

ISIS: BETWEEN UNITY AND FRAGMENTATION

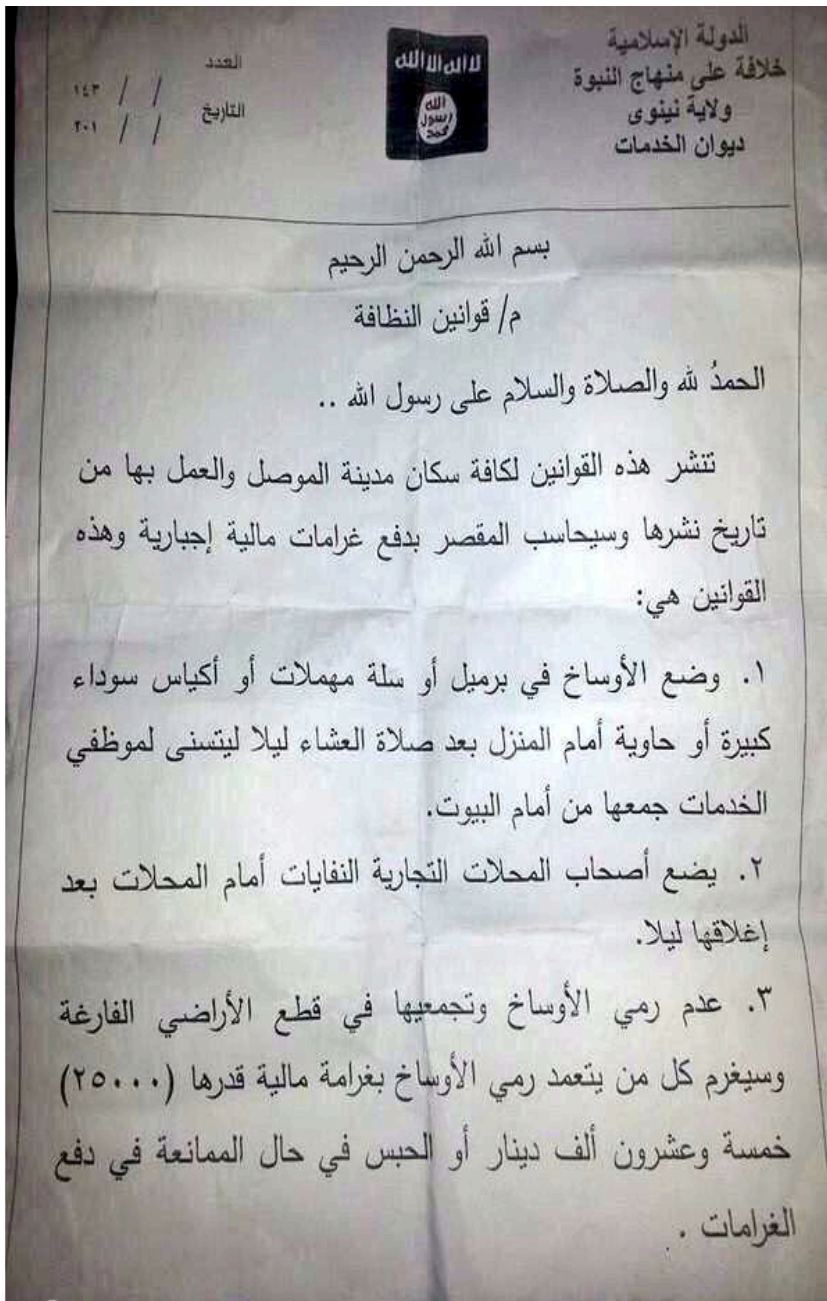
DR ALIA BRAHIMI

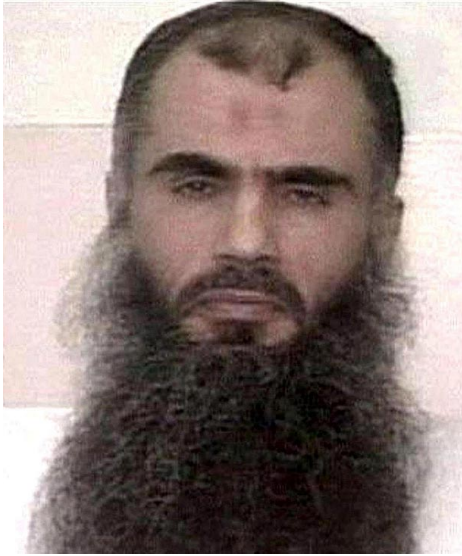
Sanitation Laws

These laws are published for all the inhabitants of Mosul and come into effect from the date of publication. The one contravening these laws will be held accountable in paying a compulsory monetary fine. These laws are:

1. Waste is to be placed in a barrel, waste-basket, big black bag or wase in front of the house after evening prayer at night so it may be possible for the services' employees to collect them in front of the houses.
2. Owners of shops/businesses should place waste in front of the shops after closing them at night.
3. Waste is not be thrown away and gathered in a strip of vacant land and all who deliberately throw away waste thus will incur a fine of 25,000 dinars or be held in custody in the event of refusal to pay the fines.
4. No throwing away of papers and empty containers for drinks, water from cars during driving or from travel. All who contravene will be held accountable with an immediate fine of 5000 dinars. All who refuse to pay the fines will be held accountable in custody.
5. Public gardens, streets and lighting are to be protected, not to be sabotaged or violated because they were founded for the service of the public interest. All who infringe on public property will be held accountable.
6. Every house is to pay monthly a sum of 2000 dinars in expenses for cleaning of waste. Also, every shop/business is to pay 5000 dinars monthly and the one who disagrees through refusing to pay the service sum will be held accountable.
7. The presence of livestock inside the boundaries of the Mosul locality is absolutely forbidden, and we will confiscate them in the event of their presence.
8. One is not to give more than the sum specified to the employees of the service and in the event of that being demanded by the services' workers, we will be informed directly to undertake due process as the case requires.

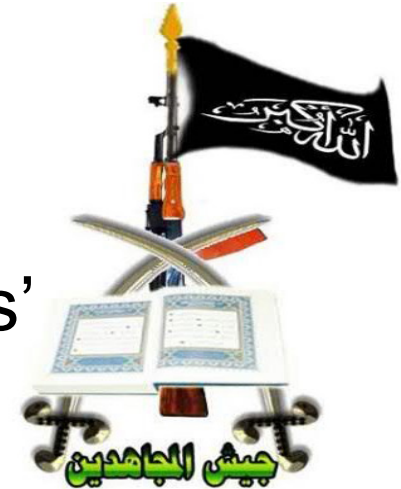
May God reward you best.





‘Dogs of the Hellfire’
Abu Qatada al-Filastini

‘Ignorant, lying murderers’
Jaysh al-Mujahidin



‘Sedition’
Ayman al-Zawahiri

CHANGING DYNAMICS

1. Localisation

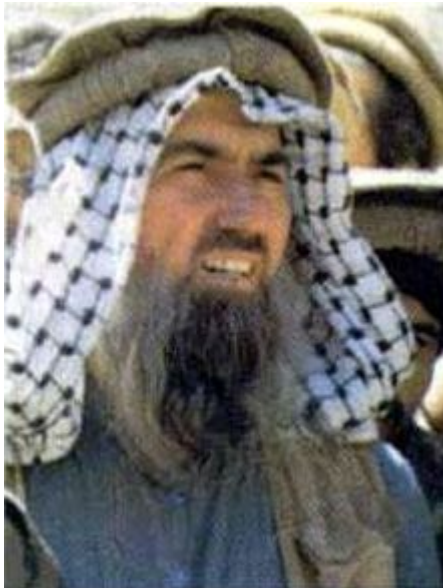
2. Targets

3. Projection of strength

4. Millenarianism

LOCALISATION

- Al-Qaeda emerged partly due to the globalisation of a local conflict in Afghanistan;
- Conversely, ISIS rose to prominence in Iraq and Syria through the localisation of al-Qaeda's global struggle
- Abdullah Azzam: fight for the sake of *Islam*



‘The people involved in jihad were far removed from Islam. He told of how these people used to spend the nights playing cards and listening to music, under the illusion they were performing jihad’

- *Foreword to Join the Caravan (1987)*

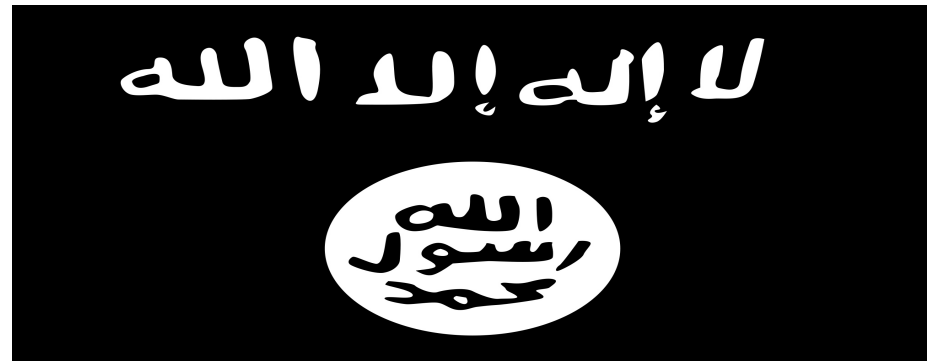
AL-QAEDA



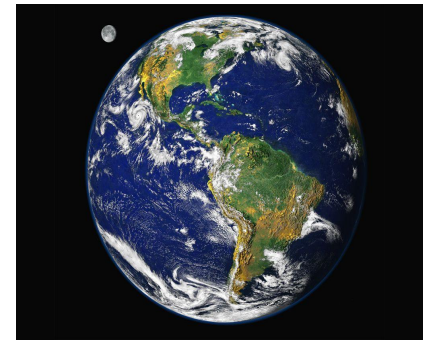
- **Osama bin Laden**
 - Funded and organised would be fighters responding to Azzam's call
 - Established a training camp for Arab fighters at Jaji
 - Found a political platform in emerging arena of international Islamism
 - Nucleus of an army dedicated to newly defined 'Islamic' causes → basis for al-Qaeda
- **Al-Qaeda**
 - View local conditions through global prism
 - Frame war as 'battle of Muslims against global Crusaders'
 - Mobilisation of globalised identities

‘ISLAMIC STATE’

- More particularised phenomenon
- ISIS & antecedent groups were born amid the violent contestation of power in post-invasion Iraq:
 1. Heavy emphasis on anti-Shia component of jihadist ideology
 2. Participation in insurgency + tactical alliance with Baathists = jihadism as a state-building enterprise
 3. Must capture territory to survive, Caliphate quite literal
- Local identity politics key



RELATIONSHIP TO THE GLOBAL



- ISIS & antecedents imported the symbols of global jihad into the Iraqi and Syrian contexts
- Seek global reach to consolidate local gains
- Bin Laden wanted to deterritorialise jihad, as an important part of al-Qaeda's bid for universality
- By contrast, ISIS has aggressively linked jihad to the acquisition and administration of territory
- Main significance:

*ISIS's territorial project ties the group to a vision of society that makes dealing with '**bad Muslims**' more fundamental than attacking the West, if not more urgent*

TERRITORIALISATION



'Islamic State' Police Car in Raqqa, Syria

Photo credit: Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi

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THE NEARER ENEMY

- OBL: ‘a defensive jihad to protect our land and people’
BUT since 9/11 the victims of groups affiliated with al-Qaeda were mostly Muslim civilians (82%-97% during 2006–11)
- Central leadership unable to halt misdirected violence



*RESULT =
‘the alienation of most of the [Islamic]
nation from the mujahidin’*

OBL, Abbottabad letter dated July-Oct 2010

THE INNOCENT CHILD, SHAYMA

‘Let me discuss the death of the innocent child, Shayma. I deeply regret her death and am willing to pay blood money. This girl was as old as my own daughter.’



*Ayman al-Zawahiri, Knights
Under the Prophet's Banner,
2005*

TRANSGRESSIONS

- Important tracts justifying suicide bombings were written by Zawahiri (e.g. ‘Jihad and the Superiority of Martyrdom’)

- Now laments the effects:

‘We must be concerned for the sanctities and the blood that the sharia made inviolable’ – Interview (18/04/2014)

- **‘General Guidelines for Jihad’ (2013)**

- Target the ‘Zionist–Crusader alliance’
- Avoid fighting local regimes as much as possible
- Don’t fight ‘deviant sects’ or ‘Christian, Sikh and Hindu communities living in Muslim lands’
- If forced to act in self-defence, only those who bear arms may be targeted – and with a proportionate response



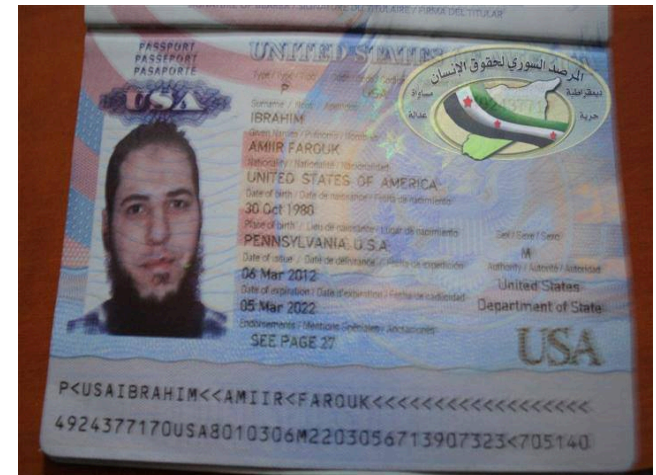
THE INWARD TURN OF ISIS



- **Shi'a as the primary enemy**
- **Grisly ultimatum to Yezidis: convert or face the sword**
- **Crucifying Christians**
- **Harsh treatment of Sunnis too**
- **More Sunni killed than Shi'a?**

ONE UMBRELLA

- Combined threat to society, state, and the West
- Adnani: 'we will conquer your Rome, break your crosses, and enslave your women'
- Baghdadi: 'erupt volcanoes of jihad everywhere'
- Foreign fighters extend imagined boundaries of the caliphate



CHANGING DYNAMICS

1. Localisation
2. Targets
- 3. Projection of strength**
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DOWNTRODDEN YET DEFIANT

- **AQ narrative based on victimhood and dispossession**
- **Improvised weapons of the weak:**
 - commercial airliners (9/11)
 - chapathi powder + hair bleach (21/7)
- **Self-image of al-Qaeda fighters as the oppressed**



**‘We ourselves are the victims of murder and massacres.
We are only defending ourselves against the United States ...
live and let others live’**

Osama Bin Laden, 12 November 2001

ISIS EMPHASIS ON STRENGTH

‘Today the believers rejoice with victory from Allah, feeling great happiness. Today the hypocrites are degraded. Today the *rafidah*, ‘awakening councils’ and apostates are humiliated. Today the *tawaghit* in the east and west are frightened. Today the nations of infidelity in the west are terrified. Today the flags of Satan and his part have fallen. Today the flag of Islamic unity rises with its people. Today the Muslims are honoured. Now the caliphate has returned, humbling the necks of the enemy ... Now the dream has become a reality’

- Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, 29 June 2014

FROM DESPERATION TO CELEBRATION

- **Strength:**

- Control oil fields
- Issue own passports
- Arsenal includes M1A1 tanks, up-armoured Humvees and at least three MiG-21 and MiG-23 aircraft



- **Pledges of allegiance congratulatory**
- **Power as allure for foreign fighters (and maybe psychopaths in particular?)**

**Wielding power rather than searching
for deliverance**

CHANGING DYNAMICS

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BLACK BANNERS HADITH

‘If you see the black banners coming from Khurasan, join that army, even if you have to crawl over ice; no power will be able to stop them and they will finally reach Jerusalem, where they will erect their flags’



AFP file

SANAA, YEMEN

17 SEPTEMBER 2001

FBI interrogator: ‘... tell me, why do you think you’ll be victorious?’

Abu Jandal: ‘You want to know why?’

FBI interrogator: ‘Sure’.

Abu Jandal: ‘I’ll tell you why. The hadith says, “If you see the black banners coming from Khurasan, join that army, even if you have to crawl over ice; no power will be able to stop them—”’

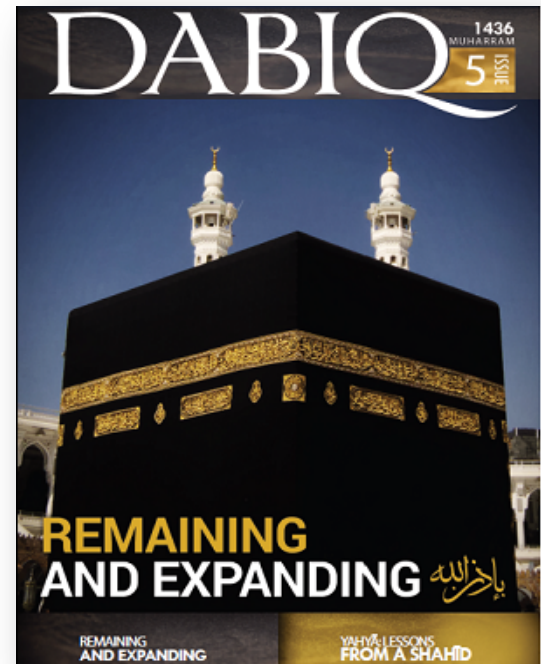
FBI interrogator: ‘—and they will finally reach Beit al-Maqdis, where they will erect their flags”’

Abu Jandal: ‘You know the hadith? Do you really work for the FBI?’

DABIQ

‘The spark has been lit here in Iraq and its heat will continue to intensify – by Allah’s permission – until it burns the Crusader armies in Dabiq’.

-- Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi



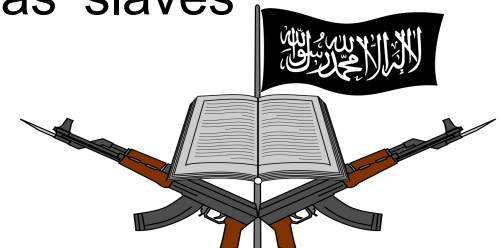
TWO EFFECTS (SEEMINGLY CONTRADICTIONARY)

✧ **UNITY.** Caused primarily by imitation.

✧ **FRAGMENTATION.** Caused primarily by competition.

IMITATION: BOKO HARAM

- Killed more than 10,000 Nigerians in 2014
- Captured large towns and cities in Borno State, including Gwoza, Damboa, Bama and Dikwa
- Laying groundwork for a push to state capital, Maiduguri
- Brutal operations targeting society:
 - Suicide bombings in mosques, crowded markets, school assemblies, Shi'a ceremonies, World Cup screenings
 - Execute people for smoking
 - Beheadings
 - Abduct women and children, threaten to sell as 'slaves'
- Cross-border activity: attacks in Cameroon
- 'Breaking the walls' campaign



NORTH AFRICA

- **IS pledges of allegiance from:**

- Established organisations: Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis in Egypt; Uqfa ibn Nafi battalions in Tunisia*; MUJAO in Mali*
- Emerging groups: Jund al-Khilafa fi Ard al-Kanana in Egypt; Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam in Libya; Jund al-Khilafa fi Ard al-Jazair in Algeria

*Later retracted

- **‘Wilayaat’:**

- Wilayat Sinai (Egypt)
- Wilayat Barqa (E. Libya)
- Wilayat Tripoli (W. Libya)
- Wilayat Djazair (Algeria)



- **Beheadings → entrenchment of IS vision of society**

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SUBVERTING AUTHORITY



- Purportedly universal caliphate has deeply polarising effect
 - Baghdadi plays upon his alleged descendance from the Prophet Muhammad, says is a member of the tribe of Quraish
 - Full name he uses: Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi al-Quraishi al-Hussaini
(Real name: Ibrahim al-Badri al-Samarrai)
 - Splits at highest level & down chain of command
- ‘The policy of our brothers in the Islamic State split the ranks of the *mujahideen* and scattered them, in this sensitive phase in the history of the *mujahid umma*’**

– Harith bin Ghazi al-Nadhari (AQAP), 20 November 2014

AGAIN, NORTH AFRICA

- **EGYPT:** Formation of new anti-ISIS group
- **TUNISIA:** Ansar al-Sharia divisions & defections
- **ALGERIA:** AQIM divisions & defections
- **LIBYA:** Abu Salim Martyrs Brigade push out ISIS from Derna



AQIM

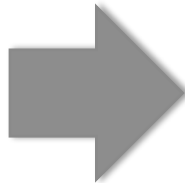


تَنْظِيمُ الْقَاعِدَةِ فِي بِلَادِ الْمَغْرِبِ الْإِسْلَامِيِّ

- **Droukdel letter intercepted October 2012:**
 - 'Ill organisation'
 - Broken chain of command
 - Random and undisciplined operations for personal gain
 - 'Takfir'
- **Problem personified by Belmokhtar**

LETTER TO BELMOKHTAR

- ‘Your letter ... contained some amount of backbiting, name-calling and sneering’
- ‘Why do you only turn on your phone with the Emirate when you need it, while your communication with some media is almost never ending!’



- ‘It is wrong to cite scholars out of context.’
- ‘Why do the successive Emirs of the region only have difficulties with you? You in particular every time? Or are all of them wrong and brother [Belmokhtar] is right?’

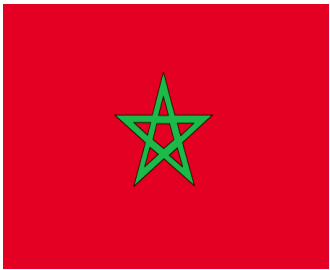
FOREIGN FIGHTERS IN SYRIA



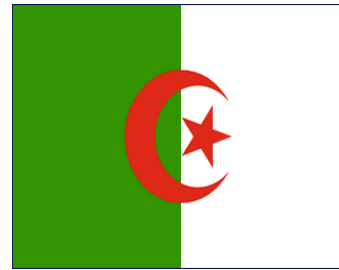
3800 Tunisians



2500 Libyans



1200 Moroccans



500 – 1000
Algerians

- ✓ *Extreme tactics*
- ✓ *ISIS networks*
- ✓ *New ideas about jihadist legitimacy*

DIALECTICAL TENSION

**Competing tendencies of unity and
fragmentation**



Thank you

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