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ORGANIZATIONAL LEGITIMACY OF THE ISLAMIC STATE: A HISTORICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The fighters of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) surprised the world in June 2014 as they pushed across Iraq's western border, and captured terrain extending beyond Mosul to within reach of the Kurdish capital Erbil, and as far south as Fallujah. In a matter of weeks, ISIS controlled approximately 12,000 square miles of territory extending from Syria across northwestern Iraq. ISIS' victories in 2014 over rival anti-Assad regime groups, over the American trained Iraq Security Forces (ISF), and over the Kurdish forces, culminated on July 4th, 2014, the first Friday of Ramadan, as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, by then self-proclaimed Caliph Ibrahim "Commander of the Faithful", announced the end of ISIS and the birth of the Islamic State (IS).

Using Richard Scott's conceptual framework for institutional analysis, this paper demonstrates that the emergence, viability, and long term survivability of the IS movement is the product of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive factors. First, the re-emergence of IS as a governing power is documented within the regional political context, in order to provide a situational baseline. Second, Scott's institutional analysis framework is introduced in order to establish its relevance and application to the topic. Third, an institutional analysis is conducted based on the three pillars of Scott's framework. Finally an integrated analysis is conducted to examine the interactions of the pillars and their impact on the institution.

The cultural-cognitive interpretation of IS illustrates IS' organizational worldview by examining the challenges it poses to international order and to the concept of national identity, demonstrates the compounding effects of political disaffection and sectarianism in Iraq and Syria, and describes IS ideology and the role of its underlying apocalyptic narrative. The normative interpretation of IS places emphasis on the analysis of methods, employed by the

movement, in achieving the universal caliphate in accordance with its ideology. This is accomplished through describing IS grand strategy as the outcome of two formative documents, by defining the communication strategy that enables IS to recruit, legitimize its activity, subjugate its population, subdue its enemies, and entice western intervention, and by observing the assimilation and role of foreign fighters within the organization. The regulative interpretation of the IS movement considers the current state, and IS' ability to rule it, in two sections. First, IS rule is described as a function of its territory and population as well as the organization's residual military capability. Second, IS rule is analysed as a function of its hegemonic leadership structure and state like governance methods. In the final chapter, an integrated analysis is conducted to synthesize the combined effects and interactions of the pillars and determine impact on the IS institution's viability and long term survivability.

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From where Winston stood it was just possible to read, picked out on its white face in elegant lettering, the three slogans of the party: War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength.

- George Orwell, 1984

INTRODUCTION

The fighters of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) surprised the world in June 2014 as they pushed across Iraq's western border, and captured terrain extending beyond Mosul to within reach of the Kurdish capital Erbil, and as far south as Fallujah. In a matter of weeks, ISIS controlled approximately 12,000 square miles of territory extending from Syria across northwestern Iraq.[1] ISIS' victories in 2014 over rival anti-Assad regime groups, over the American trained Iraq Security Forces (ISF), and over the Kurdish forces, culminated on July 4th, 2014, the first Friday of Ramadan, as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, by then self-proclaimed Caliph Ibrahim "Commander of the Faithful", announced the end of ISIS and the birth of the Islamic State (IS). From the pulpit of the al-Nuri Mosque in Mosul, he proclaimed: "…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…The State is a state for all Muslims".[2]

On August 8th, U.S. air strikes finally halted the IS advance, however a humanitarian disaster followed. [3] As the group consolidated its power in northern Iraq, a western military operation was planned to rescue thousands of Yazidis, members of a Kurdish speaking minority, who fled into the mountains in an attempt to escape the jihadist's campaign of genocide and

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[1] Maria Abi-Habib, "Assad Policies Aided Rise of Islamic State Militant Group; Islamic State, Or ISIS, Gained Momentum Early on from Calculated Decision by Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad to Go Easy on It," *Wall Street Journal (Online),* 2014.

[2] SITE Intelligence Group, "A Message to the Mujahideen And the Muslim Ummah In the Month of Ramadan," last accessed on 5 April 2016. https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/islamic-state-leader-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-encourages-emigration-worldwide-action.html. This video was released on July 1, 2014 by the IS' al-Furqan Media Foundation, which distributed links to the audio through their Twitter account. English, Russian, French, German, and Albanian translations of the transcript were subsequently issued by a second Islamic State-affiliated media organization, the al-Hayat Media Center Complete English translation of this 19 minute and 47 second speech.

[3] "Back to Iraq; America and the Middle East." *The Economist* 412, no. 8900 (2014a), p. 9.

enslavement.[4] In September, Kurdish forces supported by Coalition airstrikes, conducted offensive operations is northern Iraq to rescue the Yazidis, seize control of vital areas, and to push IS away from Erbil.[5] This successful effort set conditions for the military stalemate that persisted in northwestern Iraq for the remainder of 2014 and into 2015. Operations on multiple fronts in 2015, and in early 2016, have degraded the groups hold on Iraq and Syria, however, IS remains in control of significant territory, population, and military capability.[6]

Prior to the emergence of IS, western popular narrative saw Iraq entering a seemingly more peaceful phase of its post-2003 evolution. In the spring of 2009, hope for the future of Iraq began to emerge as violence levels subsided. The Counter Insurgency (COIN) revolution in American military policy for this theatre had seemingly begun to bear fruit. This new policy was characterized by a population centric mandate, the deployment of a "Surge" of 30,000 additional troops, and the harnessing of an anti-insurgency Sunni tribal "Awakening" that appeared to change the trajectory of what was widely viewed as a losing war.[7] With a period of relative calm established, the stage was set for the withdrawal of Coalition forces that culminated in 2011.[8] The extremist predecessor of IS, however, had not been convincingly defeated: it had simply gone underground where new leadership began planning and preparing for their next opportunity.

This opportunity would begin in Syria with the partial disintegration of government authority. The start of the Syrian civil war in 2011 provided the jihadists sanctuary beyond the

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[4] Sam Jones et al., "West Plots Rescue of Yazidis," *The Financial Times*, 2014.
[5] Kirk Semple, "Kurds Capture Territory from ISIS; More Airstrikes," *National Post*, 2014.
[6] Patrick Martin, "In Iraq, all Roads Lead to Mosul: Two Years After the Islamic State Captured the Major Metropolis, Opposition Fighters are Closing in on the City from Every Direction," *The Globe and Mail (Index-Only)*, 2016.
[7] James A Russell, "Counterinsurgency American Style: Considering David Petraeus and Twenty-First Century Irregular War," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 1 (2014), p. 70.
[8] Ahmed S. Hashim, "The Caliphate at War: Ideology, War Fighting and State-Formation," *Middle East Policy* 23, no. 1 (2016), p. 48.

reach of the Shi'a dominated government of Iraq, battlefield experience for its fighters and commanders, new recruits, and financial independence following the capture of oil wells and other assets.[9] Meanwhile in Iraq, the divisive Shi'a government of Nuri al-Maliki, who failed to integrate Sunnis in the aftermath of the "Awakening" through power sharing and wealth distribution, once again left the disaffected Sunni population open to extremist proselytization. The outcome since 2011 has been nearly continuous sectarian violence, and the further consolidation of Iraq's ethnic and religious communities into quasi states in the Shi'a south, Sunni northwest, Kurdish northeast, and the displacement of four million Iraqis.[10]

The IS movement, from its meager beginnings as the little known Iraqi jihadist group Jamaal al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (JTJ also known as Monotheism and jihad) in 2003, to its current form as a dominating political and military force in Iraq and Syria, has been widely written about since the fall of Mosul in June 2014. Of particular note, credible works such as William McCants' *The ISIS Apocalypse: the history, strategy, and doomsday vision of the Islamic State* (2015), and Michael Weiss' *ISIS: inside the army of terror* (2015), authoritatively chronicle the movement's emergence, ideology, strategy, appeal, and the political context from which it emerged. Though these treatments provide extensive and balanced historical perspectives, they do not offer specific analysis of the internal social dynamics at play within the organization in an effort to deepen the reader's level of understanding.

Using Richard Scott's conceptual framework for institutional analysis, this paper will demonstrate that the emergence, viability, and long term survivability of IS are products of regulative, normative, and cognitive factors. The analysis within this paper is structured to

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[9] Andrew Phillips, "The Islamic State's Challenge to International Order," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 5 (2014), p. 496.
[10] Central Intelligence Agency. 'World Fact Book, Iraq', last accessed 4 April 2016: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html.

provide the reader with a greater understanding of IS' internal institutional forces, strengths, and weaknesses. First, the re-emergence of IS as a governing power is documented within the regional context, in order to provide a situational baseline. Second, Scott's institutional analysis framework is introduced in order to establish its relevance and application to the topic. Third, an institutional analysis is conducted based on the three pillars of Scott's framework: the cultural-cognitive (ideology, worldview); the normative (values, norms); and the regulative (regulations, policies). Finally, an integrated analysis is conducted to synthesize some combined effects and interactions of the pillars on IS' viability and long term survivability as a product of its legitimacy in the eyes of its members, its global community of supporters, and its captive population.

IS' particular brand of Salafi-jihadism widely proclaims aspirations of world domination, contempt for the remainder of the global community, and a deeply held belief in its inherent superiority. These tenets lend themselves to comparison with those of the monstrous totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. IS' hegemonic structure, use of religion to justify violent subjugation, extermination of religious minorities, and suppression of opposition, in addition to its aggressive emphasis of Sunni supremacy, all serve to illustrate. As will be observed in the text that follows, IS' apocalyptic fervor, perpetual war-making, and information domination are reminiscent of George Orwell's 1984. In this classic work of dystopian fiction, The Party's three slogans, visible atop the Ministry of Truth's complex, are once again made relevant, and are offered as epigraph to this paper.

CHAPTER 1 – THE EMERGENCE OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

1.1 Organizational History

Important condition setting for the emergence of the IS begins with JTJ, a little known militant group founded in 2000 by Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (AMZ). AMZ, born Ahmad Fadhil Nazzal al-Khalaylah, is a central figure to the post 2003 Iraqi insurgency and sectarian conflict, and as such, the historical baseline of the emergence of IS begins with him.

In 1984, at the age of eighteen, AMZ was a Jordanian school dropout and small time criminal who wrote Arabic at a semi-literate level.[11] Worried about her son, AMZ's mother made him attend religious courses at the Al-Husayn Ben Ali Mosque in Amman. This experience would turn out to be transformative as it was at the Mosque that AMZ would first discover a militant form of Salafism. Salafist doctrine advocates a fundamentalist approach to Islam, emulating the Prophet Muhammad and his earliest followers. In general, Salafists support the implementation of sharia (Islamic law), reject most forms of religious innovation, and view western liberal democracy as incompatible with Islam.[12] The Salafist ideological spectrum, however, ranges from an apolitical majority to a minority of practitioners who are proponents of jihad, an Arabic word for "struggle", whose contemporary use refers mainly to armed resistance.[13]

Owing to his new found militant Salafi-jihadism, AMZ made his first trip to Afghanistan by way of Hayatabad, Pakistan in 1989, arriving after the Soviet withdrawal. Hayatabad, a town on the outskirts of Peshawar in vicinity of the Khyber pass, was the rear base of the Afghan and Arab mujahidin. In addition, it is well documented that throughout the 1990s, Hayatabad was the

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[11] Jeffrey Gettleman, "Zarqawi's Journey: From Dropout to Prisoner to an Insurgent Leader in Iraq," *The New York Times*, 2004.
[12] Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror* (New York, NY: Regan Arts, 2015), p. 2.
[13] "Politics and the Puritanical; Salafism." *The Economist*, sec. 415, 2015a.

base of operations for al-Qaeda (AQ). As a key node in the war against the Soviets, Hayatabad brought together Arab jihadists who had come to participate in the effort. Of particular note, important Islamist combatants, like Abdallah Azzam, Gulbuddin Hekmatayar, and Abu Mohamad Al-Maqdisi were lodged in the town's safe houses.[14] AMZ remained in the region until late 1992 then returned to Jordan. After a short attempt at civilian life, he would join an anti-Jordanian government jihadist cell by the name of Bayat al-Imam (the Pledge of Imam). He was arrested in a 1994 after the Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate (GID) raided his house and found a stockpile of weapons. Zarqawi was subsequently sentenced to fifteen years in prison, but served only a fraction of his sentence as the new king declared a general amnesty in March 1999 for several thousand prisoners.[15]

AMZ left Jordan in the summer of 1999, and headed once more for Afghanistan seeking an audience with AQ's leadership in an effort to raise money and recruits to start a revolution in the "Fertile Crescent", defined as the area of land stretching from the eastern Mediterranean through to Iraq. A meeting would eventually take place with Osama bin Laden, the son of a wealthy Saudi building contractor, and Ayman al Zawahiri, a surgeon who had run an Egyptian terror group before merging part of it with AQ. Both men, who had spent the proceeding decade targeting American soldiers throughout the Middle East, would eventually oversee the 9/11 attacks. Though the initial meeting did not go well reportedly due to AMZ's extreme views, the duo eventually consented and by 2000, he was in Herat running a training camp for the Syrian, Palestinian, Jordanian, and Lebanese recruits of his "Jun-al-Sham" (Soldiers of the Levant)

[14] Jean-Charles Brisard and Damien Martinez, *Zarqawi: The New Face of Al-Qaeda* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), p. 16.
[15] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror, p.* 10

jihadist organization.[16] Of interest, the banner that flew above the entrance to his camp carried a slogan that would later become the name of his terrorist cell in Iraq: "Jamaat al-Tawhid wal-Jihad" (JTJ) or Monotheism and Jihad.

After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, AMZ fled Afghanistan, with the help of supporters, to seek refuge in neighboring Iran. He also needed medical attention for an injury sustained in an American air strike in Kandahar.[17] As early as October 2002, AMZ had anticipated the American invasion of Iraq and relocated to build a clandestine network and prepare his new group, Monotheism and Jihad, to fight the American occupiers.[18] By the time the American led coalition invaded in March 2003, AMZ's group was ready to start the insurgency and by the end of August, had bombed both the United Nations headquarters and the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad.[19] These successful attacks, however, had not been conducted in isolation; support was provided by former security officers in Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist government.

During the pre-invasion period, bin Laden had written a letter to the people of Iraq in a communique aired on Al Jazeera, advocating preparation for the occupation. In the message, the AQ leader promoted urban warfare and suicide bombings, and requested a mujahidin army on a level not seen since the days of the Service Bureau of the Afghan rebellion against the Soviets. In addition, bin Laden offered that Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime were worthy accomplices in a fight against the Americans. To hurt the "far enemy," jihadists were encouraged to collaborate with the remnants of the "near enemy".[20] By October 2003, bin Laden's request for foreign

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[16] William Faizi McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015), p. 13.
[17] Brisard and Martinez, *Zarqawi: The New Face of Al-Qaeda, p.* 93-94.
[18] McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State, p.* 15.
[19] MARK MacKINNON, "Did Al-Zarqawi Strike Too Close to Home?" *The Globe and Mail (1936-Current),* 2005.
[20] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror,* p. 19.

fighters had largely been answered, thanks in part to the Ba'athists who had already established clandestine methods to transport them into Iraq from a around the Middle East and North Africa.

By happenstance, Saddam Hussein had prepared his regime for a different survival scenario in the decade after the first Gulf War fearing a Shi'a or Kurdish uprising. The regime had constructed an entire underground apparatus for counterrevolution and had strengthened its conventional military deterrents. In addition, Saddam had insulated his previously secular regime against potential foreign and domestic adversaries that could challenge his legitimacy on religious grounds. Starting in 1993 the regime had begun an "Islamic Faith Campaign" designed to increase support for the regime from the Sunni religious community. Interestingly, the Faith Campaign promoted mainly Salafi Islam in order to develop Salafism as an alternative to the Muslim Brotherhood, whom Saddam considered a threat to his rule.[21] This pragmatic Islamization is highlighted by the introduction of Sharia law and the addition of the phrase "Allahu Akbar" (God is great) to the Iraqi flag. It should also be noted that the Ba'athist Islamization campaign provided a means to deflect criticism for the poor state of the Iraqi economy that had receded under international sanctions. Through Islamization, the regime introduced a proscription on female employment, in an effort to artificially lower Iraq's unemployment rate.[22]

As will be detailed further in the next section, the implementation of democracy in Iraq that followed the American led invasion of 2003 resulted in a demographic inversion of Iraq's power structure. This destroyed what many Iraqi Sunnis, as the minority ruling class, saw as their birthright. It was in this context that the radical Sunni uprising started against the allied forces and the rule of the newly installed Shi'a dominated government in Baghdad. AMZ's

[21] Joel Rayburn, *Iraq After America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, Vol. 643. (Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 2014), p. 102.
[22] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror, p.* 22.

Monotheism and Jihad benefited from this. During this period he was able build a supply of weapons and recruit angry young Sunni men who resented the loss of their privileged position in Iraq.[23]

Iraq's population distribution is 75 – 80 percent Arab of which 60 – 65 percent are Shia and 32 – 37 percent are Sunni, 15 – 20 percent Kurdish, and 5 percent either Turkmen, Chaldean, or Assyrian.[24] The Shi'a Arabs, who form the majority, are concentrated in the south, while Sunni Arabs dominate the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys to the north and northwest. The Kurds are concentrated in the northeast. Prior to the invasion, the Sunni dominated government of Saddam Hussein contained ethno sectarian competition through authoritarian rule, rather than through balanced social and economic policies. The American de-Ba'athification process saw the removal of authoritarian structure and led to the re-activation of dormant hostility between communities. In addition, it is estimated that between 65 and 95 thousand members of Saddam's Specialist Republican Guard, the Mukhabarat, the Fedayeen Saddam, and the state-subsidized militias were rendered unemployed as Paul Bremer, the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), ordered the disbanding of the Iraqi military. [25] Many of these officers would join the nascent campaign to expel their expropriators.

As the insurgency progressed in 2004, AMZ ramped up the brutality. In May 2004, Monotheism and jihad released a video of the beheading of American Businessman Nicholas Berg to the global media as an answer to the torture of Iraqi prisoners by U.S soldiers at the Abu

[23] Stephan Rosiny, "The Rise and Demise of the IS Caliphate," *Middle East Policy* 22, no. 2 (2015), p. 95.
[24] Central Intelligence Agency. 'World Fact Book, Iraq', las modified 2 November 2015, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html.
[25] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror,* p. 21.

Ghraib.[26] Of note, this would not be the last time this form of propaganda would be used as cinematic ultra-violence staged for world consumption remains a trademark of the IS movement.

In addition to fighting the American occupiers, AMZ's strategy was to foster a sectarian war by targeting Shi'a civilians and religiously significant buildings in an effort to provoke retribution attacks and awaken the inattentive Sunnis. An excerpt of a letter obtained in February 2004 by the Coalition Provisional Authority serves to illustrate AMZ's hatred of the Shi'a and rationalization for violence:

> These [have been] a sect of treachery and betrayal throughout history and throughout the ages. It is a creed that aims to combat the Sunnis. When the repulsive Ba`thi regime fell, the slogan of the Shi`a was "Revenge, revenge, from Tikrit to al-Anbar." This shows the extent of their hidden rancor toward the Sunnis. However, their religious and political `ulama' have been able to control the affairs of their sect, so as not to have the battle between them and the Sunnis become an open sectarian war, because they know that they will not succeed in this way. They know that, if a sectarian war was to take place, many in the [Islamic] nation would rise to defend the Sunnis in Iraq. Since their religion is one of dissimulation, they maliciously and cunningly proceeded another way. They began by taking control of the institutions of the state and their security, military, and economic branches. As you, may God preserve you, know, the basic components of any country are security and the economy. They are deeply embedded inside these institutions and branches.[27]

Thus, in addition to promoting attacks against the Shi'ites, AMZ viewed sectarian civil war as a key part of his strategy: rallying Iraqi Sunnis to the future caliphate.[28]

The early American offensive in Anbar province saw the extensive use of drone strikes and Special Operations Forces from the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) led by Major General Stanley McChrystal. By September 2004 JSOC assessed that it had killed six of out of fourteen major jihadist leaders, however, the structure of Monotheism and jihad remained intact

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[26] Rosiny, *The Rise and Demise of the IS Caliphate*, p. 95.
[27] US Department of State, Archived Content Website, "Zarqawi Letter," last accessed 15 April, 2016, http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rls/31694.htm .
[28] James Fromson and Steven Simon, "ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now," *Survival* 57, no. 3 (2015), p. 31.

and only grew in strength, numbers, and popularity after the battle, which became known as the First Battle of Fallujah.[29] This offensive, essentially aimed at destroying the Zarqawi network, had the effect of lionizing the man who would soon transform his organization into the AQ franchise in Iraq.

In October 2004, AMZ pledged allegiance to bin Laden and AQ. The new organization "Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn", or al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), increased AMZ's legitimacy and prestige, and provided AQ leadership with a base of operations from which to target the United States. A newly minted AQI was now part of a network of financial and logistical support.[30] Zarqawi would make full use of it during the second battle of Fallujah one month later. This operation, launched in November 2004, saw ten American army battalions, included two Marine regiments, several hundred Iraqi soldiers, and the extensive use of air strikes. During the clearance phase of the operation, evidence of AQI's violent domination of the city was discovered in mass graves, kidnap victims, and torture houses. In addition, American troops discovered an IED manufacturing facility, and of particular note, a calendar for video-recorded beheadings.[31]

AMZ and his supporters considered themselves to be fighting a global war for the reestablishment of the universal caliphate, and not simply an Iraqi liberation campaign. This is an import distinction from the vast majority of Iraqi Salafi insurgents who were nationalistically minded. In addition, many of the Islamists, especially the Muslim brotherhood, did not agree with AMZ's attacks on the Shi'a aimed at starting a broad sectarian war. These reservations, however, did not stop their continued collaboration through 2005.[32] Briefly, AMZ's strategy

[29] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror, p.* 33.
[30] Brisard and Martinez, *Zarqawi: The New Face of Al-Qaeda, p.* 151.
[31] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror,* 37.
[32] Rayburn, *Iraq After America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, p. 112.

followed a text titled *Idarat al-Tawahhush* (*the Management of Savagery)*, published online in 2004 by author Abu Bakr Naji. This field manual offered a basic strategy for the establishment of the universal caliphate and would eventually form the basis for ISI's strategy document as will be discussed in section 4.1.

Over the course of 2005, AMZ's amassing civilian casualty toll, aroused grave concern from AQ leadership and his mentor Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, a Jordan based Salafist thinker. In a letter sent by Ayman al-Zawahiri to AMZ that was intercepted by U.S. military forces on July 9, 2005, the AQ second in command expressed reservations with AMZ's extremist tactics.[33] In January 2006, AMZ announced the creation of an organization called Mujahidin Shura Council (MSC) in an attempt to unify Sunni insurgent groups in Iraq and shore up the waning local support. Iraqi Sunnis had begun to question the mass atrocities and civil strife brought on by the essentially foreign organization that was AQI. Open hostility and conflict between the groups had even begun in the Sunni inhabited areas. The umbrella group consisted of AQI and several other Iraqi Salafi insurgent groups. In putting an Iraqi face on their operations, Zarqawi hoped to insulate his AQ franchise from criticism. The remainder of 2006 saw Iraq slip into a sectarian civil war, with AQI continuing to stoke the fire with spectacular attacks on Shi'a civilian and religious targets, all under the auspices of the MSC.[34]

AMZ was killed by a U.S. airstrike on June 7, 2006 and was quickly replaced by Abu Hamza al-Muhajir (aka Abu Ayub al-Masri), a top AQ operator in Iraq. In early October 2006, the MSC would announce the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) under the leadership of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi.[35] The new emirate would include the Sunni-majority

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[33] *Ibid*., p. 118.
[34] *Ibid*., p. 170.
[35] Ahmed S. Hashim, "The Islamic State: From Al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate," *Middle East Policy* 21, no. 4 (2014), p. 72.

provinces of Anbar, Ninewa, Salahadin, and Diyala, and would also include Kirkuk, Baghdad, and a portion of Babi and Wasit in the South where Sunnis were clearly the minority.[36]

Since the MSC was a thinly vailed front for AQ, and the plan essentially called for AQ ruling over the Sunni sections of a divided Iraq, Sunni nationalists, even those in the insurgent groups, began to view ISI as a political competitor. Former Ba'athists wanted to restore the Ba'athist state not create a foreign led Islamic one, and the majority of Sunnis nationalists rejected the idea that Iraq should be partitioned at all. ISI's actions and politics produced significant backlash among Iraqi Sunnis. [37] Ultimately, The ISI project failed due to its corruption, an inability to garner support amongst the powerful Sunni tribes, its lack of resources and personnel, and its use of extreme violence.[38] As ISI didn't control any cities, it was effectively unable to improve the lives of its population through governance, services, and economic growth. Instead, their strategy appears to have been anchored on the imposition the Sharia and accompanying hudud punishments.[39] The early imposition of the hudud by ISI was intended to bolster the young state's ultraconservative credentials and thus its claim to statehood. In addition, some of the penalties, such as the punishment for apostasy, could be used against enemies and proved useful for the subjugation of the people under their control.[40] ISI's use of extreme violence eroded the support of the Sunni tribes and other Iraqi insurgents. Making matters worse, ISI fighters attempted to control Sunni business enterprise, and demonstrated disregard for tribal leadership and custom. The result was the well documented "Awakening," movement: The tribes and Sunni insurgents allied themselves with the Americans to fight ISI.

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[36] Rayburn, *Iraq After America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, p. 121.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 122.
[38] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror, p.* 80-90.
[39] The hudud are described during the regulative interpretation of IS in section 5.2.
[40] McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State,* p. 49.

By the end of 2008, ISI appeared to be contained: Roadside Improvised Explosive Device (IED) explosions dropped by two thirds, civilian death levels declined to almost zero by the year's end, and American combat casualties dropped to levels that hadn't been seen since the start of the occupation. With this, U.S. forces began to withdraw and turn security tasks over to the American-trained ISF in 2009.[41]

The next phase of the IS movement's evolution begins with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. It should be understood that an authoritative biography has not been produced to date. Born Ibrahim Awwad al-Badari in 1971 near the city of Samarra, al-Baghdadi was an Islamic scholar, having earned his PhD in Islamic Studies at the University of Islamic Sciences in Baghdad's Adhamiya suburb. During the 2003 occupation, he founded his own Islamist faction, Jaysh Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah (the Army of the People of thee Sunni Community), and was arrested a year later while visiting a friend in Fallujah on January 31, 2004. Al-Baghdadi was subsequently sent to the U.S. detention facility at Camp Bucca where he would spend one year. [42] Accounts differ with regard to al-Baghdadi's early connection to AQI and its eventual successor the MSC. One account provided by the BBC suggests that al-Baghdadi joined AQI shortly after his release from Camp Bucca, and due to his Islamic credentials, was eventually placed as an ISI emir overseeing the administration of a Syrian border town.[43] He would eventual join the eleven member ISI Shura council.

The ISI movement suffered a major setback on April 18, 2010 when its top two leaders, Abu Ayub al-Masri and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, were killed in a raid in the area of Tikrit. In

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[41] Fred M. Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), p. 265-266.
[42] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terro*, p. 117-118.
[43] BBC News, "Who is Islamic State Leadere Abu Back al-Baghdadi," last accessed 8 May, 2016, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35694311.

Addition, by June 2010, 80 percent of the group's leaders had been killed or captured. [44] This setback, however, set conditions for the current and most successful leadership of the movement to date. The extensive loss of AQI leadership that occurred in 2010 is reported to have severed communications with AQ central in Pakistan. According to Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, this situation meant that, before al-Zawahiri and bin Laden could appoint a new emir, ISI was able to decide on one of their own.[45] As such, al-Baghdadi's ascension to emir of ISI was reportedly decided by the Shura Council and announced in May 2010 although it would be two years before he would appear publicly.[46]

Under al-Baghdadi, ISI's goals became more specifically articulated as the overthrow of illegitimate apostate governments and the creation of an Islamic caliphate.[47] This was made all the more clear once al-Baghdadi transformed his organization in to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in March 2011in preparation for a Syrian expansion.[48] In this period, ISIS began explaining their strategy, propriety, and existence through public outreach efforts including social media posts, audio recordings, and publications. Of note, ISIS would later begin the production of a digital magazine series entitled Dabiq, on 5 July 2014.[49]

When ISIS prepared for entry into the Syrian civil war, it already had a network in place. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's funneling of hundreds of jihadists into Iraq to fight against the U.S. occupation is well documented.[50] ISI had received many of them and maintained its

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[44] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terro,* p. 120.
[45] *Ibid*., 121
[46] McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State,* p. 57.
[47] This was in part due to the distribution of an ISI produced strategy document in late 2009 that is discussed in section 3.3.
[48] Hashim, *The Islamic State: From Al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate*, p. 73.
[49] Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," The Sufan Group, November, 2014, http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/TSG-The-Islamic-State-Nov-14.pdf, p. 56.
[50] Maria Abi-Habib, *Assad Policies Aided Rise of Islamic State Militant Group; Islamic State, Or ISIS, Gained Momentum Early on from Calculated Decision by Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad to Go Easy on It*.

extensive facilitation network in Syria.[51] In addition, when Syrians began peacefully protesting against their government, the Assad regime released an unknown number of jihadists from prison, during a 2011 general amnesty, designed to foster a violent uprising in order to provide a pretext for a military crackdown. [52] Thus, taking advantage of the volatility and power vacuum, and reportedly due to an urging by Zawahiri, ISI deployed a number of operatives composed mostly of Syrian veterans of the Iraqi insurgency. Under the leadership of Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, this group would later become as Jabhat al-Nusra in January 2012.[53]

Initially al-Nusra conducted similar operations to its jihadist parent organization in Iraq with staggering civilian casualty rates and spectacular suicide attacks. Six months later however, Al-Nusra expanded and transformed its methods to reflect a more population centric approach. According to Weiss and Hassan: "Al-Jolani, in other words, spent close to six months building – or reconstituting – a clandestine jihadist network in Syria before he debuted it as a strictly homegrown affair."[54] Though the group was successful militarily against the Syrian regime, developing a reputation as one of the most formidable anti-Assad group in Syria, it also managed to gain local support in Aleppo by establishing an effective food and medicine distribution program.[55] Taking note, al-Baghdadi released an audio statement in April, 2013 announcing Al-Nusra's ISIS roots and the merging of the two organizations as the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).[56] For simplicity, the group is referred to

[51] McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*104.
[52] Maria Abi-Habib, *Assad Policies Aided Rise of Islamic State Militant Group; Islamic State, Or ISIS, Gained Momentum Early on from Calculated Decision by Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad to Go Easy on It*.
[53] Hashim, *The Islamic State: From Al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate*, p. 77.
[54] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror*, p. 150.
[55] Ruth Sherlock, "Terrorist Group Wins Loyalty with Bread; Jabhat Al-Nusra Vows to Feed Syria for One Year," *National Post*, 2013.
[56] "Syrian Opposition React to Al-Nusrah Leader's Allegiance to Al-Qa'Idah." *BBC Monitoring Middle East*2013c.

as ISIS from this point until the founding of IS. Al-Jolani, issued a statement denying the merger, and expressing his concerns at not being consulted.[57]

Significant ideological differences existed between Al-Nusra and ISIS in 2013. Al-Nusra was willing to work with other jihadist organizations, whereas ISIS only accepted others into their fold insisting on an oath of allegiance. Next, though Al-Nusra maintained a large group of foreign fighters, it was seen as Syrian led. Conversely, ISIS was seen as a foreign led occupation movement. In addition, Al-Nusra actively fought for the Assad regime forces, whereas ISIS maintained a focus on establishing the caliphate and avoided fighting the Syrian Army.[58]

With the development of this stalemate, Ayman al-Zawahiri intervened and addressed the two leaders in a letter. In his letter, Al-Zawahiri ordered the dissolving of ISIS, and separated the organizations between the two countries. Al-Nusra would oversee operations in Syria while ISI would do the same in Iraq. Shortly after, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi would reject the ruling, and declared instead that the merger stood.[59] ISIS rejected the ruling arguing on religious and practical grounds. Based on ISIS' Islamic interpretation, dissolving the union was a sin. In addition, they argued that Islam did not recognize the post-World War I boundaries that separated Muslims into states. Finally, it was not practical to dissolve the organization as it would dilute its combat power in the face of the enemy.[60]

In February 2014, al-Qaeda would cut its ties to ISIS issuing a public statement: "ISIS is not a branch of Qaidat al-Jihad group, we have no organizational relationship with it, and the group is not responsible for its actions."[61]A violent clash between ISIS and the other anti-Assad

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[57] "Syrian Group Leader's Message "Surprise," Exposes Differences - Report." *BBC Monitoring Middle East*2013b.
[58] Hashim, *The Islamic State: From Al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate*, p. 77.
[59] "Al-Zawahiri Sent Letter Dissolving Al-Qa'Idah Groups in Iraq, Levant - Al-Nusrah." *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, 2013a.
[60] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror,* p. 186.
[61] *Ibid*., p. 196.

regime groups in Syria, most importantly al-Nusra, would follow .[62] ISIS began attacking other groups with the familiar AMZ tactics of vehicle borne IEDs, suicide attacks, and the assassination of opposing leadership. In the first half of 2014, 6,000 people died in battles waged by ISIS on other insurgent groups in Syria.

ISIS was able to capture terrain, including the lucrative oil fields of Deir al-Zor, and expand its Syrian operations with limited effort as large groups of fighters from other groups defected to join its ranks.[63] Al-Baghdadi's uncompromising approach had the effect of drawing foreign fighters and a younger generation of jihadists to the ISIS movement, thereby stripping the other groups of needed resources. The fracturing of the al-Nusra and ISIS had a transformative effect on the jihadism in the Levant. Foreign fighters defected in droves to ISIS from al-Nusra and other Syrian jihadist groups leaving them more Syrian in nature. Meanwhile, ISIS public relations efforts in Iraq, starting with AQI's formation of the MSC and eventually ISI, had Iraq-ized its leadership, and filled its higher levels with former Ba'athists. Thus the internationalized terror army was born.[64]

In early June 2014, ISIS captured Mosul, Iraq's second largest city. [65] Approximately 1,500 ISIS fighters, outnumbered by more than 15 to one in their advance against a well-equipped ISF, seized government buildings, television stations, police stations, Banks, and military installations housing U.S. supplied equipment and weapon. In addition, the jihadists raided prisons and released prisoners while security and civilian officials fled, or were killed. This was not the first city to be captured as Tikrit was already under ISIS control. [66]

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[62] Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, p. 34.
[63] Rosiny, *The Rise and Demise of the IS Caliphate*, p. 98.
[64] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror*, p. 186.
[65] Ali A. Nabhan and Matt Bradley, "Islamist Insurgents Seize Mosul," *Wall Street Journal*, 2014.
[66] "Terror's New Headquarters; the Capture of Mosul." *The Economist* 411, no. 8891 (2014b), 11.

Prior to ISIS' dramatic return to Iraq in 2014, conditions had been set for its rapid capture of terrain. ISIS had activated its network of former Ba'athists, military and intelligence officers, many of whom had set up shadow administrations throughout Sunni Iraq. ISIS Shura Council Leaders conducted information operations to convince accessible military and civilian leaders to either resign or desert. Remaining military and civilian personnel were isolated and targeted by assassination sleeper cells, by suicide attacks, or murdered when captured. The psychological warfare potential of these exploits were also used to send a message to remaining government forces in uncaptured territory. Videos of ISIS beheadings, executions, and torture were widely distributed by ISIS fighters over social media.[67] The ISF collapsed. Four Army divisions simply disappeared while ISIS captured an enormous amount of their equipment.

Upon taking over a city or town, ISIS fighters controlled police stations, municipal buildings, and core infrastructure such as water and electricity, enabling them to completely control access to vital needs. As such, ISIS was able to rapidly implement their governance structures and everyday functions of a state.[68]

ISIS' victories in 2014 over rival anti-Assad regime groups, over the American trained Iraq Security Forces (ISF), and over the Kurdish forces, culminated on July 4th, 2014, the first Friday of Ramadan, as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, by then self-proclaimed Caliph Ibrahim "Commander of the Faithful", announced the end of ISIS and the birth of the Islamic State (IS).

Though the above chronicling of IS' emergence offers a level of context, leaving it at this point would lead to an overly simplistic view. This emergence occurred within a divisive Iraqi political environment widely attributed, at least in part, to the al-Maliki government's unwillingness to meet Sunni demands for greater political inclusion, a share of government

[67] Hashim, *The Islamic State: From Al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate*, p. 78
[68] Till F Paasche and Michael M Gunter, "Revisiting Western Strategies Against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria," *The Middle East Journal* 70, no. 1 (2016), p. 21.

resources, and protection from revanchist Shi'a militias that terrorized Sunni civilians. As this internal struggle set conditions for IS' offensive and current hold on western Iraq, the next section aims at providing this context.

1.2 Post-2003 Iraqi Political Environment

In post-2003 Iraq, the al-Malaki Regime failed to create a legitimate and competent government through transparency, power sharing, and accommodation. This section documents these failures and the resulting decentralized power structures that have since emerged in Iraq. The intent is not an exhaustive list of events, but rather the provision of sufficient detail to show the process by which the al-Maliki Regime grew the divide between his Shi'a dominated Government in Baghdad, the Sunnis, and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), to the point of crisis in 2012.[69]

After the removal of Saddam Hussein in 2003, exiled Iraqi opposition leadership were summoned by the US led Coalition to participate in the process of re-building an Iraqi government. Nuri al-Maliki's Shi'a Dawa party, became a junior partner to the larger Shi'a coalition that included the Sadrists, and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). These organizations formed the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA). The Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) formed the Kurdish Alliance, and the Sunni-Arab Iraq Accord Front became the nucleus of Sunni participation. Beginning with the January 2005 election of the 275 member National Assembly, Iraqis went to the polls to determine who would be nominated to write Iraq's new constitution. The Sunni boycott of these elections, driven by rejectionists that refused to acknowledge their diminished role in Iraqi

[69] There exists a risk of oversimplification here due to the requirement for brevity. For additional detail, see Joel Rayburn, *Iraq After America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, Vol. 643. (Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 2014), or Emma Sky, *The Unraveling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2015.

politics, limited the Sunni community's ability to influence the political process from this early stage. The results saw 140 seats won by the Shi'a UIA, 75 Seats won by the Kurdish Alliance, and 40 seats won by the secular Iraqiyya list.[70]

Next, the parliamentary elections of December 2005 saw the nomination of the 275 member Council of Representatives, with a five year mandate, this time with Sunni participation. Again, the Shi'a UIA won the largest number of seats with 128, followed by the Kurdish Alliance with 58, and the Sunni-Arab Iraq Accord Front with 44. The Iraqiyya National List only won 25 seats.[71] Nuri al-Maliki was nominated Prime Mister, post-election, when the return of the interim Prime Minister Ibrahim Jafaari was blocked by American leadership. In December 2006, driven by the Iraqi government's cooperation with Coalition military operations, the Sadrists withdrew from the UIA and thus from government.

In 2007, as the US surge began, al-Malaki gained the backing of rival parties and his government remained in power without Sadrist participation. This period saw significant inter-Shi'a conflict, resulting in the Iraqi government of al-Maliki authorizing joint U.S.-Iraqi military operations against Shi'a militant strongholds in Basra, Baghdad and other locations in southern Iraq. These had been planned as a result of a series of attacks on ISF personnel and infrastructure.

The provincial elections of January 2009 resulted in the further cleavage of the Shi'a factions when al-Malaki's Dawa party detached itself from the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI - Formerly the SCIRI) and created the State of Law List. The provincial elections saw the

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[70] Anthony H. Cordesman and Sam Khazai, *Iraq in Crisis* (US: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014)92. The use of this non-primary source is due to difficulties in finding trustworthy published results the Iraqi elections from 205 to 2010. The website of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) does not provide archived results in English (http://ihec.iq/en/index.php/results.html).

[71] *Ibid.*, p. 92.

three major Shi'a parties locked it bitter competition and resulted in al-Maliki's State of Law List winning the majority of the Shi'a governorates.[72]

The Dawa party managed to stay in power after the March 2010 parliamentary elections, however the outcome was controversial: The secular Iraqiyya List won 91 seats while the State of Law List took only 89 due to the Shi'a split. With the potential of losing Shi'a domination of the Iraqi Government, Iran brokered a deal to unite the Shi'a parties and the 70 seats won by the ISCI supported al-Malaki as prime minister.[73] [74] This outcome aggravated relations between Iraqi Shi'ites and Sunnis, and served to increase tensions between Arabs and Kurds.

In general terms, al-Maliki's Dawa party dominated Iraqi politics from 2005 through 2010. Throughout this period the Prime Minister's inner circle exploited Iraq's degrading security situation to undermine the newly written Iraqi constitution and centralize power. This was accomplished by securing executive control of most of the state's institutions through patronage appointments and the abuse of Prime Ministerial power. This split Shi'a political factions, disenfranchised Sunnis and Kurds, and resulted in the decentralization that led to the establishment of power centres away from Baghdad. Joel Rayburn observed the following during al-Malaki's military defeat of the Sadrist militias in the south:

> Sadrists had appeared to many to represent the worst of the Shi'a sectarianism and the influence of Iran, and in defeating them in 2008, Maliki was credited as a non-sectarian nationalist. But this aura did not last long. Well before the elections, Maliki had alienated the other parties in his governing coalition by his non-inclusive decision making process and his increasing reliance on a small circle of Dawa Party advisors rather than the Council of Ministers.[75]

Thus, Prime Minister al-Maliki relied on his appointed inner circle rather than the ministers of his cabinet and eventually usurped control of the secretariat of the Council of Ministers. This

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[72] *Ibid.*, p. 93.
[73] The importance of Iranian influence over the Shi'a factions, not discussed until this point in the paper,
[74] *Ibid.*, p. 93.
[75] Rayburn, *Iraq After America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, p. 44.

small coordination staff for al-Malaki's cabinet, grew in size and power to the point of exercising executive authority over the major state functions of defense, finance, and others.[76] Through the consolidation of power, al-Maliki was able to provide employment and other benefits to his vast network of friends, relatives, and other clients.

The new constitution of 2005 stipulated that the spending of oil revenues would be determined in a budget set by the Iraqi parliament. With the leadership of the ministries divided among Iraq's major parties, the arrangement ensured the equitable division of oil revenues and the balance of power. Under the al-Malaki regime however, these authorities were gradually absorbed by the Prime Minister's office. Haithem Sawaan observed in 2012 that Iraq was at that point a country that had been overtaken by corruption due to changes that occurred during the post-invasion transition phase, coupled with the lack of oversight, transparency, and accountability for the political elites.[77]

As a further illustration of power consolidation, the al-Maliki Regime replaced the upper ranks of the Iraqi military and intelligence services with appointees in this same period. Rayburn observes: "Reconsolidation of an Iraqi Intelligence apparatus that was purposely subdivided to prevent its politicization has been an important factor in the prime minister's political power".[78]

Between 2005 and 2010, Iraq's internal sectarian tensions were reinforced by power consolidation, and corruption. In addition, nepotism ruined its public sector with unqualified and incompetent staff. Thus, the politicization of Iraq's institutions, the continued marginalization of

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 61.
[77] Haithem Sawaan, "The Corruption of Political Elites in Iraq - an Economic Analysis," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 5, no. 1 (2012), p. 108.
[78] Rayburn, *Iraq After America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, p. 60.

opposition groups, and the inability to provide basic social services worsened the political crisis.[79]

It is in this context that an opening was created for Sunni extremists and Shi'ite militias that defined Iraq's security situation throughout the post-occupation period. Zaid Al-Ali argues: "The state's failure to significantly improve the delivery of basic services to the people has also discouraged average Iraqis from rallying to its side in a worsening conflict."[80] Thus, the al-Maliki Regime, whose authoritarian tendencies aggravated sectarianism, bear much of the blame for the crisis that continues to exist in Iraq.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 118.
[80] Zaid Al-Ali, "Iraq's Next Parliamentary Elections: The Stakes," *OpenDemocracy*, 2014.

CHAPTER 2 – RICHARD SCOTT'S THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Stanford sociologist Richard Scott defines institutions as "regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life."[81] Scott consolidates three symbolic systems, or conceptual frames, to form the basis for the analysis of institutions. The regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements are at once interrelated and distinct: They provide distinct frames of reference that can be considered in isolation, or in combination as functions of two or more elements that may vary in importance between organizations. These frames form the pillars of Scott's conceptual framework.

The regulative pillar describes the internal and external regulatory processes that constrain or regularize institutional behavior.[82] In general terms these processes provide the formal and informal capacity to establish rules, monitor conformity, and rewards or punishments in order to influence behavior. To further illustrate, a regulative interpretation of IS includes the establishment of the state and leadership structure, and its ability to provide state like governance.

The normative pillar refers to the set of values and norms that provide "the prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory dimensions into social life."[83] Values define the desirable or the preferred based on constructed symbolic standards. Norms specify legitimate and accepted means to achieve these outcomes. These are clearly interconnected as rules can become norms overtime and vice versa. In addition, though normative structures limit behavior, they can also empower action. To further illustrate, among other possibilities, a normative interpretation of IS

[81] W. Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014), p. 56.
[82] *Ibid*., p. 59.
[83] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

includes the means it employs in achieving its goals. As such, these include the organizations grand strategy, its communication strategy, and use of foreign fighters.

Finally, the cultural-cognitive pillar refers to the set of "shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and the created frames through which meaning is made."[84] Thus, this pillar is made up of the symbolic frames through which members of an institution view the world. In general terms, the cultural-cognitive view includes shared worldview, and ideology. The cultural-cognitive view of IS thus will include these topics. The three pillars of Richard Scott's conceptual framework are presented as Figure 2.1. In his table, Scott combines the pillars with their principle dimensions. Of note, this includes their individual basis of legitimacy.

	Regulative	*Normative*	*Cultural-Cognitive*
Basis of compliance	Expedience	Social obligation	Taken-for-grantedness Shared understanding
Basis of order	Regulative rules	Binding expectations	Constitutive schema
Mechanisms	Coercive	Normative	Mimetic
Logic	Instrumentality	Appropriateness	Orthodoxy
Indicators	Rules Laws Sanctions	Certification Accreditation	Common beliefs Shared logics of action Isomorphism
Affect	Fear Guilt/ Innocence	Shame/Honor	Certainty/Confusion
Basis of legitimacy	Legally sanctioned	Morally governed	Comprehensible Recognizable Culturally supported

Figure 2.1: The Three Pillars of Institutions[85]

Given the current significance of IS to global security and the precarious state of the Middle East, its long term viability and survivability are particularly important. According to Scott "organizations need more than material resources and technical information if they are to

[84] *Ibid*., p. 67.
[85] *Ibid*., p. 60.

survive and thrive in their social environments. They also need social acceptability and credibility – in short they require legitimacy."[86] Consequently, the concept of "organizational legitimacy" as a source of viability and long term stability must be considered.

In 1995, Brown University Sociologist Mark Suchman offered the following comprehensive definition: "Legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions."[87] Thus, I offer that the organizational legitimacy of IS exists in the shared belief amongst its concerned audience – defined as limited to its members, global community of supporters, and those it governs – that its rule is the best option available, that its authority should be respected, that its behavior is justifiable, that it is morally right, and that it deserves voluntary allegiance. It should be understood that these exist on a continuum rather than as a simple series of binary decisions. In addition, as will be discussed, IS' system of governance and ideology are inseparable based on its roots in Islamic scripture and law, therefore the use of the word "rule" throughout this document is intended as an aggregate of all that establishes IS authority. Finally, the use of the term "organizational legitimacy" throughout the document, is defined as the extent to which the group is legitimate in the eyes of the specified group of IS' concerned audience as defined above. It is not intended to include the opinions of the global community, both Muslim and not.

Suchman further defines three broad types of organizational legitimacy: pragmatic, moral, and cognitive. Pragmatic legitimacy is based on the "self-interested calculations of an organization's most immediate audience."[88] In the pragmatic sense, support for an

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[86] *Ibid*., p. 71.
[87] Mark C. Suchman, "Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches," *The Academy of Management Review* 20, no. 3 (1995), p. 574.
[88] *Ibid*., p. 578.

organization's policy or activity is based on expected value to the audience and is thus achieved through a transaction of benefit. This form of legitimacy is the easiest to influence. Moral legitimacy is based on a "normative evaluation of the organization and its activities."[89] In this case, the policy or activity is not judged based on the benefit to the evaluator, but wether it is right according to a communally constructed symbolic standard. This form of legitimacy is more difficult to establish. Cognitive legitimacy involves "acceptance of the organization as necessary or inevitable based on taken for granted cultural account."[90] Though cognitive legitimacy is the most difficult to achieve and measure, it is also the most resistant to outside influence.

By definition, the taken-for-granted nature of cognitive legitimacy makes it distinct from evaluation as it is seen as inevitable by the concerned audience. For the IS organization, some level of cognitive legitimacy may exist, however its observation and analysis is problematic due to a lack of data driven by the short period of IS' existence, and a lack of access to its internal social structure. As such, this paper will limit its analysis to the other two forms of organizational legitimacy.

Though not a strict hierarchy, in this model, the three broad types of legitimacy exist on a continuum moving from the pragmatic through the moral and cognitive. As we progress along the continuum, "legitimacy becomes more elusive to obtain, more difficult to manipulate, but also becomes more subtle, more profound, and more self-sustaining, once established."[91] As such, the order of terms I offered above as the basis of IS organizational legitimacy follows a progression of sorts. From the pragmatic: "that its rule is the best option available and that its authority should be respected"; to the moral and cognitive: "that its behavior is justifiable, that it is morally right, and that it deserves voluntary allegiance".

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[89] *Ibid*., p. 579.
[90] *Ibid*., p. 582.
[91] *Ibid*., p. 585.

In the next three chapters, an institutional analysis of the IS movement is conducted in accordance with the three pillars of Scott's institutional framework. According to Scott: "In stable social systems, we observe practices that persist and are reinforced because they are taken for granted, normatively endorsed, and backed by authorized powers."[92] Following this logic, the analysis begins with the cultural-cognitive pillar as the foundation for the organization, then continues with the normative pillar as the endorsement of practices, and finishes with the regulative pillar as the authority to enforce conformity. In the final chapter, an integrated analysis is conducted to examine the relationship between the pillars and their effects on the process of organizational legitimization. By means of the study of the broad types of organizational legitimacy proposed by Suchman, the organization's viability and long term stability and survivability are examined.

[92] Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities, p.* 70-71.

CHAPTER 3 – THE CULTURAL-COGNITIVE PILLAR

As discussed above, the cultural-cognitive pillar is based on core beliefs, thought patterns, and symbolic frames that define an institutions collective reality. Making sense of the emergence of the IS movement and the violent challenge to world order for which it stands, thus requires an understanding of the organization's collective identity, worldview, and ideology. This chapter provides the reader with a cultural-cognitive view of IS in three sections. The first section illustrates IS' organizational worldview by examining the challenges it poses to international order and to the concept of national identity. The second section demonstrates the compounding effects of political disaffection and sectarianism in Iraq and Syria. The third section describe IS ideology and the role of its underlying apocalyptic narrative

3.1 A Challenge to World Order

The existence of IS in its current form poses two important challenges to regional and international order that serve as useful starting point in revealing the organization's worldview. These are its physical existence outside of international law, and its claim to rule over a population that transcends the concept of national identity.

In June 2014, during a well-publicised action, IS fighters deconstructed border posts separating Syria and Iraq, used heavy equipment to flatten the man-made obstacles, and in doing so symbolically created the contiguous territory of the Islamic State.[93] Through the physical destruction of the border that had marked the end of the Ottoman Empire, the last caliphate, IS asserted its power over the expanded territory of a new caliphate. Thus, the organization challenged the regional system in existence since the San Remo conference of 1920 separated the region into states under British and French control. In addition, by proclaiming the birth of a new

[93] The Guardian, "Isis breach of Iraq Syria border merges two wars into one," last accessed 8 May, 2016, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/18/isis-iraq-syria-two-wars-one-nightmare.

universal caliphate and declaring himself caliph, al-Baghdadi claimed leadership of the world's Muslims, posing a direct challenge to all other religious leadership. In this way, IS worldview counters to the idea of national identity as its logic does not rest on the concept of the state, but on the collectivity of all Muslims under the authority of the universal caliphate. As a physical manifestation of this ideologically driven destruction of national identity, immigrants to the caliphate ritualistically burn passports and identity papers. The promotion and propaganda value of this initiation rite is then exploited through internet videos and social media posts. [94]

Underlying the symbolism of the universal caliphate, is the resentment, held by many Muslims, of western imperialism which is seen as the cause of the decline of Islamic civilization. Andrew Phillips observes that the emergence of the caliphate channels "…deep disaffection within a world order that an angry minority of Muslims regard as the product of western imperialism, designed to keep the Islamic community estranged from God and from one another..."[95] Thus, in addition to exploiting a collective sense of humiliation to legitimize the existence and actions of the movement, al-Baghdadi and his Shura Council have defined IS based on the Islamist articulation of divine sovereignty, removing the division between religion and politics. This worldview explains IS' complete disregard for international law, and its refusal to negotiate with either states or other competing groups, as doing so is incompatible with its underlying logic. Of note, this rejectionist worldview also has an overlapping ideological basis that will be covered in the section 3.3.

In support of this interpretation of IS worldview, Nicos Panayiotides observes that IS "…does not feel bound to any convention of international law or the law of war. In other words, it is committed to spread its supranational ideology at any cost to the regional system of the

[94] Rosiny, *The Rise and Demise of the IS Caliphate, p.* 101.
[95] Phillips, *The Islamic State's Challenge to International Order, p.* 496.

Middle East or the international system elsewhere."[96] It follows that the rejection of the modern conventions of the international system contributes to IS moral legitimacy as a reflection of mass sentiment. In addition, through these challenges to world order, IS has demonstrated a commitment to spreading ideology in defiance of other forms of national identity.

3.2 The compounding effects of Iraqi political reform and sectarianism

In an effort to make sense of the ongoing crisis in Iraq and Syria, popular reporting has maintained a focus on the IS movement's religious foundation and apocalyptic fervor.[97] Though certainly important, if not sensational and alarmist, it should be understood that political grievances and related sectarianism also play a significant, if not a critical role in explaining the current crisis, and form an important component of IS organizational worldview due to the movements Iraqi roots.

The polarized post-2003 Iraqi political environment, as previously described in section 1.2 of this paper, arose from the failures of the nation building process. As documented, the demographic inversion that occurred saw the dissolving of Sunni Ba'athist control, and the rise of what Rayburn labelled as the rule of "Shi'a Supremacists".[98] Throughout the historical narrative, the emergence of IS was contextualized as a logical outcome for Iraq's Sunni minority. Many Sunnis were either coerced into submission, or simply preferred the rule of IS predecessors to any level of accommodation with a corrupt Shi'a government that persecuted, and excluded them from state resource distribution. According to Fanar Haddad: "The root of Sunnis' newly found politicized sense of self is the conviction that the post-2003 order came and

[96] Nicos Panayiotides, "The Islamic State and the Redistribution of Power in the Middle East," *International Journal on World Peace* 32, no. 3 (2015), p. 14.
[97] Graeme Wood, *What ISIS really Wants*, Vol. 315 (Boston: Atlantic Media, Inc, 2015), p. 78.
[98] Rayburn, *Iraq After America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, p. 73-95

now exists at their expense."[99] Thus, Sunni victimhood drives the rejectionist view that has characterised Iraqi Sunni politics since 2003.

Sunni rejectionist sentiment is an enabling factor for the politically fueled sectarian grievances that constitute another important component of IS worldview. Although Sunnis account for less than 20% of Iraq's population, as established above, the acceptance of their diminished political role in the post-2003 environment has not been forthcoming. The near total boycott of the 2005 parliamentary elections by Sunni voters serves to illustrate.[100] IS predecessor organizations, going back to 2003, profited from the mass Sunni political discontent and lack of options to progressively lodge their movement within Sunni political, economic, and security spheres of influence. It should be understood, however, that although the Zarqawi inspired violent anti-Shi'a efforts refocussed Sunni anger along religious lines and was a key component of the IS movement's strategy, it was not the only cause of the sectarian conflict that continues to this day.

As an additional factor, sectarianism was used to enhance regime security of both the al-Assad Alawite government in Syria, and al-Maliki Shi'a government in Iraq compounding the political problem. As claimed by John Esposito: "Both the Syrian and Iraqi regimes have deliberately and successfully portrayed the conflict as sectarian to discredit the opposition and unify non-Sunnis around their respective governments."[101] The resulting Sunni rejectionist worldview is a product of these mutually supporting forces.

In the case of the Syrian conflict, the Sunni majority, tired of oppression and exclusion by the minority Alawite regime of al-Assad, seeks power re-distribution. James Fromson and Steven

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[99] Fanar Haddad, "A Sectarian Awakening: Reinventing Sunni Identity in Iraq After 2003," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 17 (2014), p. 77.
[100] Rayburn, *Iraq After America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance, p.* 110
[101] John L Esposito, "Islam and Political Violence," *Religions* 6, no. 3 (2015), p. 1076.

Simon observe: "Forces of paranoia and fear similar to those of Iraq Shi'ites characterise the ruling Alawites' zero-sum approach to the prospect of power-sharing with the Sunnis".[102] Thus, it follows that the exclusionary behavior of both the current Iraqi and Syrian regimes, caused by concerns about long term regime survivability, has exacerbated Sunni rejectionist sentiment and increasingly shaped Sunni identity in terms of their self-perception as victims. The prospect of stability continues to be grim as Haider al-Abadi, who replaced al-Malaki in 2014, is also viewed as anti-Sunni. [103] This leaves both sides of the Sunni-Shi'a divide with little hope of reconciliation.

Since the beginning of the movement, IS has capitalized on the violent sectarian environment in Iraq and Syria. Although ISI experienced a decisive backlash to its methods during the "Awakening" movement of 2007-08 as described in section 1.1, the sectarian environment has since continued to deteriorate. Increasingly, cycles of fear, violence, and revenge have elevated IS' status as protectors of the Sunni community and only alternative to the repressive government in Baghdad, offering the movement a level of pragmatic legitimacy. In addition, this sectarian solidarity continues to hold together its coalition of former Ba'athists, tribesmen, nationalists, and frustrated youth. Sectarianism also factors high in IS' ideology and is characterised by the concept of takfir that will be described in the next section.

3.3 Ideology

IS' ideology legitimizes its actions, fuels its recruiting, motivates its fighters, and subjugates its citizens through a comprehensive blend of religion, violence, and politics that is rife with symbolism, and is actively promoted through social media. IS Ideology is based on strict interpretation of Salafi-jihadist Islam that is intolerant of any religious innovation

[102] Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, p. 25.
[103] Hashim, *The Islamic State: From Al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate*, p. 80.

introduced since the time of the prophet Muhammad. In IS' interpretation, the Qur'an and hadith are read literally as since practitioners believe that any departure from these texts, in accordance with the universal caliph's interpretation, constitutes blasphemy and is a crime punishable by death according to the fixed Islamic punishments of the hudud. As a regulative structure, the specific nature and role of the hudud are discussed in section 5.2 of this paper. This logic of eradication of non-conformity, in turn, justifies the use of violence, and according to Richard Barret, is seen as "…in the interest of reviving Islam, returning it to its pure form, uniting the Muslim world under truly Islamic rule, and so restoring the dignity and greatness of its people while fulfilling the orders of God."[104] Thus, the underlying rational of violence gives rise the practice of takfir, used to justify the execution of Muslims who do not conform. Takfir, defined as both the process and outcome of the declaration of a Muslim's removal from the Islamic community, is an important component of the group's ideological basis.[105]

In the IS vision of Islamic civilization, it is believed that al-Baghdadi as caliph, has complete authority over the global Islamic community to include all other Islamists and jihadists. These groups and individuals are expected to swear allegiance to him or suffer the uncompromising violent reprisals based on the logic of takfirism. As a product of the movement's authoritarian structure, there is but one interpretation of God's law, the sharia, with no room for discussion or different interpretations. To further illustrate, Stephen Rosiny offers that "Whoever does not acknowledge and obey the caliph, according to the undisguised threat in

[104] Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," The Soufan Group, November, 2014, http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/TSG-The-Islamic-State-Nov14.pdf, p. 18.
[105] David S. Sorenson, "Priming Strategic Communications: Countering the Appeal of ISIS," *Parameters* 44, no. 3 (2014), p. 29.

practically all IS statements, is an apostate." [106] Apostate, defined as a person who forsakes his religion, is another crime punishable by death following the same logic.

IS violent prosecution of Shi'a Muslims, Christians, and Yazidis is well documented with hundreds of thousands killed or forced to flee from the group's advancing forces.[107] In addition, evidence of a continued campaign of brutal sectarianism is available in IS' vengeful treatment of the Shi'a, making no distinction between fighters and civilians, as the group ethnically cleanses areas under its control. As a demonstration of ideological overlap, Esposito posits that the continued anti-Shi'a violence is "…reinforced by senior ISIS officers, Sunni members of Saddam Hussein's military who lost their positions after the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq…"[108] Thus, politically driven sectarianism overlaps with ideological sectarianism.

The declaration of the caliphate has made it particularly appealing to its supporters. Its physical existence makes prophecy a lived reality rather than a hypothetical goal, as it is for AQ.[109] IS interprets the current global environment in accordance with Qur'anic verse and the hadith, sayings attributed to the prophet Muhammad, interpreted as prophecy. One such hadith about a final battle between Muslims and Christians in Dabiq, a town in rural Alepo, is a frequent reference point. This reference point is so pervasive in fact that IS' propaganda magazine is named for it. To illustrate, the English translation of this hadith, featured in IS videos recited by Zarqawi is as follows: "The spark has been lit here in Iraq and its heat will continue to intensify, by Allah's permission, until it burns the crusader army in Dabiq." [110] According to several credible sources, IS prophetic interpretation holds that the "armies of

[106] Rosiny, *The Rise and Demise of the IS Caliphate*, p. 101.
[107] John L Esposito, *Islam and Political Violence*, p. 1075.
[108] *Ibid*., p. 1075.
[109] Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, p. 32.
[110] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror*, p. 175.

Rome," attributed to the armies of the west, will battle the faithful at Dabiq, an event that will bring on the beginning of the apocalypse.[111]

IS has managed to make use of the opinions and actions of its enemies to further develop its underlying narrative of global exclusion and the end-times struggle between good and evil. To illustrate, the announcement of the creation of an international coalition in August 2014, to conduct an air campaign against IS targets in Syria, was hailed as a sign that the apocalyptic prophecy was becoming reality. Of note, the announcement was made after the declaration of the universal caliphate, another event supposedly predicted by the hadith. The following English-translation of this prophecy is provided by McCants:

> Prophethood is among you as long as God wills it to be. Then God will take it away when He so wills. Then there will be a caliphate in accordance with the prophetic method. It will be among you as long as God intends, and God will take it away when He so wills. Then there will be a mordacious monarchy. It will be among you as long as God intends, and then God will take it away when He so wills. Then there will be a tyrannical monarchy. It will be among you as long as God intends, and then God will take it away when He so wills. Then there will be a caliphate in accordance with the prophetic method.[112]

Thus, according to this hadith, Muhammad explained that a caliphate would be established, followed by a coercive kingdom of tyrannical rule. Finally, another caliphate modeled on the prophethood would be established. Modern Islamist and jihadist organizations often interpret this hadith to mean that a caliphate will replace the current tyrannical regimes in the Arab world.[113] End-times symbolism also supports the IS narrative of global exclusion, and siege mentality. IS members are pitted against the outsider community of non-believers in their historic struggle against evil. IS' identity, as the harbinger of the end-times, also explains its refusal to engage in peace negotiations.

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[111] Frances Flannery, *Understanding Apocalyptic Terrorism: Countering the Radical Mindset* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), p. 134.
[112] McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, p. 194-195.
[113] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror*, p. 175.

The Islamic symbolism used by IS has the effect of drawing recruits, emboldening its fighters, and drawing support from Muslims outside the caliphate. Illustrating this is al-Baghdadi's claim of blood lineage to Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet. As a requirement set by many Islamic schools of thought for legitimate rule of Muslims, IS' use of this lineage is of particular interest. Weiss and Hassan observe "…genealogies are profoundly evocative and can mobilize Muslim youth around an imminent project. Frustration with the more gradualist approach to building an Islamic state endorsed by the Muslim Brotherhood sometimes leads Islamists to look at IS as an alternative."[114] Thus, the lived reality of the prophetical caliphate entices Muslim youth to abandon the gradual approaches of AQ and other Islamist organizations and join IS. Through the declaration of the caliphate, and the raising of apocalyptic expectations, however, pressure has begun to mount on IS from its supporters to live up to the rhetoric.[115]

This cultural-cognitive conception forms the basis for the organizational practices of the normative pillar that are analysed in the next chapter. In it, IS' methods are discussed in terms of grand strategy, communication strategy, and the assimilation and role of foreign fighters.

[114] *Ibid*., p. 175.
[115] Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, *p.* 28.

CHAPTER 4 – THE NORMATIVE PILLAR

In chapter 2, the normative pillar was defined as the set of values and norms that form the basis of an institution's behavior. In this conception, values define the desirable or preferred for both individuals and collectives within the institution, while norms "define the legitimate means to pursue valued ends."[116] To simplify the normative conception of IS, this chapter places emphasis on the analysis of means, or methods, employed by the movement in achieving its key desired end: a universal caliphate in accordance with its ideology. The first section will describe IS' grand strategy as the outcome of two formative documents. In the second section, the communication strategy that enables IS to recruit, legitimize its activity, subjugate its population, subdue its enemies, and entice western intervention is analysed. The third section will further define the assimilation and role of foreign fighters as a logical outcome of the first two sections.

4.1 Strategy – "Strategic Plan" and "The Management of Savagery"

The IS movement's use of force does not follow a commonly understood conception of war, as its military actions, whether on the periphery of the caliphate or elsewhere, are not followed up with political demands.[117] Instead, IS continues to be unrelenting in its expansionist military efforts, and in the creation of regional chaos, with no prospect of peace negotiations for the ideological reasons discussed in the previous chapter. In an effort to further understand IS organizational behavior, we must understand the grand strategy at its root.

Conveniently, IS grand strategy is publicly available in a widely circulated internet document aptly named *Strategic Plan to Improve the Political Position of the Islamic State in Iraq*. This strategic blueprint, produced by ISI leadership, was distributed to the organization in December 2009, only months before the group's leader, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, and defense

[116] Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities*, *p.* 64.
[117] Murat Yesiltas and Tuncay Kardas, "The New Middle East, ISIL and the 6th Revolt Against the West," *Insight Turkey* 17, no. 3 (2015), p. 75.

minister, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, were killed in a coalition military operation.[118] According to McCants, in this strategy paper, the failures of the first Islamic State in Iraq were acknowledged as being the result of "…a dirty war waged by its American adversaries who used 'awakened' Sunni tribes against it."[119] The text, however, also affirmed the organizations return once American withdrawal was complete.

In general, the key military components of the document asserted that the movement needed to unite all the jihadist factions, not waste resources on attacking Americans, and concentrate force against the ISF to degrade capability and instill fear in potential recruits. In doing so, the government would be forced to withdrawal from areas of minimal presence, and open up security vacuums that could be exploited by the jihadists who would seize terrain and equipment. The document also said that the jihadists would not be able to establish an Islamic state without the support of the Sunni tribes, whose allegiances could be bought with weapons and money, like the Americans had done. The strategy paper also provided the requirement to gain the support of the people under the jihadist's control. This would be achieved through provision of protection, increased prosperity, good governance, implementation of the sharia, and the distribution of money from the treasury. In addition, the document offered that the jihadists would need a media strategy to counter the international media bias.[120] As documented in section 1.1, the post-2008 emergence of the IS movement, that culminated in the events of June 2014, included a sophisticated adherence to this strategy.

Hashim observes that this ISI strategy paper was based on the lessons learned from the failures of ISI in 2007-08, and another important thought piece circulated in 2004, written by an

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[118] Aamer Madhani, "Deaths seen as a Huge Blow to Al-Qaeda.(Abu Ayyub Al-Masri and Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi)," *USA Today*, 2010.
[119] McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, 97.
[120] *Ibid*., p. 99-100.

unknown jihadist thinker that went by the nom de guerre Abu Bakr Naji[121]: *The Management of Savagery: The Most Dangerous Period Through Which the Umma Will pass.*[122] In *The Management of Savagery*, Naji offers a blue-print for achieving the universal caliphate. The strategy begins with a campaign of "vexation and exhaustion", where constant violent attacks in Muslim states exhaust the ability and will to enforce government authority. As the influence of the state diminishes, chaos or savagery ensues. If the state is already unstable due to revolution, external attack, or civil war, the jihadists can benefit from such a situation to further weaken illegitimate regimes by diminishing their control over territory. In the savagery that is fostered, jihadists can win popular support by imposing security, providing social services, and implementing sharia. As territory increasingly comes under jihadist control, the satellite communities, or "administrations of savagery" can be tied together to form the new caliphate.[123] In addition, Naji believed that drawing the United States into open conflict in the Middle East was an important step in the campaign. By doing so, he offered, once American soldiers were killed by jihadists, their false invincibility, as portrayed by media, would be exposed to all Muslims who would come to understand the harm they could inflict on the weak, and corrupt superpower who occupied their holy lands. This would lead the remainder of the Muslim community to jihad. The following extract from McCant's English translation of *The Management of Savagery* serves to illustrate this point:

> A – The first goal: Destroy a large part of the respect for America and spread confidence in the souls of Muslims by means of:
>
> (1) Reveal the deceptive media to be a power without force.
>
> (2) Force America to abandon its war against Islam by proxy and force it to attack directly so that the noble ones among the masses and a few of the noble ones among the armies of apostasy will see that their fear of

[121] Hashim, *The Islamic State: From Al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate*, p. 75.
[122] English translation of this document is available at *https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/abu-bakr-naji-the-management-of-savagery-the-most-critical-stage-through-which-the-umma-will-pass.pdf
[123] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror*, p. 40.

> deposing the regimes because America is their protector is misplaced and that when they depose the regimes, they are capable of opposing America if it interferes.
>
> B – The second goal: replace the human casualties sustained by the renewal movement during the past thirty years by means of human aid that will probably come for two reasons:
>
> (1) Being dazzled by the operations which will be undertaken in opposition to America.
>
> (2) Anger over the obvious, direct American interference in the Islamic world, such that that anger compounds the previous anger against America's support for the Zionist entity. It also transforms the suppressed anger toward the regimes of apostasy and tyranny into positive anger. Human aid for the renewal movement will not dry up, especially when heedless people among the masses – and they are the majority – discover the truth of the collaboration of these regimes with the enemies of the Umma to such extent that no deceptive veil will be of use and no pretext will remain for any claimant to the Islam of these regimes of their like.
>
> C – The third goal: Work to expose the weakness of America's centralized power by pushing it to abandon the media psychological war and the war by proxy until it fights directly. As a result, the apostates among all of the sects and groups and even Americans themselves will see that the remoteness of the primary center from the peripheries is a major factor in contributing to possible outbreak of chaos and savagery. (10)[124]

Thus, the basic strategy of the IS movement is defined to include the attraction of foreign fighters referred to as human aid in the text. Finally, and of particular interest to IS strategy, Naji's document advocates ceaseless and uncompromising violence in gaining control over territory. Naji writes:

> One who previously engaged in jihad knows that it is naught but violence, crudeness, terrorism, frightening others, as massacring… Regardless of whether we use harshness or softness, our enemies will not be merciful to us if they seize us. Thus, it behooves us to make them think one thousand times before attacking us. (31)[125]

According to McCants interpretation of the text "Maximum latitude for maximum violence is the real interpretive framework for Naji and his acolytes. To Naji's mind, anything less would make

[124] William MaCants, "The Management of Savagery," Harvard University, May 2006, https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/abu-bakr-naji-the-management-of-savagery-the-most-critical-stage-through-which-the-umma-will-pass.pdf.., p. 10.
[125] *Ibid*., p. 31.

the jihadists ineffective as insurgents." [126] Thus, in Naji's document, ISI leadership clearly found the basis of their grand strategy, and the well documented use of extreme violence found its justification.

Of particular importance to IS strategy, is the role of extreme violence in the promotion of its vision of hegemonic control. The normative role of the extreme violence applied by IS, can be explained beyond the regulative deterrence to resistance it offers. Florence Gaub, in her analysis of the cult-like behavior of IS, claims that it is aimed at strengthening the group and discouraging individuality, making the group at once "exclusive and reclusive." Thus, through these violent shared experiences, individuals are further separated from their societies of origin.[127] This process can be applied to the civilians under IS control who are witness to atrocities, as well as the fighters that perpetrate them. People under IS rule can be induced to commit violent acts, or at least begin to see them as appropriate, through indoctrination and related moral disengagement. One of IS' methods for moral disengagement is the shifting of responsibility for violent actions to God, thereby minimizing individual responsibility. Within IS, individuality is discourage as critical thinking undermines the hegemonic rule.[128]

An important tool for the indoctrination process and for spreading of their ideology, is IS' sophisticated communication strategy. The media strategy referred to in ISI's grand strategy document is of particular importance to the movement's success. Though only mentioned above as a counter to international media bias, the sophisticated communication strategy employed by the organization has several functions that are discussed in the next section.

4.2 Communication Strategy

[126] McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, *p.* 102.
[127] Florence Gaub, "The Cult of ISIS," *Survival* 58, no. 1 (2016), p. 122.
[128] *Ibid*., p. 122.

As discussed, IS' significant military ability, a product of its numbers, quality of leadership, sophisticated weaponry, and ideologically fueled aggression, has certainly played an important role in expanding its territory and influence. The accompanying communication strategy, however, characterized by the use of cellular technologies, social media platforms, and the distribution of professional looking videos and documents via an extensive online community, have also contributed to this success.

IS' adept use of Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms, enables the group to widely distribute its message, project images, and influence supporters, enemies, and even journalists on a global scale. Images depicting IS fighters as fearsome warriors, the group as gaining in strength, and the inevitability of its victory, are aimed at building support, and recruit new members. Other images depicting extreme violence, beheadings, and other executions are intended to intimidate its enemies and even entice western intervention as a fulfillment of the organizations eschatological destiny. Thus, these methods enable the organization to build credibility, establish organizational legitimacy, to recruit new followers and fighters, to subjugate its population, and intimidate its enemies. This strategy is enhanced by the inaccessibility of IS' territory and the global media's inability to gather evidence to provide a counter narrative.

From the beginning, IS predecessor online presence has exited the jihadist base. To illustrate, since the first declaration of the Islamic State in Iraq in 2006, some jihadist websites continue to include digital tickers to record the number of days since its founding.[129] Even before this, AMZ pioneered at least some of these techniques by posting beheading videos online as early as 2004.[130] Reportedly, AMZ maintained a media team who was adept at video editing, however, current IS leadership has taken this to the next level. Beginning with the distribution on

[129] Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, p. 32.
[130] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror*, p. 30.

19 August 2014 of a video showing a masked IS member beheading American journalist James Foley, the new caliphate periodically release videos showing the beheadings of their captives, or other executions such as the murder of a Jordanian pilot by burning and stoning.[131] In addition to the high production value videos, IS now employs its own channel, social media feeds, and online community to push its narrative, and publishes its glossy online magazine Dabiq.

In general, IS employs messaging that endeavors to show all Muslims that restoring the caliphate is their religious duty, a reflection of the ideology explained in section 3.3. James Farwell observes: "The group's narrative portrays IS as an agent of change, the true apostle of a sovereign faith, a champion of its own notion of social justice, and a collection of avengers bent on setting accounts for the perceived sufferings of others".[132] Through this narrative, IS explains its mission and depicts itself as alone in the battle between Muslims and the rest of an evil world bent on their destruction. Within its community of members and followers, both for and against, the narrative increases ideological credibility in terms of IS' ability to follow through on its rhetoric, and builds organizational legitimacy for its actions. Peresin and Cervone offer the following interpretation of IS' intentional creation of a dual image:

> Brutally violent videos of beheadings and public tortures and executions are on one side directed to ISIS's enemies, to frighten them and force them into collaboration (on the territory of Syria and Iraq), or to provoke their reaction (primarily the United States and its allies). On the other side, it is recognized as an effective tool for recruitment of sympathizers from outside the Middle East. Additionally, due to the absence of any neutral source of information from the territory they occupied by ISIS, materials published on the Internet by its leaders and followers are used to create a picture of the proclaimed caliphate as an idealistic place for living and to motivate sympathizers from all around the world to join them.[133]

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[131] Richard Spencer, "Jordanian Pilot Hostage Burnt Alive by Jihadists," *The Daily Telegraph*, 2015.
[132] James P. Farwell, "The Media Strategy of ISIS," *Survival* 56, no. 6 (2014), p. 49.
[133] Anita Peresin and Alberto Cervone, "The Western Muhajirat of ISIS," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no. 7 (2015), p. 503.

As an example of the IS movement's effective use of propaganda, the release of the now infamous video entitled "Clanging of the Swords" was timed for two weeks before the capture of Mosul.[134] This hour long professional looking video includes the reading and interpretation of Islamic scripture, testimonials of fighters, battle scenes, images of American forces and Shi'a militia, and ISIS executions and beheadings of Shi'ites and members the ISF. The video also includes the scene of an ISIS recruiting lineup at a Mosque in Anbar while a narrator explains that Sunni members of the ISF, former member of the "Awakening council," and Sunni public servants working for the Iraqi government, are entitled to repent and receive clemency. As long as, the narrator continues, this occurs before the fighters reach them. The video also exhibits ISIS' ubiquitous nature, as its agents dressed in ISF uniforms enter the home of a former "Awakening" commander execute him.[135] For Iraqi Shi'a and other religious minorities in Sunni dominated areas, the end result was terror. For Iraqi Sunnis, a simple desertion of their posts and a pledge of allegiance meant they could remain alive and even join the movement. This video, shared and re-shared tens of thousands of times via an online community, had the intended effect as ISIS fighters swept across Iraq in June 2014 and met little resistance.[136]

These images and messages have effects, however, both intended and not, on the wider conception of IS. Though certainly useful for enticing a small segment of the Muslim population, and intimidating its opposition, it is this very kind of extreme violence that prompted the backlash of the "Awakening" in 2007-08 and led to the failures of ISI. In addition, AQ leadership realized that images of sectarian ultra-violence were counterproductive, and became

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[134] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror*, p. 172.

[135] "Clanging of the Swords," Jihadology video, 1:03:49, posted by Posted on June 30, 2012, by Aaron Y Zelin, http://jihadology.net/2012/06/30/al-furqan-media-presents-a-new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-of-iraq-clanging-of-the-swords-part-1/

[136] Ali A. Nabhan and Matt Bradley, *Islamist Insurgents Seize Mosul*

critical of ISIS before the groups parted ways.[137] The omnipresence of smartphones, however, makes complete control of information flow impossible. This technology has empowered individual fighters to spread their own messages including videos of atrocities that give IS opposition material to exploit for the production of counter narratives.

In terms of recruiting new members, Facebook and Twitter are ideal platforms for IS recruiters. Gaub comments: "The act of 'Liking' a post about a Muslim cause will put that individual on an ISIS recruiter's radar. Once contact is established, ISIS offers a narrative of change and hope – but mostly one of meaning and collective identity."[138] This narrative of change, hope, meaning and collectivity are visible in many IS recruiting videos that include scenes violence and training, but also of men sharing meals, smiling, and having fun.

IS' extremely effective communication strategy has attract many followers and brought recruits, both men and women, from all over the globe. Esposito observes the following:

> Like recruits to other effective social movements, many of ISIS recruits, are drawn by a message and lifestyle that romanticizes and legitimates their mission and brutality and excessive use of force. The slaughter and savagery of ISIS fighters are normalized by images of heroic jihadist warriors, their cause and exploits, in victoriously routing of the enemy or 'enemies of Islam'.[139]

Thus, recruits flow into an organization, legitimized through its communication strategy, in search of adventure and violence in support of the "just cause". The next section describes the incorporation of foreign fighters and their role within IS.

4.3 The assimilation and role of foreign fighters

IS military ranks are filled with a disparate mix of local Iraqis and Syrians, and a large number of foreign fighters. In October 2015, United States National Counterterrorism Center Director Nicholas Rasmussen stated that IS had attracted more than 28,000 foreign fighters since

[137] Farwell, *The Media Strategy of ISIS*, p. 52.
[138] Gaub, *The Cult of ISIS*, p. 117.
[139] John L Esposito, *Islam and Political Violence*, p. 1078.

the group's re-emergence in 2014.[140] Indigenous membership is composed of mix of former Ba'athists, Sunni military members, Sunni tribesmen, and other Sunni insurgents including nationalists and Islamists, who have been radicalized and united by the divisive policies of the Shi'a dominated government in Baghdad. Foreign members include many from global Sunni populations in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, as well as newly radicalized Europeans, Americans, and citizens of other western nations. IS' narratives of fraternity, purpose, and meaning, discussed in section 4.2, have clearly resonated among foreign recruits, many of whom are alienated and marginalized members of society.[141]

As discussed in section 3.1, IS differs from most other insurgent groups in its rejection of all forms of national identity. According to its ideology, the Westphalian notion of nation-states, and the concept of Ba'athist Arab nationalism, artificially divides the Muslim community that it claims to rule. Thus, IS faces significant difficulty in building its state, based on the varying political beliefs held by important segments of its membership. Similar to other insurgent groups, motivation for IS fighters varies from monetary to political. In addition, while IS' core of ideologically committed radicals remain, many more latecomers have joined for reasons of self-preservation, out of pragmatism, or out of a sense of adventure. The partnership that continues to hold today between former Ba'athist nationalists and IS' ideological core serves to illustrate. It should be understood, however, that these ideological differences make the relationship tenuous, and reports indicate that violence has occurred between the two factions.[142]

In order to overcome these obstacles, systematic indoctrination is employed by IS. After undergoing initial screening, recruits attend training camps where they learn basic military

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[140] "Threats to Homeland," Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson, last accessed 8 May 2016, https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/media/majority-media/opening-statement-of-chairman-ron-johnson-threats-to-the-homeland.
[141] *Ibid.*, p. 1078.
[142] Rosiny, *The Rise and Demise of the IS Caliphate*, p. 104.

knowledge and receive ideological instruction. While the training itself is difficult, Gaub claims that "…the ultimate goal is not so much military know-how but the creation of cohesion among the recruits and dependency on the trainer, who, while inflicting pain, also has the power to remove it."[143] Gaub also claims that IS indoctrination methods are similar to those of other cult-like organizations and serve the purpose of establishing control over the individual: "For IS, this means disavowing family: women are encouraged to leave their husbands, and children are encouraged to report un-Islamic behavior by their parents. The individual subordinates his or her own identity to the group entirely."[144] This Orwellian end state is enhanced by IS' ideology and proclaimed statehood, in accordance with its prophetic destiny in the end-times battle. Thus, through indoctrination, fighters can be mobilized in the interest of the caliphate, whose cause is of urgent importance, no matter the cost.[145] This is also achieved through the carefully constructed siege mentality of the members of IS locked in a historic battle with the evil non-believers of the remainder of the globe. In this context, IS self-proclaimed caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, is elevated to near divine status and power, completing the hegemonic transformation.

Of specific importance to the indoctrination process, beyond the role of extreme violence described in the last section, is the role sexual violence. Through it, not only does IS consolidate its supremacy over conquered groups, but it further disassociates individuals from their contexts of origin, and builds cohesion, or group identity, within its ranks. According to Ariel Ahram, sexual violence plays different roles solidifying IS hegemony, the most visible of which is female sexual enslavement:

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[143] Gaub, *The Cult of ISIS*, p. 119.
[144] *Ibid.*, p. 120.
[145] Flannery, *Understanding Apocalyptic Terrorism: Countering the Radical Mindset*, p. 135.

> Thousands of women and girls have been abducted by IS in the last year, particularly Christians and Yazidis from the Mosul area. Captured women and girls have been forced into brothels and are sold on the street. The semi-public display of sexuality is more than about revenue. Passing abducted women from man to man demonstrates the abject humiliation of a conquered community. [146]

IS justified sexual violence toward non-believers through the re-interpretation of Islamic law, and subsequent fatwa published in Dabiq. Accordingly, these women and girl sexual slaves became the legal spoils of jihad.[147] To demonstrate how enshrined sexual violence and the slave trade is in IS, the Islamic State Research and Fatwa Department produced an lengthy official how to manual In July 2015.[148] Of interest, captured IS documents also indicate that concern exists within the leadership for the legalities of sexual relationships with slaves indicating at least some disagreement within IS leadership over the practice.[149]

The ethnicity of IS' hierarchy is also significant to the normative conception of IS. As discussed in section 1.1, high ranking Iraqi Ba'athists and former military officers fill the upper echelons of its military and Shura council. Though the group started as an AQ franchise who answered to Pakistani based leadership, during the transition of the MSC to ISI, the movement's leadership became increasingly Iraqi. Iraqis now make all the decisions and the perception exists that they are putting foreign fighters, rather than Iraqis, on the front lines. Anecdotal evidence also points to the disproportionate use of foreign fighters for suicide operations causing some dissention within the rank and file with "…small scale armed clashes between local fighters and foreign jihadists over such issues as pay disparities, living conditions, and perception that locals are disproportionately forced to serve in the bloodiest battles." [150] Thus, the short term benefits of

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[146] Ariel I. Ahram, "Sexual Violence and the Making of ISIS," *Survival* 57, no. 3 (2015), p. 68.
[147] CBC News, "ISIS Admits enslaving Yazidi Women", last accessed 5 May 2016, http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/isis-admits-enslaving-yazidi-women-kids-in-own-magazine-1.2796680.
[148] RUKMINI CALLIMACHI, *ISIS Enshrines a Theology of Rape* (New York: New York Times Company, 2015).
[149] Ahram, *Sexual Violence and the Making of ISI*, p. 567.
[150] Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, p. 19.

having assembled members with such ideological and political differences is beginning to create friction as larger sacrifices are demanded of less committed members in the name of the caliphate. There is there is evidence that some are fleeing the caliphate. However, in accordance with the logic of takfir, the penalty for desertion is beheading.

Through the illustration of IS methods, the preceding normative interpretation sets the conditions for the authoritative structures studied in the regulative pillar. The next chapter is dedicated to defining these as a function of the current state.

CHAPTER 5 – THE REGULATIVE PILLAR

The regulative pillar refers to an institution's formal and informal capacity to establish rules, monitor conformity, and provide rewards or punishments in order to influence behavior. In an effort to further interpret the institutional view of IS, this section considers the current state, and IS' ability to rule it, in two sections. First, IS rule is described as a function of the territory and population it currently controls as well as the organization's residual military capability. Second, IS rule is analysed as a function of its leadership structure and state like governance methods.

Due to the evolving nature of IS in terms of terrain, military capability, population, and internal conditions, the following section provides an up-to-date estimate of the current situation. The information presented is derived from credible news sources, government reports, and private sector intelligence products but it has not necessarily have received rigorous review or academic critique. Efforts have been made to provide a consensus view. In addition, since the half-life of the information is short, it is presented in order to provide current context rather than final conclusions.

5.1 Current State

As of March 2015, a report in the Economist stated that the size of the population under IS control was approximately eight million.[151] This number certainly offers a good start state, however in accordance with Figure 1, as of early 2016, IS had lost approximately 40% of the populated terrain it held in Iraq, and approximately 20% of the populated terrain it held in Syria. In addition, as will be discussed, IS' downward trajectory will continue to make a steady-state analysis unattainable in the short to medium term.

[151] "The Pushback; Islamic State." *The Economist* 414, no. 8930 (2015b), p. 17.

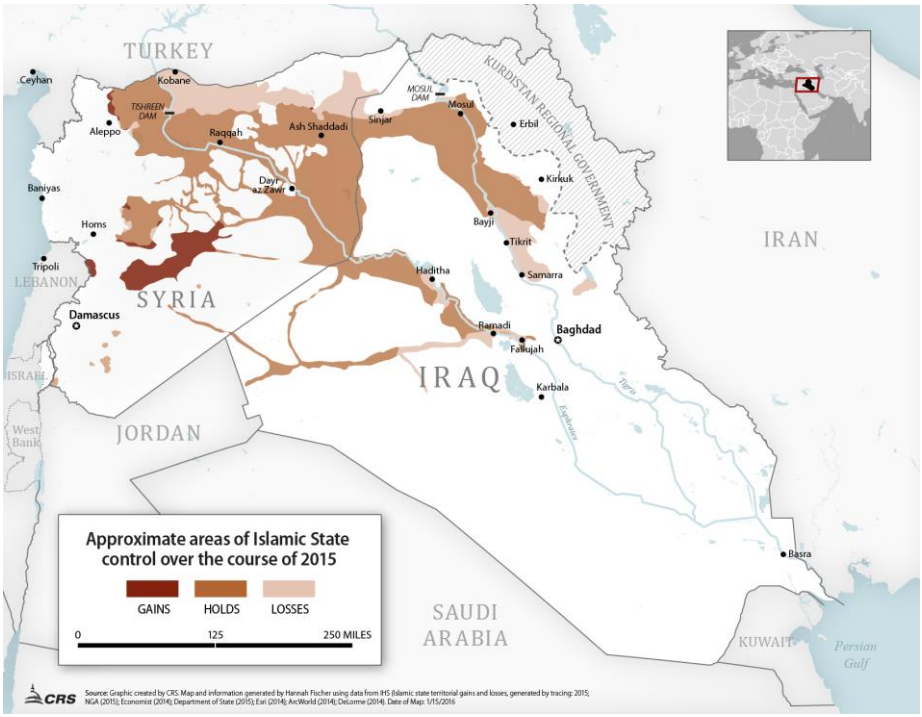

Figure 5.1: Status of Islamic State Held Territory to January, 2016[152]

In terms of military power, on 26 February 2015, General James Clapper, Director National Intelligence, claimed that IS had the ability to field between 20,000 and 31,500 fighters in his statement to the U.S. Armed Services Committee.[153] Other estimates range as high as the 200,000 deployable troops as asserted by a Kurdish official in 2014, however this higher number is suspect due to the Kurdish efforts to secure additional western financial and military support.[154] The actual number is likely to be closer to the lower end of the range, but the 2015 population estimate of approximately eight million established above suggests that the lower figure would be adequate to meet the manpower requirements of governance and control.

[152] Blanchard, Humud. "The Islamic State and U.S. Policy," *Congressional Research Service Report,* February 9, 2016, 3. Last accessed 8 May 2016, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R43612.pdf.
[153] Committee on Armed Services, "Hearing to Receive Testimony on Worldwide Threats, February 26, 2015," last accessed 8 May, 2016, http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/15-18%20-%202-26-15.pdf.
[154] Patrick Cockburn, "Kurds: Islamic State has Army of 200,000," *The Independent on Sunday,* 2014.

Ultimately, regardless of the number, it is clear that IS remains the largest of the Sunni militant groups operating in the region.

IS fighters are well led and highly motivated. Though Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is its caliph, IS military strategy is dictated by second and third tier leaders, many of whom were previously Ba'athists officers in the Iraqi military or intelligence services.[155] In addition, In October 2015, National Counterterrorism Center Director Nicholas Rasmussen stated that the group had attracted more than 28,000 foreign fighters since the group's re-emergence in 2014.[156] Many of these foreign fighters arrived with previous combat experience, providing IS with immediate tactical capability while others arrived with none, providing IS with a steady flow suicide bombers and other disposable troops.[157] In March 2015, the U.S. Military estimated it had killed approximately 8,500 IS fighters. In addition, Obama administration officials stated that IS continues to replace its foreign fighters at a rate of approximately 1,000 per month. [158] To update this figure, in February 2016 an unnamed US official estimated that between 26,000 as 27,000 IS fighters had been killed in Iraq and Syria by coalition airstrikes since 2014.[159] The larger figure appears credible considering rate and the time lapse between estimates. Considering the data, the strength of between 20,000 and 31,500 provided above appears to remain credible.

In terms of equipment, IS has amassed a large stockpile since 2014, when it scavenged several Iraqi divisions worth of weapons during its mostly unchecked advance. In addition, IS was able to claim the materiel housed at the al-Tabqa military base in Syria. This stockpile

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[155] Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, p. 10.
[156] "Threats to Homeland," Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson, last accessed 8 May 2016, https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/media/majority-media/opening-statement-of-chairman-ron-johnson-threats-to-the-homeland.
[157] Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, p. 10.
[158] Helene Cooper, Anne Barnard and Eric Schmitt, "Battered but Unbowed, ISIS is Still on Offensive: Foreign Desk," *New York Times*, 2015.
[159] CNN.com, "Estimate: More than 26,000 Fighters Killed," last accessed 8 May 2016, http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/17/politics/isis-fighters-killed-iraq-syria/.

includes Russian and American heavy weapons and armor: Russian made T-55s and T-72s, and a smaller number of American M1A1s, armored Humvees, artillery, guided anti-tank missiles, and man-portable anti-aircraft missiles.[160] Since the start of the coalition air campaign many pieces of equipment have been destroyed.[161] In addition, as IS does not have the means to replace existing equipment or procure spare parts, their ability to field many of these weapons is questionable.

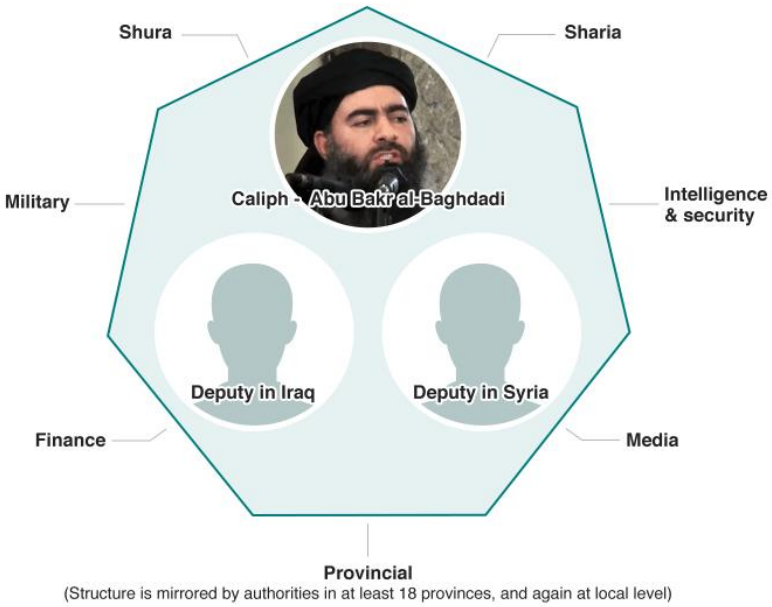
IS has demonstrated significant battlefield ability. According to James Fromson and Steven Simon, three factors explain the group's military success: "…its number and quality of troops, sophisticated materiel and sheer aggressiveness."[162] IS' manpower is established above, however its quality is explained by a military leadership class of former Ba'athist officers who reportedly established an effective reception and training system for new recruits. Next, though the group's equipment was scavenged from the battlefield, IS fighters have proven to be adept at integrating the equipment into their operations. The group's hybrid warfare style combines columns of fast, armed pick-up trucks with a few heavier vehicles, has allowed it to marshal forces quickly and achieve local superiority.[163] Finally, IS has certainly achieved relative superiority due to its aggressive combat style. Due to IS' uncompromising ideology visited in section 3.3, success on battle field has been a product of its fighters complete acceptance of the cause, even in death. This acceptance provides IS commanders with flexibility to shape the environment and commit to winning at all costs including the widespread use of suicide attacks. In addition, IS' battlefield notoriety and sophisticated propaganda, in concert with its refusal to

[160] Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, p. 10.
[161] US Department of Defense, "Operation Inherent Resolve," last accessed 8 May 2016, http://www.defense.gov/News/Special-Reports/0814_Inherent-Resolve.
[162] Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, p. 9.
[163] Countering Terrorism Centre, "ISIL's Political Military Power in Iraq," last accessed 8 May, 2016, https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/isils-political-military-power-in-iraq.

compromise with any of its competitors, has produced a significant bandwagon effect, giving it a consistent ability to replenish its spent forces with fresh recruits both foreign and local.

5.2 Leadership structure and governance

According to the Suffan Group, IS leadership consists of a series of councils: Provincial, Military, Security/Intelligence, Sharia, Financial, and Media. From the Caliph's executive level, power is distributed to the provinces claimed by IS (regardless of recent losses): Anbar; Baghdad; Diyala; Fallujah; al Janub (the South); Kirkuk; Nineveh, and Salahuddin in Iraq; and Aleppo; al Badiah (Homs); al Baraka (Hasaka); Damascus; Hama; Idlib; al Khair (Dir az Zur); al Raqqa, and al Sahal (Latakia) in Syria, with an additional province, al Furat (the Euphrates), spanning the border. Provincial governors have their own representatives for sharia, military, and security. This structure is replicated at sector and town levels.[164] A graphic representation of this structure is offered as Figure 2.



[164] The Soufan Group. "Ordered Chaos: The Structure of the Islamic State," last accessed 8 May 2016, http://soufangroup.com/tsg-intelbrief-ordered-chaos-the-structure-of-the-islamic-state/

Figure 5.2: Islamic State Leadership and Ruling Council[165]

IS' establishment of agreements to govern Iraqi territory with Sunni Arab tribes as well as former Ba'ath Party members and Sunni military officers is commonly understood to be due to the rapid and professional nature of the establishment of governance in 2014.[166] What is unknown however, are the specific details of these agreements or their longevity. Upon gaining control of towns and villages, IS quickly and competently implemented state-like governance structures for basic services such as security, sanitation, water, and conflict resolution.[167] Populations were coerced into a public pledge of allegiance (baya) to the caliph in exchange for protection and services. The following report excerpt is offered as an illustration of the implementation of IS governance on a newly acquired city:

> …after driving out Iraq Security Forces and capturing Ramadi, a predominantly Sunni city, in May 2015, ISIS consolidated its power and proceeded to govern and administer it's would be state, as it had for Raqqa and Deir al-Zour in Syria to Mosul, imposing its brutal version of law and order. Those who resisted were killed, often beheaded, mosques were seized and regulated; male residents were required to attend and pray. However at the same time, ISIS operated an efficient government providing jobs, goods and services, rebuilding the city's infrastructure, public works projects, repairing roads, restoring medical services, and providing food, fuel, and electricity.[168]

Having submitted to the IS rules, many Sunni Arabs have been able to exist in a stable and secure environment in areas that were insecure over the last few years. This new order has appeal to some Sunni Arabs while others are simply too scared to express dissent.[169] Social media and news feeds are flush with video evidence of methods used by IS to counter any form of deviation, knowing that open dissent would weaken its hegemonic rule.

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[165] BBC News, "Islamic State Leadership and Ruling Council," Last accessed 8 May 2016, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35695648.
[166] Hashim, *The Islamic State: From Al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate*, p. 78.
[167] Weiss and Hassan, *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror*, p. 215-216.
[168] John L Esposito, *Islam and Political Violence*, p. 1076.
[169] Till F Paasche and Michael M Gunter, *Revisiting Western Strategies Against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria*, p. 21.

The group's interpretation of Sharia law is rapidly implemented upon gaining control of a populated area. This includes the use of the harsh fixed punishments specified by Islamic scripture: the hudud.[170] IS hudud penalties are: death for blasphemy, homosexual acts, treason, and murder; death by stoning for adultery; one hundred lashes for sex out of wedlock; amputation of a hand for theft; amputation of a hand and foot for bandits who steel; and death to bandits who steel and murder.[171] These penalties on the surface appear to match those used in the ultraconservative Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), however their use differs in important ways: IS carries out its penalties in public, and applies a much heavier hand in its application and sentencing. For example, the penalty for drinking alcohol is reportedly eighty lashes, whereas in the KSA it is left to the Islamic judge's discretion. In addition, though the KSA does execute people by beheading, IS does this, and more to include the throwing of people of buildings, crucifixions, point blank use of firearms, stoning and the burning people alive. IS also regulates many other aspects of life including a requirement to grow a beard, and a ban on smoking [172]

The strict controls and public spectacles of extreme violence bolster the organizations ultraconservative Islamic credentials, and dissuade internal opposition. More importantly, however, in accordance with the discussion in section 4.2, they promote the creation of the hegemonic society through the process of indoctrination.

Having completed the analysis of the last pillar, the next and last chapter turns to the evaluation of their combined effects.

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[170] McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, p. 164-165.
[171] *Ibid*., p. 165.
[172] PATRICK COCKBURN, "Under Isis, Haircuts are a Matter of Life and Death," *The Independent,* 2015.

CHAPTER 6 – INTEGRATED ANALYSIS

In the institutional analysis conducted in the preceding chapters, aspects of the cultural-cognitive, normative, and regulative pillars of the IS movement were interpreted. Though some overlap between pillars occurred for the purpose of depth, the preceding chapters were constructed to stand on their own. Scott claims that the stability of social systems is a product of the relative alignment of the pillars that enables the combination of their individual forces.[173] Thus, the analysis of the pillars is enhanced through the study of the interactions of their mutually supporting internal forces, and their impact on the institution. As a final segment, this chapter will evaluate the combined effects of these institutional forces, on the viability and long term survivability of IS as a product of its organizational legitimacy as defined in chapter 2: "…the shared belief, amongst its concerned audience, that its rule is the best option available, that its authority should be respected, that its behavior is justifiable, that it is morally right, and that it deserves voluntary allegiance."

The IS movement is an institution in accordance with Scott's model. The evolution of the organization, from its roots as a little knows Iraqi Salafi-jihadist group in 2004, to its present form as a dominating regional Sunni military and political force, demonstrates its institutionalization along regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive lines. In addition, alignment of IS' institutional pillars explains the dramatic success the organization had in June 2014 as its fighters advanced across Iraq and took control of large amounts of Iraqi territory. The ideologically fuelled aggression of its fighters, aptly led by a cadre of competent military commanders, combined with an effective strategy including the sophisticated use of propaganda, to rapidly dominate Iraq's northwestern populated areas and establish the state-like governance that currently defines the caliphate. This success however, may be short lived as IS currently

[173] Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities*, p. 71.

spends the majority of its efforts and resources fighting its enemies and exerting coercive control within its domain rather than consolidating power and constructing the required institutions of a state. Thus, the organization has not been able to move from the domination phase of its emergence, to the establishment of legitimate rule.

In general, al-Baghdadi's declaration of the universal caliphate, in accordance with IS' ideological yearnings and eschatological narrative, has linked his movement with what Esposito terms as "…an idealized period of history that many Muslims see as the golden age of Islam religiously, politically, and culturally."[174] Thus, in the cultural-cognitive interpretation of the institution, IS leadership has managed to legitimize the movement in the eyes of its concerned community. Moral legitimacy is achieved is several interrelated ways: Through replacement of national identity with the new collectivity based on the Islamist interpretation of divine sovereignty, through its challenge to the imposed regional and international systems, through sectarian rejection of the current Sunni political predicaments in Iraq and Syria, through its strict adherence to ideological principles, and through the prophetic end-times narrative that depicts IS as under siege from an evil global community of non-believers. All of these resonate with the members of its concerned community.

Normatively, IS' grand strategy, a product of its ideological base and the pragmatic agreements it made with the former Ba'athists and Sunni tribes, explains the dramatic victories of June 2014, and the role of extreme violence in creating its hegemonic rule. Specifically the distribution of the strategy documents in 2009-10, increased moral legitimacy within its jihadist community because it offered an explanation for IS' mission and methods and a way to its valued end: the universal caliphate. In addition, the execution of the communications strategy has provided IS with a multifaceted and sophisticated platform from which the organization is

[174] John L Esposito, *Islam and Political Violence*, p. 1075.

able to influence a much wider base of support and the international community. Through it, the organization has been able to mobilize moral legitimacy for its actions, entice western intervention as the fulfilment of its end-times narrative, and transmit the related pragmatic value proposition to its fighters and prospective recruits. Information domination, however, has become problematic, as uncontrolled information is beginning to provide opportunities for counter narrative and thus a process for degradation of moral legitimacy within this concerned community is possible.

Although *Strategic Plan*, and *the Management of Savagery*, served as an early unifying force for Iraq's disparate community of Sunni insurgents, the short term gains it has made may not survive the test of time as the regulative realities of life under IS' harsh rule push the less radical portion of the captive population, tribes, and nationalists toward decent and internal rebellion. Thus, another de-legitimizing process along both the pragmatic and moral planes is defined.

For IS' greater community of supporters and foreign fighters, both prospective and current, the organization's main source of pragmatic legitimacy is the physical manifestation of the "lived prophecy" that the universal caliphate has become as a destination for adventure, justice, meaning, and belonging. The role of foreign fighters within the institution, however, could erode the organization's legitimacy on both pragmatic and moral planes as information is leaked and spread about the perceived favor shown toward Iraqi fighters.

IS' ability to rule is a regulative function of the territory it dominates, the population it controls, its military capability, leadership structure, and its governance methods. Though recent territorial losses have occurred due to attacks on many fronts, IS maintains significant population and terrain. With the ability to field a force of between 20,000 and 31,500 soldiers, in concert

with significant holdings in equipment, sophisticated leadership, and ideologically fuelled aggression, IS remains the most credible Sunni militant organization in the region; a source of moral legitimacy. IS' main sources of pragmatic legitimacy, within its controlled territory, continue to be protection, security, and the state-like government services it manages within its domain, offering a measure of normalcy absent since 2004. In addition, the rapid and harsh application of sharia, to include the banning of smoking, and other aspects of life, bolster its Islamic credentials and increase its moral legitimacy within the ultra-conservative community, however this also represents a source of friction for many and a lowering of the institutions legitimacy along both pragmatic and moral planes is also possible in this interpretation of the institution.

Compliance in democratic society is generally based on a mix of voluntary and coerced compliance as people will generally follow rules they see as legitimate (acceptable and necessary), and will comply with others based on the threat of sanction. In IS' hegemonic structure however, the balance shifts over to coerced compliance. Though some certainly see IS as legitimate, others likely remain compliant based solely on the threat of violence. Over time, the question is whether the coerced compliance becomes voluntary based on the perception of organizational legitimacy and if IS can then extract resources to enable its long term survival as a governing power. It remains to be seen how pragmatic and moral factors transform into cognitive factors over time should IS manage to continue to resist the international efforts to degrade its control over the remaining territory of its domain.

CONCLUSION

Using Richard Scott's conceptual framework for institutional analysis, this paper demonstrated that the emergence, viability, and long term survivability of the IS movement is the product of regulative, normative, and cognitive factors. First, the re-emergence of IS as a governing power was documented within the regional context, in order to provide a situational baseline. Second, Scott's institutional analysis framework was introduced in order to establish its relevance and application to the topic. Third, an institutional analysis was conducted based on the three pillars of Scott's framework. Finally an integrated analysis was conducted to examine the interactions of the pillars and their impact on the institution.

The cultural-cognitive interpretation illustrated IS' organizational worldview by examining the challenges it poses to international order and to the concept of national identity, demonstrated the compounding effects of political disaffection and sectarianism in Iraq and Syria, and described IS ideology and the role of its underlying apocalyptic narrative. The normative interpretation of IS placed emphasis on the analysis of methods, employed by the movement, in achieving the universal caliphate in accordance with its ideology. This was accomplished through describing IS grand strategy as the outcome of two formative documents, by defining the communication strategy that enabled IS to recruit, legitimize its activity, subjugate its population, subdue its enemies, and entice western intervention, and by observing the assimilation and role of foreign fighters within the organization. The regulative interpretation of the IS movement considered the current state, and IS' ability to rule it, in two sections. First, IS rule was described as a function of the territory and population as well as the organization's residual military capability. Second, IS rule was analysed as a function of its leadership structure and state like governance methods. Finally, an integrated analysis was conducted to synthesize

the combined effects and interactions of the pillars on the IS institutions viability and long term survivability.

As argued, IS' viability and survivability are a product of its organizational legitimacy. Recalling the definition provide in Chapter 2, IS' rule remains the best option available for the Sunni population it currently controls due to the lack of options and deep held concern for the reprisals of the Shi'a dominated government in Baghdad and it's sponsored militias. Next, the respect for its authority remains generally coercive rather than legitimate. Further, much of IS' behavior is justifiable to its concerned community, however the use of extreme violence has reportedly begun to erode its legitimacy. Finally, though the radicalized core of IS certainly believes that the organization deserves voluntary allegiance, it is unlikely that this has translated to the less radical nationalists, Ba'athists, and tribesmen that fill its ranks, or the majority of its captive population who are coerced into compliance.

Ultimately, the largest obstacle to IS' establishment of organizational legitimacy is impossible for it to resolve due its ideology and related expansionism: IS expends all of its resources and time fighting enemies and exerting coercive control within its territory rather than consolidating power and constructing the required institutions of a state. Thus, the organization has not been able to move from the domination phase of its emergence, to the establishment of legitimate rule. In addition, its current downward trajectory robs it of resources and fighters making this proposition all the more remote over time. It does, however, have a distinct advantage in the absence of internal resistance as there remains little hope of outside help for its captive population.

Defeating IS will require a comprehensive campaign aimed at delegitimizing the group among its wider community of supporters, members, and its captive population. In addition, the

military intervention must be comprehensive in its approach. Unlike the first defeat of the organization in the aftermath of the Sunni “Awakening” movement of 2007-08, eradication must be achieved as this is the only long-term solution for the violent ideology and challenge to world order that the organization represents.

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