qaeda, Zawahiri implored ISIS to operate only in Iraq as other al Qaeda affiliates, JN, were functioning within Syria. Disagreements ensued, and in the end, the differences in tactics and approach led al Qaeda to dissolve their relationship with ISIS in February 2014.

The Shia dominated Iraqi government continued to fuel the sectarian division by targeting more Sunni leaders and attacking Sunni protest camps. In June 2014, ISIS pushed their forces into Mosul, Iraq. They were able to capture the city easily as security forces quickly surrendered or deserted their posts. Later that month, Baghdadi began referring to ISIS as the Islamic State (see Appendix 1 for further name information), declaring a Caliphate and all occupied territory as theirs.

ISIS leadership deserves credit for their actions as well, in the proliferation of the group. After being pushed too hard by al Qaeda, ISIS was able to cut ties with them and reemerge under the Abu Bakr al Baghdadi and his reorganization. ISIS was able to become self-funding as they captured territory in oil rich areas. The reorganization of ISIS also put the appropriate individuals in control of recruitment and propaganda via social media. This attention brought additional foreign fighters from all over the globe to be trained and fight with ISIS as well as return home to carry out attacks in the name of the group.

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108 Ibid., 72-73.
The Tipping Point

Gladwell’s Tipping Point theory asserts that the culmination of what I deem the “Perfect Storm,” or the “moment of critical mass” had to come together in order for ISIS to be supported in Iraq and Syria, and gain the notoriety and territory it did. I believe the tipping point for ISIS was in February 2014 when al Qaeda severed ties with ISIS. Once ISIS was operating on their own accord, they were able to flourish and expand in ways never thought possible. The Tipping Point Theory best expresses my opinion that at the point the two groups separated, the elements involving ISIS became so saturated, the situation “tipped” to conditions favoring ISIS proliferation within Iraq and Syria. Zarqawi and Abu Bakr al Baghdadi fall under the Law of the Few as the “epidemic” of ISIS was encouraged by their unique social skills positioning Zarqawi to communicate the ideology of the group and later Baghdadi’s ability to organize and regrow it.

The Stickiness Factor, emphasizing a memorable message that is structured and presented in a way that creates a lasting impact, was ISIS’s language and actions of radicalization, and use of violence against Shia and other nonbelievers. ISIS pioneered the use of social media to widely disseminate these messages, including cherry picked parts of the Quran to support and substantiate ISIS’s actions.

The Power of Context, the perfect environment regarding conditions, timing, and location for an “epidemic” to spread, was the marginalization and repression of the Sunnis in Iraq after Prime Minister Maliki’s reelection, the withdrawal of U.S. military forces and the power vacuum this left after Maliki proved he was not able to protect all of the people of Iraq, and the Syrian civil war, which attracted thousands of fighters to combat the attacks of the Assad regime.

Sectarian issues are not unique to only Iraq and Syria. It is a regional concern. Exploiting the power vacuum and Iraqi government’s treatment of Sunnis, ISIS was able to tip the scales in their favor, and thrive after the capture of the key city of Mosul in northern Iraq in 2014. These are not the only conditions that mattered. Without one of them in the combination, ISIS would not have been able to proliferate as quickly and widely as they did.

Conclusion

In my paper, I have argued that the withdrawal of U.S. troops and coalition forces from Iraq, the political instability in Iraq and Syria, and the sectarian divide in combination have allowed for the jihadist organization, the Islamic State of the Iraq in Syria to escalate. Without one of the conditions in the combination, ISIS would not have been able to proliferate as quickly and widely as they did. As ISIS loses territory, as it has been since 2015, the group and its supporters will backlash and increases in attacks can be expected.

It is important to recognize why understanding the rise of ISIS is important. I believe it is essential to understand the background of the group to determine the best ways to defeat them because at some point, they are bound to make mistakes. Sectarian partitioning has resulted in further conflicts and bloodshed locally and regionally. Geopolitical divisions have made the situation slightly worse in Syria as Russia has sided with Iran and the Assad regime, whom the United States opposes and instead supports Sunni Gulf states and Turkey. With international collaboration and by fostering the creation of power sharing institutions within Iraq and Syria, the sectarian tensions could be
diminished to pre-Iraq invasion levels.\textsuperscript{111} Collaboration on a global level could also reduce the territory maintained by ISIS and ultimately eliminate the group by working towards combating a common enemy, ISIS. ISIS has become an international problem and will require international coordination, including helping Syria resolve their internal conflict and assisting the Iraqi government in overcoming their weakened government. As I researched and wrote my research paper, I began to ask myself if the timing of all aspects of the “perfect storm” and sequence of specific events played a role in rise of ISIS. This would be an interesting topic for future research.

\textsuperscript{111} Brown, Cody McClain. "Mobilizing the Caliphate: ISIS and the Conflict in Iraq and Syria," 213.
Appendix 1

Definitions
The following terms have been used to describe ISIS as an organization, sometimes interchangeably, in much of the research I have read. Throughout my paper, I attempt to use broad terms to describe and explain ISIS, unless pertinent to expressing a specific point. I believe it is important to understand the terms being used.

Insurgency
- Department of Defense - in reference to an insurgent group: “the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region. Insurgency can also refer to the group itself.”
- “Having a mass base of support and so many fighters that they can operate in daylight and capture territory with the intention of holding and governing it.”
  - Functions as a quasi military force that is able to muster recruits and deploy information not just to attack, but to exercise lasting control over the territory it captures.

Terrorism
- Department of Defense - in reference to a terrorist group or organization: “the unlawful use of violence or threat of violence, often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs, to instill fear and coerce governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are usually political.”
- “Are by nature much smaller, without a mass base of support such that they must therefore operate covertly, and they do not attempt to govern the people they terrorize.”
  - They hide in safe houses when inactive or plotting, then rapidly execute an attack only to return immediately back to their covert locations.
- United Nations Security Council: “Criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, which constitute offences within the scope of and as defined in the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, are under no circumstances justifiable by considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other similar nature, and calls upon all States to prevent such acts and, if

114 Ibid.
115 “Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms.”
117 Ibid.
not prevented, to ensure that such acts are punished by penalties consistent with their grave nature.”

**Perfect Storm**
- “A detrimental or calamitous situation or event arising from the powerful combined effect of a unique set of circumstances.”
- “A combination of events which are not individually dangerous, but occurring together produce a disastrous outcome.”

**Current ISIS Designations**
ISIS uses and is recognized by a variety of names. The following is a list of current ISIS names, who uses them, and the context in which they are used.
- **ISIS**: acronym stands for Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. The organization first announced the merger of Jabhat al Nusra and ISI under this name, and the media and public are currently using it.
- **ISIL**: acronym stands for Islamic State in Leveant (or al Sham). The name implies the inclusion of the entire geographic location of the Levant or Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine. The Obama Administration uses this name.
- **Daesh**: Arabic acronym stands for al Dawla al Islamiya fi al Iraq wa al Sham or the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham. This name is used by Arab States.
- **Islamic State**: This is the name the group calls themselves. It echoes their ambitions of an Islamic State without borders and inclusion of all Muslims.

**TABLE 1. History of ISIS Names**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP NAME</th>
<th>ACRONYM</th>
<th>YEARS IN USE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jamaat al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad</td>
<td>JTWJ</td>
<td>1999 – 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-Qaeda in the Land of Two Rivers (more commonly known as al-Qaeda in Iraq)</td>
<td>AQI</td>
<td>2004 – 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majlis Shura al-Mujahedin</td>
<td>MSM</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq</td>
<td>ISI</td>
<td>2006 – 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (The Levant) (also known as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria)</td>
<td>ISIS/ISIL</td>
<td>2013 – present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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119 “Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms.”
120 Ibid.
Bibliography


