



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Armed non-state actors in conflict: strategic decision-making in the 2014 IS-KRI conflict

Berge, W. van den

Citation

Berge, W. van den. (2024, November 22). *Armed non-state actors in conflict: strategic decision-making in the 2014 IS-KRI conflict*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4150279>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4150279>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Chapter 4

Context and actors

The previous chapter sketched different IR paradigms for analyzing ANSAs' strategic decision-making, each focusing on specific factors of the actors studied. This chapter introduces the ANSAs IS and the KRI according to the factors relevant for the different paradigms to provide the necessary background before applying the paradigms to specific cases. Chapter 4 answers to what extent particular factors – belonging to the different IR paradigms – influence the strategic decision-making of IS and the KRI. These factors provide the background for the case studies in the following three chapters. For the rational actor paradigm, these factors concern the actor's grand strategy; for the organizational behavior paradigm, the actor's organizational structure, as well as the actor's ideological framework that shapes decision-making and acts as alternative SOPs; for the governmental politics paradigm the actor's leadership; and for complexity theory the time and space specific context. The following paragraph describes the context that shaped the emergence of IS and the KRI.

This chapter observes Iraq as a historically internally fragmented state. When the Iraqi state appeared weakest in 2014, IS and the KRI aimed for territory and autonomy. Yet, IS and the KRI suffered from internal ideological and organizational fragmentation. IS' religious ideology was disputed among other jihadi-salafist organizations – notably *al-Qaeda* and its affiliates – and jihadi-salafist groups occasionally joined or left IS, despite IS' strict hierarchical internal organization with undisputed leaders. Within the KRI, fragmentation had led to different interpretations of Kurdish nationalism within the Barzani- and Talabani-dominated areas. Within international relations, the KRI maintained good relations with its Western allies, whereas IS was a pariah. Nevertheless, that pariah was able to push back ISF from northern Iraq in 2013-2014.

4.1 Iraq

Iraq's history is relevant for understanding the emergence of both IS and the KRI. Iraq provided the circumstances and, thus, the context in which IS and the KRI emerged and

evolved.⁶⁹⁴ The area is among history's most fought-over grounds. Actors from either the Syrian deserts in the west or the Persian plains in the east historically have invaded the lands, often benefitting from disagreement among the peoples there.⁶⁹⁵ Modern Iraq emerged after the First World War⁶⁹⁶, when the Ottoman Empire collapsed, and its former territory was mainly under the control of France and Great Britain, which divided the area into spheres of influence in the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916).

The Sykes-Picot Agreement sketched – literally – the British and French mandate territories, which would eventually evolve into independent states themselves after the Second World War.⁶⁹⁷ Although the Sykes-Picot treaty never came into fruition⁶⁹⁸, it was regarded illustrative of the destructive effect of Western neo-colonialism on the Middle East⁶⁹⁹: '[i]t is often erroneously assumed that the causes of all modern Middle Eastern conflict lie in the First World War, which is perhaps understandable given the significant political, social, economic, and cultural changes it provoked,' but not sustainable given 'the longevity of numerous causal factors, the proximity of religious claims, and population distribution.'⁷⁰⁰

Since the 1920s, a Sunni minority governed Shia-dominated Iraq. Sunni control continued when a coup in 1963 brought the *Ba'ath* (rebirth) party to power, which, despite its pan-Arab nationalist ideology, was dominated by Sunnis. Through internal powerplay, in 1968, Saddam Hussein became vice-chairman of *Ba'ath*'s regional command council, finally seizing total control over Iraq in 1979.⁷⁰¹ *Ba'ath* longed for a robust Arab nation-state and regarded Kurdish nationalism as a threat to this ideal. Iranian support for rebellious Iraqi Kurds during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) seemed to confirm this perceived threat of Kurdish nationalism. Since the 1991 Gulf War – operation "Desert Storm" – Iraq started disintegrating with American-monitored no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq, aimed at protecting the Kurdish and Shia populations, respectively, with the intention of provoking uprisings that would topple Hussein's regime. United Nations Security Council Resolution 688 led to the establishment of the de facto independent KRI.⁷⁰²

694 Eyal, "Introduction," 1; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 17; Mabon & Royle, *The origins of ISIS*, 13.

695 Kaplan, *De wraak van de geografie*, 309-10. Also see: Fukuyama, *Identity*, 125; Lawrence, *Zeven zuilen van wijsheid*, 72-3; Watson, "The conflict with ISIS," 9.

696 Robert Fisk, *The great war for civilisation. The conquest of the Middle East* (London: Harper Collins, 2005), 180-2.

697 James Barr, *A line in the sand. The Anglo-French struggle for the Middle-East, 1914-1948* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 283-97. Also see: Marshall, *Prisoners of geography*, 150.

698 Robert Johnson & James Kitchen, "Introduction. The Great War in the Middle East. The clash of empires and global war," in *The Great War in the Middle East. A clash of empires*, Robert Johnson & James Kitchen (eds.) (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 4, 8.

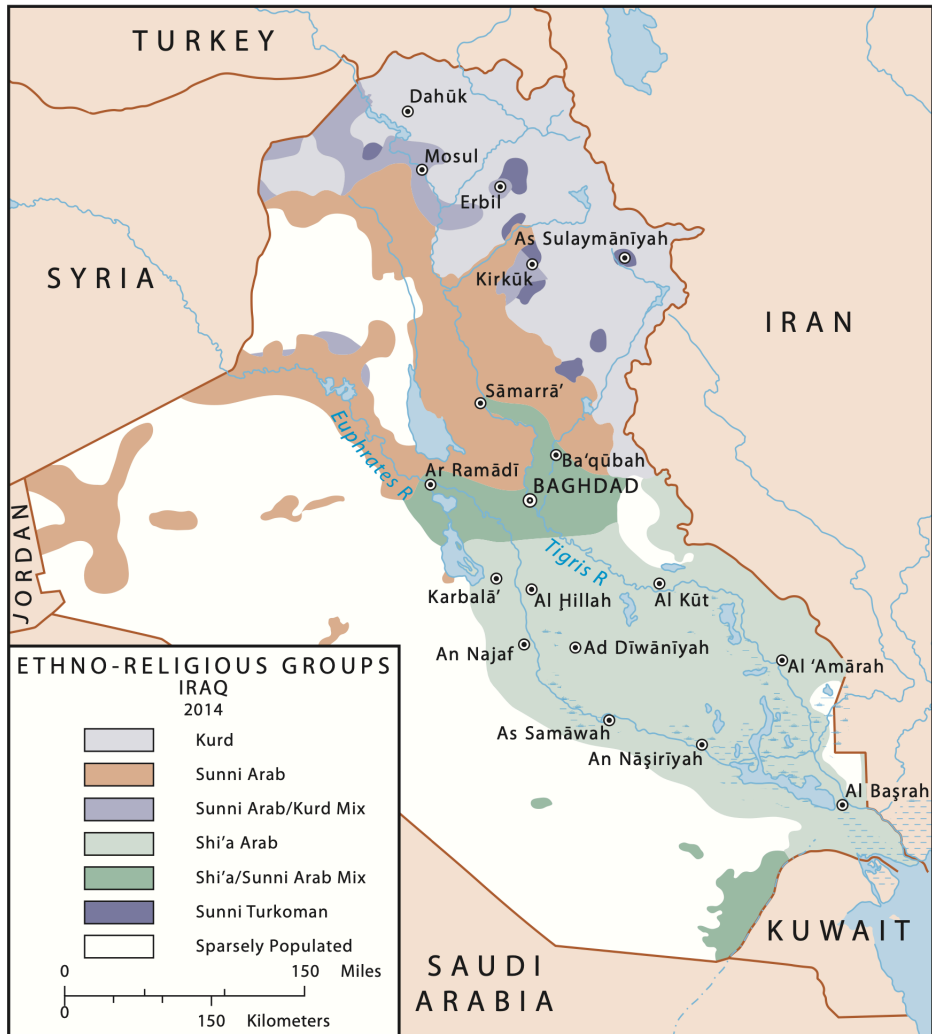
699 "Foreword," *Dabiq* 8 (1436H|2015), 4. Also see: Barr, *A line in the sand*, 3-83; Fishman, *The master plan*, 10-1; Fisk, *The great war*, 176; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 128; Kaplan, *De wraak van de geografie*, 310; Marshall, *Prisoners of geography*, xii-xiv; Umunç, "A hope so transcendent," 189.

700 Johnson & Kitchen, "Introduction," 4.

701 Fisk, *The great war*, 180-2; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 32-5.

702 Aziz, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 5-6, 130; Gunter, "The foreign policy of the Iraqi Kurds," 9; Kepel, *Fitna*, 279; Peter

Figure 4.1: ethno-religious map of Iraq in 2014.⁷⁰³



Some analysts saw the next invasion of Iraq in 2003 as proof that the Middle East does not exist in isolation but interacts with other areas.⁷⁰⁴ The invasion is often mentioned with the Arab Uprisings, as the consecutive Syrian civil war (2011-present) merged with Iraq's insurgency

Mansfield, *A history of the Middle East*, 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 343; Aylin Noi, "The Arab Spring, its effects on the Kurds, and the approaches of Turkey, Iran Syria and Iraq on the Kurdish issue." *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 16:2 (2012), 21. Also see: Larry Addington, *The patterns of war since the eighteenth century*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 317-23; Venable, "The result is never final," 121-47.

⁷⁰³ Watson, "The conflict with ISIS," 10.

⁷⁰⁴ Rabi', *Contemporary Arab thought*, 3. Also see: Kaplan, *De wraak van de geografie*, 79, 87-91.

from which IS' predecessors benefitted.⁷⁰⁵ While analysts considered Iraq's fragmentation as a country both the cause⁷⁰⁶ and the effect⁷⁰⁷ of the conflict, it did create opportunities for the KRI as one of the allies that defeated Iraq⁷⁰⁸, as well as 'opportunities of rapprochement between Arab nationalism and Islamism'⁷⁰⁹ that contributed to the rise of IS.

4.2 IS

IS was next in a sequential series of jihadi-salafist organizations that followed a pattern of rising, expanding, being forced back, and changing strategy and tactics to start rising again⁷¹⁰, thus using defeat to guide improvement.⁷¹¹ The historical background of IS and its predecessors is relevant as 'even a cursory glance through [IS'] early history reveals operational and strategic patterns that emerge time and again even to this day.'⁷¹² IS has had a dynamic history through which the organization had different outlooks and names, sometimes used interchangeably and inconsistently by analysts and authorities.⁷¹³ Some researchers have labeled IS' history non-linear, as 'IS is a clear-cut product of its own time, circumstances, and geography.'⁷¹⁴ Next to IS' history, the sections below focus on IS' strategy, ideology, and leadership, which are essential in the rational actor paradigm, the organizational behavior paradigm, and the governmental politics paradigm, respectively, and, thus, when using the paradigms as input, for complexity theory.

4.2.1 History (1999-2014): mergers and splits

Although its ideological roots are older⁷¹⁵, IS began its history around 1999⁷¹⁶ in Jordan as the jihadi-salafist group *Jama'at al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad* (Group of monotheism and *jihad*; JTJ).⁷¹⁷

705 Fukuyama, *Identity*, 5, 124-5.

706 Freedman, *Command*, 430, 435.

707 Mabon & Royle, *The origins of ISIS*, 14. Also see: Kepel, *Fitna*, 269-76.

708 Noi, "The Arab spring," 22.

709 Rabi', *Contemporary Arab thought*, 135.

710 Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 209.

711 Cf. Luttwak, *Strategy*, 19-20.

712 Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 3.

713 For example: Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 224; Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 98.

714 Chigudu, "Sectarianism and the ideology of the Islamic State," 5, 147.

715 Fishman, *The master plan*, 7-8. For example: "The call for a global Islamic resistance," *Counterterrorism blog*, November 12, 2008. Also see: Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 9; Stern & Berger, *ISIS*, 233. The future founders of JTJ had established *Bayt al-Imam* (Allegiance to the Imam) in Jordan in 1993. *Bayt al-Imam's* leaders were quickly imprisoned but released in 1999.

716 Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, "Remaining in Iraq and Syria," in Kyle Orton, "ISIS rejects al-Qaeda's command to return to Iraq," June 14, 2013, transl. unknown, *Kyle Orton's Blog*, April 3, 2014. Also see: "From hijrah to khilafa," *Dabiq* 1 (1435H|2014), 34-5; "Reflections on the final crusade," 35.

717 Lister, "Profiling the Islamic State," 6; Stern & Berger, *ISIS*, 13-5; Truls Tonnessen, "Heirs of Zaraqawi or Saddam? The relationship between Al-Qaida in Iraq and the Islamic State," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9:4 (2015), 48; Weiss & Hassan, *ISIS*, 1-10, 26.

Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi proved JTJ's capable founder and leader.⁷¹⁸ Forced out of Jordan, joining *al-Qaeda* in Afghanistan around 2000⁷¹⁹ and via Iran, ending up in Iraq⁷²⁰ – in the vicinity of Halabja, in the KRI – in 2002⁷²¹, JTJ became closely linked to Kurdish Islamist group *Ansar al-Islam* (Partisans of Islam, AaI) and joined the Iraqi insurgency against the United States in the 2003 Gulf War.⁷²² Benefiting from the perceived marginalization of Iraq's Sunni community⁷²³, JTJ eventually became the vanguard of the insurgency.⁷²⁴ In 2003, JTJ formally joined the *al-Qaeda* network under the name *Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn* (The organizational base for *jihad* in Iraq) but became better known as *al-Qaeda* in Iraq (AQI).⁷²⁵ AQI's goal was re-establishing a caliphate.⁷²⁶ How to achieve that was the subject of intense debate among jihadi-salafists.⁷²⁷ Zarqawi believed establishing a caliphate could be achieved by radicalizing Iraqi Sunnis through provoking Shia repression: '[i]f we [AQI] succeed in dragging them [the Shia] into the arena of sectarian war, it will become possible to awaken the inattentive Sunnis as they feel imminent danger and annihilating death.'⁷²⁸ How this

- 718 Edwin Bakker & Leen Boer, "The evolution of al-Qaedaism. Ideology, terrorists, and appeal" (The Hague: *Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael*, 2007), 17-8; Ezrow, *Global politics*, 114; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 74-9; Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 87, 103, 207.
- 719 Abū Jarir ash-Shamālī, "Al-Qa'idah of Waziristan. A testimony from within," *Dabiq* 6 (1436H|2014), 41; Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 223. Also see: Renner, "Air power in the Battle of Mosul," 257-8.
- 720 "From hijrah to khilafa," 35; Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 3; Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 85.
- 721 Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 224. Also see: Fishman, *The master plan*, 23-5, 99; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 148; Kyle Orton, "The Islamic State's official biography of the caliph's deputy," *Kyle Orton's Blog*, December 18, 2016.
- 722 Stern & Berger, *ISIS*, 187-91. Also see: Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 16-7; Bakker, *Terrorism and counterterrorism studies*, 19; Ian Beckett, *Modern insurgencies and counter-insurgencies. Guerillas and their opponents since 1750* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), vii-viii; Boeke, "Understanding al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb," 22-8; Chuang *et al.* "Local alliances and rivalries," 20,898; Ezrow, *Global politics*, 87-117; Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 224; Mark Grdovic, "Untangling the Gordian knot that is irregular warfare," *Small Wars Journal*, February 9, 2023; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 15; Jenkins, "International terrorism," 70-1; Kiras, "Current irregular warfare," 360-2; Kiras, "Key concepts," 301-15; Lynn, *Battle*, 323-8; Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 64n1; Venable, "The result is never final," 141.
- 723 Fishman, *The master plan*, 39-40; Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 22; Mabon & Royle, *The origins of ISIS*, 21, 45. Also see: Venable, "The result is never final," 140.
- 724 Stern & Berger, *ISIS*, 187-91. Also see: Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 37-54; Lister, "Profiling the Islamic State," 6-15; Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 87-103; "The worshipping scholar and the mujahid preacher. Shaykh Abu Ali al-Anbari," cited in Orton, "The Islamic State's official biography of the caliph's deputy"; Zarqawi, untitled letter to *al-Qaeda* leadership.
- 725 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 154-5; Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 87, 103, 207.
- 726 Bahney & Johnston, "Who runs the Islamic State group?"; Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 28, 233; Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 4. Also see: McChrystal *et al.*, *Team of teams*, 23; Morell & Harlow, *The great war of our time*, 305. For the Sunni-Shia schism in Islam see: Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 18-27. McChrystal *et al.* and Morell & Harlow confused Zarqawi's means of creating sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shia populations with his actual goal or re-establishing a caliphate.
- 727 Bernard Lewis, *The crisis of Islam. Holy war and unholy terror* (New York: Random House, 2003), 40-1; Abū Maysarah ash-Shāmī, "The Qa'idah of adh-Dhawāhirī, al-Harārī, and an-Nadhārī, and the absent Yemenī wisdom," *Dabiq* 6 (1436H|2014), 20n4; Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29:3 (2006), 228.
- 728 Zarqawi, untitled letter to *al-Qaeda* leadership. Also see: Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 86n16.

translated into the group attacking a political rally of the KDP and PUK in 2004⁷²⁹ remains unknown. Attacks like these and Zarqawi's narrative concerned many Iraqi Sunnis⁷³⁰, even leading to Sunni tribes – later supported by the United States and the Iraqi government – taking up arms against AQI in 2005-2008, known as the *sabwa* (awakening).⁷³¹ Nevertheless, AQI merged with jihadi-salafist groups with whom AQI shared *manhaj* (methodology), forming *al-Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen* (*Mujahideen Shura Council*, MSC) in January 2006.⁷³²

MSC eventually evolved into an actual Islamic state within the Iraqi state.⁷³³ After Zarqawi died in 2006⁷³⁴, *al-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi al-Iraq* (Islamic State in Iraq; ISI) succeeded MSC on October 15, 2006.⁷³⁵ Although *al-Qaeda* disagreed⁷³⁶, ISI claimed to have left *al-Qaeda*⁷³⁷ and increasingly acted independently, even creating a bureaucratic structure to govern territory and people.⁷³⁸

ISI's governance was frustrated when Zarqawi's immediate successor died together with his replacement on April 18, 2010, during an American raid in Tikrit. The death of Zarqawi's successors illustrated the increased pressure ISI found combatting, next to the American counterinsurgency also rival jihadists and Sunni tribal groups.⁷³⁹ Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was announced the new leader of ISI on May 16, 2010. Under Baghdadi's leadership, the organization seized opportunities and strategic depth – fallback in case of breached defense⁷⁴⁰

729 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 148-9. AaI might have played a role in the decision to conduct the attack. Some discrepancy here exists, as Hashim claimed JTI conducted the attack, while the group had already joined *al-Qaeda* by 2004.

730 Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 86-90, 265-6; Ayman al-Zawahiri, untitled letter to Zarqawi, July 9, 2005, transl. unknown. Also see: Kiras, "Current irregular warfare," 363-4.

731 Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 86-7. Also see: Stephen Biddle *et al.*, "Testing the surge. Why did violence decline in Iraq in 2007?" *International Security* 37:1 (2012), 36-40; Freedman, *Command*, 437; Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 140-1; 'Abd al-Rahman Atiyah, untitled letter to Zarqawi, transl. unknown, 2005; "The Fallujah memorandum, December 2009/January 2010," author(s) unknown, 2009-10, transl. Anas Elallame, cited in Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 134-7.

732 "The worshipping scholar," cited in Orton, "The Islamic State's official biography of the caliph's deputy." Also see: Fishman, *The master plan*, 53; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 91; Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 87, 103, 207.

733 Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 61; Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 87; Zawahiri, untitled letter to Zarqawi. Also see: Ayman al-Zawahiri, transcript of interview by *al-Sahab Media Productions*, September 11, 2006, transl. unknown; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 16.

734 James Corum, "Air power in interagency operations," in *Routledge handbook of air power. Royal Netherlands Air Force special edition*, John Olsen (ed.) (London: Routledge, 2018), 215.

735 Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 60. Also see: Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, "Allah will not allow except that his light should be perfected," Kyle Orton, *Kyle Orton's Blog*, December 29, 2014; Ezrow, *Global politics*, 115; "The alliance of al-Mutayyabin," transl. Anas Elallame, October 12, 2006, cited in Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 53-60.

736 Fishman, *The master plan*, 110-1; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 94; Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 70-6.

737 "The Fallujah memorandum," cited in Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 120. Also see: Fishman, *The master plan*, 87-93; Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 7.

738 Fishman, *The master plan*, 89, 110-1, 155. Also see: Atiyah, untitled letter to Zarqawi; Abu Umar al-Baghdadi, "Truth had arrived, and falsehood perished," transl. unknown, December 22, 2006, cited in Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 64-7; Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 68; Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 89-97, 97n58, 113.

739 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 95-121.

740 Marshall, *Prisoners of geography*, 173.

– in the then-emerging Syrian civil war.⁷⁴¹ ISI benefited from the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq in 2010-2011⁷⁴², which left Iraq's Nineveh governorate under ISI control⁷⁴³, and other warring parties that left Syria's eastern governorates alone during the first years of the civil war.⁷⁴⁴ Overall, ISI increased its activities to allegedly 7,681 military operations in 2012-2013, from 4,500 in 2011-2012⁷⁴⁵, a trend confirmed by the Global Terrorism Database.⁷⁴⁶ ISI's distinctive use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) – in particular suicide vest improvised explosive devices (SV-IEDs), remote bombs, and sniper attacks 'reflects strategic calculations by the insurgents to enable them to fight and, sometimes, defeat much stronger foes.'⁷⁴⁷ Figure 4.2 shows ISI's 2012-2013 infographic. ISI also benefitted from Syrian insurgent groups, supported with weapons and finance by state actors, which joined ISI, including their resources.⁷⁴⁸

Depending on interpretation, the infographic can indicate efficiency, as well as an internal loss of control.⁷⁴⁹ The infographic's numbers might also attract supporters or deter potential adversaries by showing that ISI could control its fighting capacity. As such, ISI suggested it was ready for governing, which was its overall goal, elaborated on in the next section.

741 Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 13. Also see: Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 39-40; Wietse van den Berge, "The instrumental use of terrorism. The case of the Syrian regime," *Leiden Security and Global Affairs Blog*, March 31, 2014; Kyle Orton, "Provocation and the Islamic State. Why Assad strengthened the jihadists," *Kyle Orton's Blog*, September 3, 2014.

742 Fishman, *The master plan*, 143-4; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 185; "Islamic State ascendant. Iraq struggles to tackle the proto-state," *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, August 12, 2014; Kiras, "Key concepts," 302; Renner, "Air power in the Battle of Mosul," 259; Watson, "The conflict with ISIS," 11.

743 Priyanka Boghani, "David Petraeus: ISIS's rise in Iraq isn't a surprise." *PBS*, July 29, 2014; Noyes, "Pragmatic takfiris."

744 Derek Flood, "Breaking down borders. The Islamic State's campaign to redraw the boundaries of the Levant," *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, August 28, 2014; Watson, "The conflict with ISIS," 15-6.

745 Dylan Matthews, "The surreal infographics ISIS is producing, translated," *Vox*, June 24, 2014, transl. Katie Paul *et al.* Cf. Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 69n26. The large fluctuation between 2011-2 and 2012-3 cast doubts on the reliability of the figures.

746 Charles Blair, "ISIS. The unsurprising surprise that is sweeping Iraq," *The bulletin*, June 18, 2014. Also see: Chuang *et al.*, "Local alliances and rivalries," 20,900.

747 Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 12.

748 Michael Stephens, "The emergence of ISIS," in *Inherently unresolved. Regional politics and the counter-ISIS campaign*, Jonathan Eyal & Elizabeth Quintana (eds.) (London: RUSI, 2015), 12-3.

749 Cf. Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 11.

Figure 4.2: alleged results of ISI operations during 1434H in Iraq.⁷⁵⁰



750 "Results of operations of the Islamic State during AH 1434 in Iraq," showed in Matthews, "The surreal infographics." Also see: Alex Bilger, "ISIS annual reports reveal a metrics-driven military command" (Washington D.C.: *Institute for the Study of War*, 2014); Fishman, *The master plan*, 142; "State building." Starting atop, the infographic mentioned 78 SV-IED's, 537 vehicle borne remote bombs, 160 suicide remote bike bombs, 4,465 IEDs, 336 small, medium and heavy arms attacks, 1,083 assassinations, 607 rocket/mortar attacks, 1,015 bombings and burnings of houses and headquarters, thirty check points, 1,047 sniper operations, eight cities under ISIS' control, over a hundred forced atonement of apostates, over a hundred prisoners freed, and over a hundred expulsions of deserters and fighters from Muslim lands, totaling up to allegedly 7,681 military operations.

Internally, tensions developed into a power struggle between ISI and its successful Syrian branch, *Jabhat al-Nusra* (*Nusra* front; JaN)⁷⁵¹, eventually leading JaN to join *al-Qaeda*.⁷⁵² ISI announced a new name, *Dawlat al-Islam fi al-Iraq wa Bilad al-Sham* (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria; ISIS) on April 8, 2013: ‘we declare [...] abolishing the name of the Islamic State in Iraq and abolishing the name of *Jabhat al-Nusra*, and joining them under one name “The Islamic State in Iraq and Al-Sham”⁷⁵³, indicating further involvement in Syria. ISIS rejecting orders of *al-Qaeda*⁷⁵⁴ led *al-Qaeda* to disown ISIS on February 3, 2014.⁷⁵⁵ ISIS responded by killing *al-Qaeda*’s representative in Syria using two suicide bombers.⁷⁵⁶ The schism between *al-Qaeda* and ISIS was not solely about power.⁷⁵⁷ It was about strategy too: ‘[w]hile *al-Qaeda* wanted the world to think it was nowhere [...], ISIS wanted the world to think it was everywhere, a strategy designed to produce rapid growth.’⁷⁵⁸ And rapid growth occurred: ‘by 2014 [...], all of its jihadi resistance rivals either collapsed or eventually joined the Islamic State.’⁷⁵⁹ The capture of Raqqa – the capital of the Syrian governorate Raqqa – in January 2014⁷⁶⁰ and the capture of the strategic Iraqi town of Sulaiman Bek on February 13, 2014⁷⁶¹ illustrated the success.

751 Kyle Orton, “Al-Qaeda disowns ISIS,” *Kyle Orton’s Blog*, March 21, 2014; Kyle Orton, “Ayman al-Zawahiri expels ISIS from al-Qaeda,” *Kyle Orton’s Blog*, March 21, 2014.

752 Orton, “Islamic State discusses Kurds and insurgency.”

753 Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, “Give good news to the believers. The declaration of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria,” audio speech, April 8, 2013, transl. unknown, in “The announcement of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria,” Kyle Orton, *Kyle Orton’s Blog*, April 2, 2014. Italics added. Also see: Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 128, 205; Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 154; “Khilafah declared,” *Dabiq* 1 (1435H|2014), 7; Stern & Berger, *ISIS*, 46; Weiss & Hassan, *ISIS*, 1.

754 Baghdadi, “Remaining in Iraq and Syria.” Also see: Ezeldeen Khalil, “Partners to foes. Al-Qaeda-ISIL split worsens civil conflict in Syria,” *Jane’s Intelligence Weekly*, May 29, 2014.

755 Orton, “Al-Qaeda disowns ISIS”; Orton, “Ayman al-Zawahiri expels ISIS.” Also see: Chuang *et al.* “Local alliances and rivalries,” 20,899; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 130. Chuang *et al.* stated the disowning happened on February 2, 2014.

756 Carlino, “How Al-Qaeda and Islamic State differ”; Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 246-7; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 130.

757 Morell & Harlow, *The great war of our time*, 307. Morell and Harlow oversimplified the rift by stating it was ‘an issue of “who would be calling the shots,” not an issue of a different vision.’ *Al-Qaeda* and ISIS shared a goal, but differed on how to establish the caliphate.

758 Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 9. Italics added.

759 Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 125.

760 Toivanen, *The Kobane generation*, 3-4.

761 “Militant seizure of Iraqi town underlines growing risk to commercial assets in northern provinces,” *Jane’s Intelligence Weekly*, February 14, 2014.

4.2.2 Strategic goal: re-establish caliphate

The ‘overarching goal’ of ISIS and its predecessors was ‘the caliphate’s reestablishment’⁷⁶², which translated into ‘political hegemony over Sunni Iraq’ to replace the national government with a *shari’a* (Islamic law) led state.⁷⁶³

From August 19, 2013, the motto *dawlat al-islam bakiyya wa tattamaddad* (the Islamic State is remaining and expanding) reflected ISIS’ goals⁷⁶⁴, indicating that the organization regarded victory as not being defeated.⁷⁶⁵ Remaining and expanding must be undertaken simultaneously.⁷⁶⁶ ISIS reasoned that the Shia-dominated Iraqi government and the KRI were actual states for the Shia and Kurds, respectively. According to ISIS, the Shia and the Kurds refused the Sunni population a state, to control the Sunnis and ‘make them the most remote people and strip them of all assets for advancement or thinking of a rightly-guided Islamic State.’⁷⁶⁷

Jihadi-salafism partly explains the aim to expand. Jihadi-salafism does not accept alternative world views⁷⁶⁸ and suggests abolishing national borders to allow Muslims to form a true *ummah* (community) once again.⁷⁶⁹ Furthermore, the practical aspect seemed applicable that large political entities ‘are more powerful than smaller ones and can protect themselves better. Large political entities can shape the international environment to suit their interests.’⁷⁷⁰ These interests practically included gaining personnel, material, and financial resources.⁷⁷¹ Perhaps most important was the acquisition of oil fields within Shia and Kurdish territories, without which the caliphate would not have a viable economy.⁷⁷²

762 Baghdadi, “Allah will not allow.” Also see: Bahney & Johnston, “Who runs the Islamic State group?”; Carmon *et al.*, “Understanding Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi,”; Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 28, 233. For the original caliphate see: Ringmar, *History of international relations*, 74-100.

763 Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 4, 129. Also see: Rabi, *Contemporary Arab thought*, 373; Luttwak, *Strategy*, 152; “State building.”

764 Carmon *et al.*, “Understanding Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi,” n8. Also see: Fishman, *The master plan*, 215; Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 109n5; Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 123; Kyle Orton, “ISIS rejects al-Qaeda’s command to return to Iraq,” *Kyle Orton’s Blog*, April 3, 2014, n1; “Remaining and Expanding,” *Dabiq* 5 (1436H|2014), 32-3. From April 17, 2007 onwards, ISI leader Abu Umar al-Baghdadi used the motto *dawlat al-islam bakiyya* (the Islamic State is remaining). Baghdadi used the expanded motto in an audio speech on June 14, 2013.

765 Cf. Heuser, *War*, 399.

766 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 255.

767 Abu Abdullah al-Masri, “Islamic State caliphate on the prophetic methodology,” 1435H|2013-4, transl. Aymenn al-Tamimi, December 7, 2015. Also see: Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 260.

768 Fishman, *The master plan*, 6; Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 2-3. Also see: Fukuyama, *Identity*, 39.

769 Carlino, “How Al-Qaeda and Islamic State differ”; Flood, “Breaking down borders”; “The world had divided into two camps,” *Dabiq* 1 (1435H|2014), 11.

770 Fukuyama, *Identity*, 129. Also see: Biddle, “The determinants of nonstate military methods,” 720.

771 Powell & Florea, “Introducing the Armed Nonstate Actor Rivalry Dataset,” 200-1. Also see: Ringmar, *History of international relations*, 74.

772 Marshall, *Prisoners of geography*, 166. Cf. Leonard, *The age of unpeace*, 46.

Of IS' strategic DIME instruments, the military strategy appeared to have priority over the diplomatic, information, and economic strategies.⁷⁷³ Translating Gray's Clausewitz-based definition of military strategy to IS strategies results in using force and the threat of force for re-establishing and expanding the caliphate. Analysts suggested that IS' aggressive strategy and brutal tactics limited the perceived threats and exploited the opportunities it recognized.⁷⁷⁴ These suggestions imply that IS behaved as a calculating actor.⁷⁷⁵ Still, it did so within the framework of a strict jihadi-salafist ideology.

Ingram *et al.* spoke of IS' 'strategic culture of critical reflection and innovation,' and 'especially amongst the Islamic State's leaders, that seems to encourage surprisingly critical and considered assessments of its theatre of operations through not only political, military, and information lenses, but demographic, sociocultural and psychological ones too.'⁷⁷⁶ That strategic culture allowed IS to transform to conventional tactics in times of prosperity and to return to guerilla and terrorism tactics in times of adversity. It also permitted propaganda as a strategic tool, framing messages as it saw fit.⁷⁷⁷

Yet, jihadi-salafism was of fundamental interest in applying IS strategy: 'the political goal of a caliphate could not be achieved except through violence.'⁷⁷⁸ While internally, IS established governance, given its jihadi-salafist ideology, the caliphate could not participate in international relations any other way than by conflict.⁷⁷⁹ IS acknowledged this conclusion in internal guidelines: '[a]ccording to the *Shari'a* politics, the [IS] leadership is not allowed to adopt decisions to ally with a state or implement an agreement with it if that violates *Shari'a* politics.'⁷⁸⁰ Therefore, unsurprisingly, no state supported IS, making IS' grand strategy unviable⁷⁸¹ with no chance of recognition for the caliphate as an actual state within international relations. IS did acknowledge the importance of external relations, though, considering these 'the first foundation for building every nascent state.'⁷⁸² Although IS rejected non-*shari'a* countries, it did allow people to go there or trade with these countries.⁷⁸³

773 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 188-9. Also see: Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 37.

774 Ahmed Hevidar, "Senior Kurdistan official. IS was at Erbil's gates; Turkey did not help," *Rûdaw*, September 16, 2014; Stansfield, "The Islamic State," 1,340-1n23.

775 Jenkins, "ISIS's calculated barbarity"; Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 37.

776 Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 37, 303. Also see: Gray, *Modern strategy*, 129-51; Last, *Strategic culture*, 6-11.

777 *Ibid.*, 304-6. Also see: "State building."

778 Fishman, *The master plan*, 159.

779 Stephens, "The emergence of ISIS," 11, 15; Fishman, *The master plan*, 71; Fukuyama, *Identity*, 73. Also see: Bakker, *Terrorism and counterterrorism studies*, 125-7.

780 Masri, "Islamic State caliphate on the prophetic methodology." Italics added. For example: "Fighting alongside FSA factions," *Islamic State*, no date, transl. Aymenn al-Tamimi; "Negotiations and ceasefire agreement with the regime over the thermal plant and surrounding in Aleppo," *Islamic State*, June 2013, transl. Aymenn al-Tamimi. Also see: Noyes, "Pragmatic takfiris."

781 Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 10, 204. Also see: Ezrow, *Global politics*, 186; Marshall, *Prisoners of geography*, 165-6.

782 Masri, "Islamic State caliphate on the prophetic methodology."

783 For example: "Fatwa on eating meats imported from Turkey," *Islamic State*, July 20, 2014, transl. Aymenn al-

IS' preference for violence made it inherently suitable for winning conflicts but unsuitable for winning peace.⁷⁸⁴ Considering the four grand strategy elements – diplomacy, information, military, and economics – IS regarded all⁷⁸⁵ but preferred the military instrument, guided by its jihadi-salafist ideology.⁷⁸⁶ Yet, '[b]y consuming and destroying the material and moral resources needed to keep fighting, war prevents its own continuation.'⁷⁸⁷ This paradoxical logic illustrated the inherent tension between lasting and expanding.

4.2.3 Ideology: jihadi-salafism

According to the organizational behavior paradigm, to understand IS' strategic decisions and decision-making, it is necessary to comprehend IS' SOPs. Assuming that Western-style SOPs did not apply to IS, its ideologically inspired doctrine provided guidance to jihadi-salafists.⁷⁸⁸ Mainly on the principle of *manhaj*, which included ideological obligations, different jihadi-salafist groups merged into what would become IS.⁷⁸⁹ So, to understand IS, it is necessary to understand its jihadi-salafist worldview⁷⁹⁰: 'much of what the group does looks nonsensical except in light of a sincere, carefully considered commitment to returning civilization to a seventh-century legal environment, and ultimately to bringing about the apocalypse.'⁷⁹¹ IS based 'its legal system, governing bodies, and foreign policy on the sacred texts alone.'⁷⁹²

Jihadi-salafism is 'an ideological trend that seeks violent overthrow of the existing political order in favor of a transnational theocratic entity, with the creation of a caliphate being the most common objective.'⁷⁹³ Overthrowing the existing political order implied that IS

Tamimi; "Permission slip for travel to Kuwait," *Islamic State*, October 25, 2014, transl. Aymenn al-Tamimi. Also see: "Conditions for travel outside Mosul," *Islamic State*, no date, transl. Aymenn al-Tamimi; Two Hawija inhabitants, interview by Wietse van den Berge & Mark Dechesne, Kirkuk, November 11, 2015. No audio or video equipment was allowed during the interview.

784 Cf. Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 10, 204; Ezrow, *Global politics*, 186.

785 Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 37.

786 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 188-9. Also see: Ringmar, *History of international relations*, 74.

787 Luttwak, *Strategy*, 57.

788 Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 10. Also see: Bahney & Johnston, "Who runs the Islamic State group?"; Amatzia Baram, "Saddam's ISIS. Tracing the roots of the caliphate," *Foreign Affairs*, April 8, 2016; Fishman, *The master plan*, 41-2, 202-3; Graaf & Pothoven, "De Islamitische inlichtingenstaat" 461-4; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 12, 168-9; Mohammed Mustafa & Abdulrahman Darwesh, "The anti-Kurdish thoughts of ISIS," *Review of Middle East Studies* (2023), 9-10; Perlmutter, *The military and politics in modern times*, 7; Rabi', *Contemporary Arab thought*, 127; Whiteside *et al.*, "The ISIS files – The Islamic State's department of soldiers," 21-2.

789 Abū 'Abdir-Rahmān al-Banghālī, "The revival of jihad in Bengal. With the spread of the light of the Khilafah," *Dabiq* 12 (1437H[2015]), 39n2; 'Irjā', the most dangerous bid'ah," *Dabiq* 8 (1436H[2015]), 39-56; Shāmī, "The Qa-'idah," 20n4. Also see: Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 79-87. Hashim traced back IS' ideology to Zarqawi and labeled it 'Zarqawism,' characterized by a struggle between Islamists and a plethora of enemies.

790 Fishman, *The master plan*, 6; Gerges, *ISIS*, 23; Stern & Berger, *ISIS*, 271-2; Graeme Wood, "What ISIS really wants." *The Atlantic*, March 2015, 81.

791 Wood, "What ISIS really wants," 80. Also see: Gerges, *ISIS*, 23-49.

792 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 65.

793 Fishman, *The master plan*, 6. Also see: Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 2-3. Also see: Rabi',

intended to dismantle the concept of the nation-state.⁷⁹⁴ Jihadi-salafism belongs to the salafist interpretation of Islam.⁷⁹⁵ Salafism holds a literal interpretation of the Quran, viewing the earliest days of Islam as the ideal for Muslims to strive for, put into practice by *shari'a* and rejecting any religious innovation since then. Added are descriptions of the life of the prophet Muhammad, provided by the companions of the prophet, known as the *salaf* (predecessors).⁷⁹⁶ The companions' accounts form the origin of the salafist interpretation and serve as an 'instrument of mobilization and as an avenue to express the dissatisfaction of the masses with the ruling elite.'⁷⁹⁷ The underlying idea of strict adherence to the Quran is to avoid as much human interpretation as possible, thus enabling the identification of Allah's true intentions. This principle of *tawhid* (oneness of God) is essential to salafism.⁷⁹⁸ Still, three schools emerged within salafism, sharing the same beliefs but differing on when these apply: 'the purists, the politicians, and the jihadis.'⁷⁹⁹ Within these factions, different opinions also exist⁸⁰⁰, leading to alternative ways to classify salafists.⁸⁰¹ In general, the purists propose a non-violent way to achieve their aims without interfering with politics, something the politicians do. The jihadis – or jihadi-salafists – argue they can only succeed by applying the concept of *jihad*⁸⁰², hence the name. Jihadi-salafists claim that *jihad* is only possible using the *talwar* (sword)⁸⁰³, indicating a violent interpretation of *jihad*.⁸⁰⁴ Jihadi-salafists go further than the politicians in their call for violence and revolution.⁸⁰⁵ They are more extreme and oriented towards international relations than other salafist groups⁸⁰⁶, as they operate under the assumption that punishment against every non-believer is allowed.⁸⁰⁷ Jihadi-salafists disagree on who are non-believers.⁸⁰⁸ Jihadi-salafists agree with the belief that non-practicing Muslims weaken the Muslim community,

Contemporary Arab thought, 127, 370-1; Fukuyama, *Identity*, 39.

794 Salih, "The Islamic State's visions of political community," 11.

795 Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the salafi movement," 208. Also see: Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 65-7. Salafism originated with mediaeval Islamic scholar Taqi al-Din Ahmed ibn Taymiyyah, who lived when Arabs fought both crusaders and Mongols. Taymiyyah justified violence against rulers who did not apply *shari'a*.

796 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 64-5; Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 7. Also see: Marshall, *Prisoners of geography*, 161.

797 Rabi', *Contemporary Arab thought*, 135.

798 *Ibid.*, 203; Michaelle Browsers, *Democracy and civil society in Arab political thought. Transcultural possibilities* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 44-5; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 65; Lewis, *The crisis of Islam*, 24; Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 10; Stern & Berger, *ISIS*, 263-4; Weiss & Hassan, *ISIS*, 150; Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the salafi movement," 208.

799 Lewis, *The crisis of Islam*, 24; Stern & Berger, *ISIS*, 265-8; Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the salafi movement," 208.

800 Lewis, *The crisis of Islam*, 23; Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the salafi movement," 228-34.

801 Thomas Hegghammer, "Jihadi salafis or revolutionaries? On religion and politics in the study of militant Islamism" in *Global salafism. Islam's new religious movement*, Roel Meijer (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014), 244-66.

802 Stern & Berger, *ISIS*, 271-2.

803 Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 8.

804 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 10. For example: Zarqawi, untitled letter to *al-Qaeda* leadership.

805 Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the salafi movement," 208.

806 Hegghammer, "Jihadi salafis or revolutionaries?" 257-8.

807 Kepel, *Jihad*, 31-2; Ahmad Moussalli, "Wahhabism, salafism and Islamism. Who is the enemy?" *Conflicts Forum*, January 30, 2009. 17-8.

808 Lewis, *The crisis of Islam*, 40-1; Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the salafi movement," 228. For example: Shāmi, "The Qa'idah," 20n4.

which the jihadi-salafists must take care of. Thus, they called on their followers to fight all (Muslim) infidels⁸⁰⁹ and targeted Shia and the government regimes in Iraq and Syria.⁸¹⁰

According to IS, a caliphate based on *shari'a* should replace these government regimes. A fundamental assumption within IS' ideology is that the Sunni *ummah*⁸¹¹ is under threat and needs to be defended against infidels⁸¹², IS being 'the Sunni protector of Islam and a defense against colonialism.'⁸¹³ Still, for an actor claiming to protect Sunni interests, IS behaved aggressively and offensively towards potential allies, such as the Kurds, most of whom considered themselves Sunni.⁸¹⁴ Merely focusing on IS' religiously inspired propaganda that a primordial struggle exists between Sunni Islam and other religious interpretations⁸¹⁵ – notably Shia Islam – simplifies the conflict in which IS was involved. Yet, '[t]he quest for security [...] brings a sense of urgency to politics and is one of the enduring sources of passion in policy controversies.'⁸¹⁶ Historically, however, no proof exists of a primordial conflict between Sunni and Shia Islam. IS claimed otherwise, using religious differences for political purposes.⁸¹⁷ Therefore, Noyes argued that IS'

'grand strategy is based in its *takfiri-jihadist*, Islamist ideology. Islamic State is not a Salafist organization. Its attempts to emulate the Muhammadan era are fleeting and inconsistent. Instead, Islamic State has a propensity to leverage modern mechanisms, *shirk ijma* (consensus within the Islamic world), and demonstrate *bidaa* (innovation within Islamic ideology) when it is organizationally or ideologically convenient.'⁸¹⁸

809 Black, *The history of Islamic political thought*, 12; Lewis, *The crisis of Islam*, 29-38; Moussalli, "Wahhabism, salafism and Islamism," 17-8.

810 Gerges, *ISIS*, 5-6. Also see: Baghdadi, "Allah will not allow"; Baghdadi, "Remaining in Iraq and Syria"; Fishman, *The master plan*, 20; "Foreword," *Dabiq* 8, 4; "ISIS celebrates takeover of Nineveh province"; Masri, "Islamic State caliphate on the prophetic methodology"; "The allies of al-Qā'idah in Sham," *Dabiq* 8 (1436H|2015), 8; Umunç, "A hope so transcendent," 189.

811 Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 21.

812 Zarqawi, untitled letter to *al-Qaeda* leadership. Also see: "Islam is the religion of the sword not pacifism," *Dabiq* 7 (1436H|2015), 20-4.

813 Mabon & Royle, *The origins of ISIS*, 2. Also see: Kyle Orton, "Governing the caliphate. Profiles of Islamic State leaders" (London: *The Henry Jackson Society*, 2016), 2-3; "Purpose of jihad," *Islamic State*, no date, transl. Aymenn al-Tamimi.

814 Besheer Mohamed, "Who are the Iraqi Kurds?" *Pew Research Center*, August 20, 2014. Also see: Zarqawi, untitled letter to *al-Qaeda* leadership. A 2011 research by Pew Research Center found that 98 percent of Iraqi Kurds considered themselves Sunni.

815 Zarqawi, untitled letter to *al-Qaeda* leadership. Also see: Fukuyama, *Identity*, 93; Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 37-54; Kirschner, *Trust and fear in civil wars*, 8; Abraham Maslow, "A theory of human motivation," *Psychological Review* 50 (1943), 376; Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 35-51; Wood, "What ISIS really wants," 80.

816 Stone, *Policy paradox*, 86. Also see: Zarqawi, untitled letter to *al-Qaeda* leadership.

817 Mabon & Royle, *The origins of ISIS*, 5, 57.

818 Noyes, "Pragmatic takfiris." Italics in original. Takfiri-jihadism refers to the same ideology as jihadi-salafism; *takfiri* refers to rejecting other interpretations of Islam, considering these apostates.

Noyes added that IS' leadership changed its 'decision-making – focusing on either of its priorities – depending on the organization's strength or existential challenges,' pivoting 'between the temporal and the ideological.'⁸¹⁹ Yet, it mirrored how the prophet Muhammad allegedly behaved: conducting cruelty in battle, he was willing to reach a compromise and tactical arrangements into his policy.⁸²⁰ Four key jihadi-salafist documents had translated this ideology into practices and, thus, seemingly influenced IS.

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's *The global Islamic resistance call*⁸²¹ presented an alternative to the 'regionally-focused elite jihadi vanguards determined to seize power from the top.'⁸²² Suri urged replacing a commanding top-down system with decentralized operations conducted by operatives who decided when and where to attack.⁸²³

Abu Bakr Naji's *The management of savagery*⁸²⁴ is considered IS' 'guidebook to [...] strategic thinking'⁸²⁵, its 'field manual'⁸²⁶ or blueprint for IS' doctrine⁸²⁷ and part of IS' curriculum.⁸²⁸

-
- 819 Ibid. Also see: Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 380; Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 53; Kiras, "Key concepts," 302-4.
- 820 Carmon *et al.*, "Understanding Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi."
- 821 "The call for a global Islamic resistance." Also see: Banghālī, "The revival of jihad," 39n2; Michael Ryan, "Hot issue. Dabiq. What Islamic State's new magazine tells us about their strategic direction, recruitment patterns and guerrilla doctrine," *The Jamestown Foundation*, August 1, 2014. Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's was the *kunya* of Mustafa Setmariam Nasar. Suri wrote the document in 1991, which *al-Qaeda*-affiliated websites released in 2004. IS explicitly stated that Suri's 'unnecessarily long 1600-page book' has 'never defined the methodology of the *mujahidin* [Islamic fighters]. The top Islamic State leadership [...] did not recommend as-Sūrī's book,' thus acknowledging awareness of the work. An English translation of the book is unavailable at the time of writing.
- 822 "The call for a global Islamic resistance."
- 823 Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 53. Also see: Fukuyama, *Identity*, xv; Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 5; Jessica Stern, *Terror in the name of God* (New York: Harper Collins: 2003), 173.
- 824 Abu Bakr Naji, *The management of savagery. The most critical stage through which the Umma will pass*, transl. William McCants (Harvard: *Harvard University John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies*, 2004 [2006]). Also see: André Gagné, "Understanding ISIS' 'foreign' jihadist strategy," *Open Canada* June 17, 2016; Ryan, "Hot issue. Dabiq"; David Jones & M.L.R. Smith, "The strategy of savagery. Understanding the Islamic State," *War on the rocks*, February 24, 2015. Who Naji was, remains disputed. In 2014, the founder of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad claimed that Naji had been Egyptian Muhammad Khalil al-Hakaymah, an early supporter of Zaraqawi.
- 825 Jones & Smith, "Return to reason," 949.
- 826 Weiss & Hassan, *ISIS*, 40. Also see: Jeff Sole, "Management of savagery: A model for establishing the Islamic State," *The Mackenzie Institute*, June 2, 2016; "The management of savagery," *Think Defence*, March 16, 2015;.
- 827 Fishman, *The master plan*, 38-45, 279n46; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 250; Hassan & Weiss, *ISIS*, 40; Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 4-5; Jones & Smith, "The strategy of savagery"; Sole, "Management of savagery." Also see: Banghālī, "The revival of jihad," 39n2. According to Fishman and Ingram *et al.*, IS denied Naji's influence, but Banghālī in *Dabiq* merely disagreed with the author's position towards 'the *takfir* of parties who forcefully resist the *Shari'ah* and its laws,' referring to *The management of savagery* as a 'concise but beneficial 100-page book,' which 'describes very precisely the overall strategy of the *mujahidin*.' Banghālī cited Zaraqawi, who after reading the document allegedly stated that '[i]t is as if the author [Naji] knows what I'm planning.' Hashim noted that IS mentioned several countries where jihadist could form groups in *Dabiq* 1, which were rather similar to those mentioned by Naji, suggesting that Naji's book was used as input.
- 828 Hassan Hassan, "ISIS has reached new depths of depravity. But there is a brutal logic behind it," *The Guardian*, February 8, 2015.

The book integrated military strategy with media strategy, using media to disseminate guidance for decentralized operations⁸²⁹ to establish an Islamic state despite powerful enemies.⁸³⁰ Assuming that jihadi-salafists can defeat an enemy by destabilizing social cohesion⁸³¹, Naji suggested polarizing society⁸³² using ‘small bands and separate, disparate organizations.’⁸³³ Attritional warfare by a combination of ‘vexation and exhaustion’⁸³⁴ – using violence as a means to an end⁸³⁵ in a ‘deeply realist’ strategy⁸³⁶ – should exhaust opponents, gain territory, and attract new supporters.⁸³⁷ Nevertheless, Naji was reluctant to use alliances and proxies. Furthermore, Naji seemed to suggest politics’ primacy⁸³⁸, yet mentioning that ‘the political decision issues from the military leader.’⁸³⁹

Abū Hamzah al-Muhājir’s⁸⁴⁰ “Advice for the soldiers of the Islamic State”⁸⁴¹ and “Advice for the leaders of the Islamic State”⁸⁴² provided further guidance to jihadi fighters and leaders, respectively. Emphasizing the importance of cooperation⁸⁴³, Muhājir expected IS fighters to obey their leaders to avoid disunity.⁸⁴⁴ A captured low-rank IS member interviewed for this study acknowledged that IS operated as a hierarchical, rigid organization.⁸⁴⁵ Yet, Muhājir advised the leaders to ‘[s]eek consultation and hold discussions’⁸⁴⁶, warning for uncritical

829 Naji, *The management of savagery*, 21. Also see: Jones & Smith, “Return to reason,” 950. For muslim tactics fighting crusaders see: Thomas Asbridge, *The crusades. The war for the holy land* (London: Pocket 2010), 343-61; Hassan; “ISIS has reached new depths of depravity”; Heuser, *War*, 36-7; Ringmar, *History of international relations*, 74, 88.

830 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 247-8.

831 Fishman, *The master plan*, 236-79; Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 6; Jones & Smith, “Return to reason,” 949.

832 Naji, *The management of savagery*, 22. Also see: Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 6; Fishman, *The master plan*, 44.

833 *Ibid.*, 12. Also see: Luttwak, *Strategy*, 152-3.

834 *Ibid.*, 13, 81-4. Also see: Allison & Zelikow, *Essence of decision*, 27.

835 *Ibid.*, 28-31. For example: “A message from Sotloff,” 47-51; Cantlie, “Hard talk,” 52-5; “The burning of the murtadd pilot,” 6-7.

836 Jones & Smith, “Return to reason,” 950.

837 Naji, *The management of savagery*, 16-8. Also see: Graaf & Yayla, “The ISIS files – Policing as rebel governance,” 17; Orton, “Governing the caliphate,” 3.

838 *Ibid.*, 35-7. Also see: Atiyah, untitled letter to Zarqawi; Clausewitz, *On war*, 87; Jones & Smith, “The strategy of savagery.” Jones and Smith recognized in Naji’s text Clausewitz’ dictum that ‘[w]ar is merely the continuation of policy by other means.’ Atiyah had referred to the primacy of politics in his 2005 letter to Zarqawi.

839 *Ibid.*, 37.

840 Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 233. Also see: Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 54. Abū Hamzah al-Muhājir was the *kunya* of Abdul Munim bin Izz al-Din al-Badawi.

841 Abū Hamzah al-Muhājir, “Advice for the soldiers of the Islamic State,” *Dabiq* 6 (1436H|2014), 6-15. Muhājir’s advice for IS’ fighters was dated Ramadān 1, 1428 (September 13, 2007).

842 Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 93-106; Abū Hamzah al-Muhājir, “Advice for the leaders of the Islamic State,” *Dabiq* 7 (1436H|2015), 9-16. Muhājir’s advice for IS’ leaders was dated Ramadān 1, 1428 (September 13, 2007).

843 Fishman, *The master plan*, 131. For example: Muhājir, “Advice for the soldiers of the Islamic State,” 7.

844 Muhājir, “Advice for the soldiers of the Islamic State,” 10.

845 Low-rank IS-member 2, interview by Wietse van den Berge & Mark Dechesne, Kirkuk, November 11, 2015. No audio or video equipment was allowed during the interview. Low-rank IS-member 2 stated that anyone who would express doubt on remaining with the organization, would be killed.

846 Muhājir, “Advice for the leaders of the Islamic State,” 10.

followers and urging for contradiction during decision-making.⁸⁴⁷ Still, during a 2015 interview for this study, a captured IS *emir* stated that ‘there was never any possibility to express doubt. Also, you do not know the consequences if you do.’⁸⁴⁸ So, a representative of middle-rank leadership – in this case, an *emir* – did not question orders. Uncritical behavior contradicted Muhājir’s advice, seemingly supporting rational decision-making and cost-benefit calculation⁸⁴⁹: ‘[t]he leader must study the battlefield very well. He should not fight from a position that will be easy for the enemy to surround without ensuring that the vulnerable points are guarded. And he should not take his soldiers out to a place so far that it’s impossible to bring them back safely.’⁸⁵⁰ Muhājir urged leaders to avoid unjust bloodshed and provided advice on liaising.⁸⁵¹

Elements of Suri’s, Naji’s, and Muhājir’s advice seemed merged into a handbook-like document from 2014, written by Abu Abdullah al-Masri, titled “Islamic State caliphate on the prophetic methodology.” It contained IS’ vision on military and long-term, non-military issues. Next to obedience to battlefield commanders and *shari’a* officials, Masri suggested consultation among the field commanders and *shari’a* officials over the course of action. Also, in what seems a way to establish a monopoly of violence, Masri suggested controlling the production of and trade in weapons and establishing committees for administering production projects.⁸⁵²

More battlefield-oriented than Masri’s was IS’ doctrine, as published in a 2019 *al-Naba* newsletter:

‘this method relies on surprising the enemy forces in weak areas, in which the *mujahideen* can be secure in their superiority in force, and assaulting a village or more or one of the localities or towns, according to the strength of the *mujahideen*. From there they strike or neutralize the force of the enemy inside it, thereby allowing the *mujahideen* to move about inside the area freely, and realize their aims from the expedition in a matter of a few hours. Then they withdraw from the attack site, while avoiding entrance into a decisive battle against the enemy, and trying to avoid losses in the ranks of the *mujahideen* as far as possible.’⁸⁵³

847 *Ibid.*, 10-1. Also see: Allison & Zelikow, *Essence of decision*, 283-7.

848 IS *emir*, interview by Wietse van den Berge, Suleimaniyah, April 8, 2015. No audio or video equipment was allowed during the interview. The IS *emir* was captured and awaiting trial, possibly denying full responsibility.

849 Cf. Jenkins, “ISIS’s calculated barbarity.”

850 Muhājir, “Advice for the leaders of the Islamic State,” 13. Cf. Clausewitz, *On war*, 348-51; Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, 510-2.

851 *Ibid.*, 15-6. Cf. McChrystal *et al.*, *Team of teams*, 177-8.

852 Masri, “Islamic State caliphate on the prophetic methodology.”

853 “Bringing down the towns temporarily as a method of operation for the *mujahideen* i,” *al-Naba* 179, transl. Aymenn al-Tamimi, April 26, 2019. Italics added.

The aim of the expeditions – the wording used by IS – was to inflict damage to the enemies, gain resources, free prisoners, harass or fix the enemies in an area, and enable IS supporters⁸⁵⁴, much like seventh century Muslim fighters had conducted raids.⁸⁵⁵ To do so, IS relied on actual intelligence on the target.⁸⁵⁶ IS planned the withdrawal too, to avoid unnecessary casualties⁸⁵⁷, although the execution was left with local commanders⁸⁵⁸, expecting obedience from its fighters.⁸⁵⁹ Following Zarqawi's example, IS aimed to prevent authorities from establishing powerful intelligence and security agencies that could defeat IS and to force IS' enemies into 'allout war with *Ablus-Sunnah* [the Sunni people]. So, he [Zarqawi] targeted the Iraqi apostate forces [army, police, and intelligence], the *Rafidah* [Shia] markets, temples, and militias, and the Kurdish secularists [Barzani and Talabani partisans].⁸⁶⁰

Despite *manhaj*, Western-style SOPs seemed not – or hardly – available within IS' organization.⁸⁶¹ Nevertheless, IS seemed to operate according to a *modus operandi* regarding military and economic affairs, the latter 'viewed purely as a vehicle for organizational strength.'⁸⁶² Whereas Ashour observed a three-phase, operational-level *modus operandi*⁸⁶³, Hashim observed an ongoing and simultaneous use of terrorist tactics next to semi-conventional warfare⁸⁶⁴, which combined violence and restraint, reminiscent of Muhājir's advice⁸⁶⁵: '[w]hen it succeeded militarily in territorial control, it would capitalize to boost its limited resources (such as in Nineveh [...]). When it faltered militarily, it would launch

854 "Bringing down the towns temporarily as a method of operation for the mujahideen ii," *al-Naba* 180, transl. Aymenn al-Tamimi, May 17, 2019. Also see: "From hijrah to khilafa," 36; Haroro Ingram *et al.*, "The Islamic State's global insurgency and its counterstrategy implications" (The Hague: *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague*, 2020), 33.

855 Ringmar, *History of international relations*, 74.

856 "Bringing down the towns temporarily as a method of operation for the mujahideen iii," *al-Naba* 181, transl. Aymenn al-Tamimi, May 19, 2019.

857 "Bringing down the towns temporarily as a method of operation for the mujahideen iv," *al-Naba* 182, transl. Aymenn al-Tamimi, May 19, 2019. Also see: "Iraq-based jihadist group consolidates position in central Syria and moves to extend control along Iraqi-Syrian border," *Jane's Intelligence Weekly*, April 14, 2014.

858 "Bringing down the towns i"; "Bringing down the towns iii"; "Bringing down the towns iv."

859 "Bringing down the towns iv."

860 "From hijrah to khilafa," 37. IS stressed that Zarqawi 'never targeted Sunni public places and gatherings.'

861 For example: Graaf & Yayla, "The ISIS files – Policing as rebel governance," 21, 47.

862 Noyes, "Pragmatic takfiris." Also see: Wietse van den Berge, "Islamic State's ambivalent relation to drugs," *Leiden Security and Global Affairs Blog*, March 7, 2016; "Der Gelehrte, Anbeter, Prediger und Mudschahid Schaych Abu Ali al-Anbari. Karawane der Schuhada," *Rumiyah* 3 (1438H[2016]), 15; Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 103-4, 117; Masri, "Islamic State caliphate on the prophetic methodology"; Noyes, "Pragmatic takfiris"; Barbara Starr *et al.*, "Pentagon: ISIS finance minister killed," *CNN*, March 25, 2016.

863 Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 47, 83, 202-3. Also see: Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 102-3; Aymenn al-Tamimi, "Enemy of my enemy. Re-evaluating the Islamic State's relationship with Baathist JRTN," *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Monitor*, June 5, 2015.

864 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 236-7. Also see: Ezrow, *Global politics*, 103.

865 Muhājir, "Advice for the leaders of the Islamic State," 15. Also see: "The Fallujah memorandum," in Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 128-9.

tenacious operational counteroffensives, and then shift its strategies and adjust or innovate its tactics accordingly.⁸⁶⁶

As far as diplomacy is concerned, IS claimed to maintain relations with Sunni tribes, regularly accepting their *bay'ah* and, in return, promising support and security.⁸⁶⁷ Negotiating with tribes potentially offered IS capabilities, such as money, men, and equipment. The constraint was that such negotiations took time and effort and guaranteed no positive outcome. Apart from tribes, IS asked defeated secular enemy units to repent.⁸⁶⁸ Tamimi emphasized that IS conveniently worked with other groups and tribes but did not join alliances. IS tried to control them as soon as possible.⁸⁶⁹ Perhaps IS was organizationally handicapped as its jihadi-salafist ideology was anti-establishment and, therefore, potentially vulnerable to internal fracture, as IS aimed to establish another establishment as a caliphate.⁸⁷⁰ Its anti-establishment character also explains that IS' tactical and operational hierarchies were almost always based on need and *'urf* (tradition) as opposed to internal regulations or standard operating procedures.⁸⁷¹

Jihadi-salafist ideology shaped the overall doctrinal framework⁸⁷², which IS approached rather pragmatically.⁸⁷³ Although IS' ideology is too extreme and unappealing to the masses⁸⁷⁴, Naji argued that jihadi-salafists had to show they could govern the territory. Doing so would win over public support among the Sunni masses.⁸⁷⁵ Having learned from lacking governance capabilities and benefitting from former *Ba'ath* officers among its ranks⁸⁷⁶, IS had established a bureaucratic structure aimed at governance.

4.2.4 Organization: centralized leadership

From April to June 2010, ISI had lost around 80 percent of its leadership, including the *emir* and his deputy. Despite its centralized command structure with decentralized operational cells, ISI was infiltrated by Iraqi intelligence. When Baghdadi became ISI's new leader in May 2010, he restructured the organization. ISI strengthened or created councils tasked with

866 Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 209. Also see: Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 10-1.

867 Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 12-4. For example: "Conditions for travel outside Mosul"; "Fatwa on eating meats imported from Turkey"; "Permission slip for travel to Kuwait." Also see: Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 48; "Iraq-based jihadist group."

868 "Islamic State news," *Dabiq* 1 (1435H|2014), 49.

869 Tamimi, "Enemy of my enemy." Also see: Flood, "Breaking down borders."

870 Fishman, *The master plan*, 70; Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 262.

871 Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 43. Italics added.

872 For some nuance see: Black, "Strategic practice," 11.

873 Cf. Stern, *Terror in the name of God*, 173.

874 Ezrow, *Global politics*, 186.

875 Kiras, "Current irregular warfare," 365; Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 268n36. Also see: Ezrow, *Global politics*, 61.

876 "Islamic State ascendant."

various duties to insulate the leadership against infiltration, while allowing lower levels more operational autonomy.⁸⁷⁷

Some analysts observed that IS struggled to balance centralized leadership with its decentralized characteristics.⁸⁷⁸ Other analysts recognized resilience in IS' decentralized organization. Next to the top level of command existed a 'fluid hierarchy that decentralises power to a number of local *emirs* across Iraq and Syria.'⁸⁷⁹ Shapiro stated that 'groups with a political doctrine that provides little guidance to operatives regarding which targets should be attacked will place a higher value on hierarchical structures that help manage attacks than groups with more specific political doctrines,'⁸⁸⁰ adding that how that organization is structured is less dependent on ideology than on 'operational guidance drawn from their political goals.'⁸⁸¹ Zarqawi had realized that his organization was vulnerable to decapitation, and he established councils and committees for resilience in case he died. Eventually – possibly copying Aal's structure – he created a three-tier structure composed of critical leadership in tier one, regional and operational leaders in tier two, and individual cell leaders responsible for execution in tier three.⁸⁸² During the days of ISI, the organization already had established bureaucratic frameworks that overlooked not only the political and military but also 'public works, health and finance, to counterbalance the Kurds and Shiites [in Iraq], who already had some form of self-government.'⁸⁸³ ISIS' goal of re-establishing the caliphate 'set in motion across all of its bureaucratic entities a routinization of its structure into state-like management tools.'⁸⁸⁴ Considering agency challenges, it made sense that IS created bureaucratic entities to organize conflict and govern as a means in itself.⁸⁸⁵ A 2015 interview for this study illustrated its effect: two allegedly unaffiliated Sunni Arab men who lived in IS-controlled Hawija nevertheless saw IS as the only viable alternative for governance.⁸⁸⁶

877 Orton, "Governing the caliphate," 11. Also see: Graaf & Yayla, "The ISIS files – Policing as rebel governance," 33.

878 Kiras, "Current irregular warfare," 364. Also see: Ezrow, *Global politics*, 116.

879 Stephens, "The emergence of ISIS," 14. Italics added.

880 Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 10.

881 *Ibid.*, 58.

882 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 148-51.

883 Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 231-2. Also see: Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 9, 94.

884 Whiteside *et al.*, "The ISIS files – The Islamic State's department of soldiers," 5. Also see: Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 31-3, 45-51. Cantlie, "Hard talk," 55.

885 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 12.

886 Two Hawija inhabitants. Also see: Ezrow, *Global politics*, 61; Graaf & Yayla, "The ISIS files – Policing as rebel governance," 35; Kiras, "Current irregular warfare," 365; Masri, "Islamic State caliphate on the prophetic methodology"; Muhājir, "Advice for the leaders of the Islamic State," 15; Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 268n36.

IS hinted in 2014 that the organization had approximately 32,000 members.⁸⁸⁷ At the time, IS' organization remained unknown.⁸⁸⁸ A 2016 IS video offered insight into IS' organizational structure, which consisted of the caliph, the *shura* council, the delegated committee, the *wilayat* (provinces), the *dawawin* (departments), and the committees and offices.⁸⁸⁹

At the head of the IS organization was the caliph.⁸⁹⁰ It was the caliph who the individual IS fighters pledged allegiance to.⁸⁹¹ The main tasks of the caliph included (1) upholding and spreading religion, (2) defending the Islamic State and fortifying the fronts, (3) preparing the armies, and (4) implementing and enforcing adherence to the *shari'a*.⁸⁹² These four tasks emphasized the role of the caliph as described by Ingram *et al.*: 'the position of the caliph represents a unique fusion of legal-rational authority, based on adherence to "law" or a legally-enshrined process, and traditional authority, based on established order and custom.'⁸⁹³ It also confirmed that IS had adopted Naji's suggestion to merge military affairs with political leadership.⁸⁹⁴ Still, the structure of the caliphate depended not on individuals and the caliph typically exercised influence more strategically than by micro-management.⁸⁹⁵

The *shura* council supported the caliph in his tasks by advising on politics or strategy⁸⁹⁶, which created redundancy in leadership if the caliph was no longer in place.⁸⁹⁷ The delegated committee communicated orders along the chain of command⁸⁹⁸ and supervised the *dawawin*. The *dawawin* protected public interest, religion, and security.⁸⁹⁹ Each *diwan* (department) had an office in every *wilayat*. A *wali* (governor) ran each of the *wilayat* on behalf of the caliph.⁹⁰⁰

887 Cantlie, "Hard talk," 55. Also see: Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 2; Milton, "Structure of a state," iv, 11-14. The CIA in 2014 believed IS to have between 20,000 and 31,000 fighters. In 2016, Milton identified more than 60,000 IS-identification numbers for male IS-members in Iraq, suggesting that by that time IS was larger.

888 For example: Moubayed, *Under the black flag*.

889 "The structure of khilafa." Also see: Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 235-47; Milton, "Structure of a state," 18n42; Ringmar, *History of international relations*, 74.

890 *Ibid.* Also see: Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 175-7.

891 Whiteside *et al.*, "The ISIS files – The Islamic State's department of soldiers," 13, 16.

892 "The structure of khilafa."

893 Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 172.

894 Naji, *The management of savagery*, 37-40.

895 Orton, "Governing the caliphate," 22.

896 "The structure of khilafa." Also see: Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, cited in Kyle Orton, "ISIS announces the restoration of the caliphate," *Kyle Orton's Blog*, June 29, 2014; Baghdadi, "Remaining in Iraq and Syria"; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 177; Orton, "Governing the caliphate," 11.

897 Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 144; "The structure of the caliphate." Also see: "The Fallujah memorandum," in Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 142.

898 "The structure of khilafa."

899 *Ibid.* Also see: Kiras, "The historical practice," 333; Kyle Orton, "The structure of the Islamic State," *Kyle Orton's Blog*, August 8, 2016; Aymenn al-Tamimi, "Aspects of Islamic State (IS) administration in Ninawa province. Part II," *Aymenn Jawad*, January 20, 2015. Orton pointed out that discrepancies exist between the video and documentary evidence.

900 *Ibid.* Also see: Milton, "Structure of a state," 10n22; Orton, "The structure of the Islamic State."

Five *dawawin* had existed since Zarqawi established JTJ: (1) *shari'a*; (2) media; (3) *emni* (security); (4) administration/finance; and (5) *al-jund* (soldiers).⁹⁰¹ Besides evolving into more *dawawin*, the names of the entities appear inconsistent among IS documents. Following Tamimi, Ingram *et al.* pointed out that these inconsistencies indicate 'structural flux and legion of local peculiarities within an organization fighting an insurgency in some places and conventional war in others.'⁹⁰²

A *fatwa* issued by IS clarified that the 'spoils [of war] are to be distributed according to the necessity dictated by the Islamic State's military situation.'⁹⁰³ Approximately eighteen percent of IS' 2015 income originated in *ghana'im* (spoils)⁹⁰⁴, which some analysts regarded as a way to legitimize activities that otherwise might be seen as illegal.⁹⁰⁵ Yet, the *diwan al-hisba* (religious compliance police) was charged with population control and enforcing the *shari'a*, promoting virtue, and preventing vice.⁹⁰⁶ The *hisba* 'is bound by direct order to the military commander without resort to the *wali* in special military matters.'⁹⁰⁷ In his study on bureaucracy in terrorist organizations, Shapiro concluded that internal 'punitive strategies should only exist when the organization can wield a credible threat of violence over the agent or their loved ones.'⁹⁰⁸ It allegedly guaranteed good governance by IS officials, who put public interest above their own and punished those who did not.⁹⁰⁹ IS tried to gain popular support by showing it was capable of good governance.

The *diwan al-jund* was responsible for managing wars, protecting its frontlines, planning and preparing resources for military raids/offensives, distributing troops, and supplying trained individuals when needed.⁹¹⁰ As Tamimi noted, during Baghdadi's leadership, IS established a military council under its first *emir* Haji Bakr.⁹¹¹ The establishment of a military council increased resilience against decapitation, but also meant professionalization compared to the *diwan* led by an individual war minister. The military council led the *diwan al-jund*.⁹¹² Bakr

901 Whiteside *et al.*, "The ISIS files – The Islamic State's department of soldiers," 6.

902 Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 247.

903 "Spoils of war for the mujahideen," *Islamic State*, no date, transl. Aymenn al-Tamimi.

904 Whiteside *et al.*, "The ISIS files – The Islamic State's department of soldiers," 40n85.

905 Mabon & Royle, *The origins of ISIS*, 142; Whiteside *et al.*, "The ISIS files – The Islamic State's department of soldiers," 19-20. Also see: Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 76.

906 "The structure of khilafa." Also see: Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 259.

907 "Qualities and manners of the mujahid commander," *Islamic State*, no date, transl. Aymenn al-Tamimi. Italics added.

908 Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 109.

909 Cf. Fukuyama, *Identity*, 128-9; Talha, "Administrative and judicial frameworks," 35.

910 "The structure of khilafa"; Whiteside *et al.*, "The ISIS files – The Islamic State's department of soldiers," 9.

911 Aymenn al-Tamimi, "An account of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi & Islamic State succession lines," *Aymenn Jawad*, January 24, 2016. Also see: Orton, "Governing the caliphate," 12.

912 Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 46; Kyle Orton, "The Islamic State's first war minister," *Kyle Orton's Blog*, January 25, 2017.

oversaw IS' 'creeping intervention in Syria'⁹¹³, allegedly using Naji's *Management of savagery* as a reference.⁹¹⁴ Bakr died in January 2014. Bakr's immediate successor as the *emir* of the military council was Abu Abdulrahman or Adnan al-Bilawi⁹¹⁵, who had planned IS' advance on Mosul.⁹¹⁶ After his death on June 4, 2014, Abu Mohannad al-Suwaydawi succeeded Bilawi. After Suwaydawi's death in May 2015, Abu Muslim al-Turkmani took over until he died in August 2015.⁹¹⁷ Next to the *shura* council, '[t]he Military Council is believed to be the most important institution'⁹¹⁸ within IS. The security and intelligence council was a sub-component of the military committee, which controlled the *emmi*. As former *Ba'ath* security officials dominated IS' military council since its inception, extremism researcher Kyle Orton concluded that these former *Ba'ath*-ists highlight the fact that 'ISIS has a mature bureaucracy capable of retaining intellectual capital and putting it to use in long-term planning.'⁹¹⁹ The security and intelligence council was also responsible for separating IS' strategic leadership from the rest of the organization, to avoid infiltration.⁹²⁰

Abdullah Ahmed al-Mashadani was a member of the military council and acted as IS' Minister for Foreign Affairs. As such, Mashadani managed the arrival of foreign jihadis and provided resources and housing. He was also the logistics coordinator for moving foreign fighters to their designated locations.⁹²¹ Mashadani's tasks explain why part of the *diwan al-jund* was the *idarat al-mu'askarat* (camps administration), which was responsible for IS' military camps and together with the *diwan al-'eftaa wa al-buhuth* (*fatwa* issuing and investigation department; also: *hay'at al-buhuth wa al-iftaa'*, the office of research and studies) published (theological) training manuals.⁹²² The *diwan al-jund* aimed to operate as a conventional force securing IS' territorial sovereignty instead of the insurgency force it was before. IS' armed forces adapted, made possible by 'an adhocratic organizational culture that embraced fluidity and constant change.'⁹²³ Since the JJJ days, IS' predecessors had known a department for its fighters and,

913 Reuter, "The terror strategist"; Whiteside *et al.*, "The ISIS files – The Islamic State's department of soldiers," 7. Also see: Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 108-9.

914 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 170.

915 Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 46; Whiteside *et al.*, "The ISIS files – The Islamic State's department of soldiers," 7.

916 "Islamic State liberates the city of Mosul," *Islamic State Report* 3 (1435H|2014), 4; "Islamic State News," *Dabiq* 1, 47; Whiteside *et al.*, "The ISIS files – The Islamic State's department of soldiers," 7.

917 Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 46; Weiss & Hassan, *ISIS*, 124. Suwaydawi was the *kunya* of Adnan al-Suwaydawi al-Dulaymi.

918 Kyle Orton, "The Islamic State's deputy and the ghost of Saddam Hussein," *Kyle Orton's Blog*, August 22, 2015.

919 Orton, "The Islamic State's deputy." Also see: Graaf & Pothoven, "De Islamitische inlichtingenstaat," 461-4; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 168-70; Orton, "Governing the caliphate," 12.

920 Orton, "Governing the caliphate," 12-3.

921 *Ibid.*, 49.

922 Aymenn al-Tamimi, "The archivist. Unseen Islamic State military commanders manual. Qualities and manners of the mujahid commander," *Aymenn Jawad*, April 11, 2016.

923 Whiteside *et al.*, "The ISIS files – The Islamic State's department of soldiers," 5. Also see: Bilger, "ISIS annual reports," 10-1; Boghani, "David Petraeus."

depending on the situation, operated either centralized or decentralized⁹²⁴ and changed in size.⁹²⁵ From one hybrid army in Syria and a guerrilla army in Iraq in 2013, the department expanded its force structure to four distinct entities after the conquest of Mosul, each with a different purpose.⁹²⁶ These four entities were: (1) the caliphate army, a conventional force protecting IS' territorial integrity across Iraq and Syria; (2) the Dabiq army, loosely organized foreign fighters grouped into ethnic or language-centric units and dispersed among different fronts as 'highly motivated shock troops defending key nodes of the caliphate'⁹²⁷; (3) the *al-usra* army, a special operations force for defending Mosul; and, (4) the army of the provinces, which were all forces under control of a particular *wali*.⁹²⁸

An IS *emir* interviewed for this study explained that he had no interactions with the foreign IS members: 'they are in separate groups. We form separate groups with the locals. We do not have any contact with the foreigners.'⁹²⁹ The IS *emir* suggested that within the strong IS hierarchy, no interaction took place with the foreign fighter sub-organizations, acknowledging the *status aparte* of the foreign fighters of the Dabiq army. The organizational structure of its military showed IS' emphasis on specialization. Apart from separate armies for conventional and irregular forces, on a lower level, IS had specialized units, for example, for sniping and intelligence. Some difference exists over whether IS tried to diversify the origin of a unit's fighters. Some analysts indicated that IS did share the burden of losses over as many areas as possible, with the unintended benefit of quickly spreading knowledge and skills.⁹³⁰ Other analysts suggested that IS grouped fighters with the same origin to strengthen unit cohesion.⁹³¹

Before advancing on Mosul, notably in Fallujah and Ramadi in late 2013 and early 2014⁹³², ISIS units 'moved in large semiconventional formations.'⁹³³ ISIS proved successful due to a combination of 'significant military build-up, tactical innovations in urban terrorism and shifts between conventional and guerrilla warfare.'⁹³⁴ By the end of 2013, 'ISIS was a sophisticated

924 *Ibid.*, 6-7. Cf. Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 16.

925 Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 43.

926 Whiteside *et al.*, "The ISIS files – The Islamic State's department of soldiers," 8.

927 *Ibid.*, 8.

928 *Ibid.*, 8.

929 IS *emir*.

930 Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 43.

931 Milton, "Structure of a state," 32. Cf. Wietse van den Berge, "Muitelij in Frankrijk. Gevechtsbereidheid in de Eerste Wereldoorlog," *Militaire Spectator* 174:1 (2005), 12.

932 Ben Connable, "Iraq picture may not be as bleak as it seems," *RAND*, January 31, 2014.; Fishman, *The master plan*, 51, 183; "ISW covers al-Qaeda in Iraq. Stand-off underway in Fallujah and Ramadi," *Institute for the Study of War*, January 6, 2014.

933 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 238.

934 Ashour, *How ISIS fights*, 39.

military organization with the ability to conceive and to carry out multiple coordinated attacks across Iraq.⁹³⁵

The *diwan* of *emni* maintained public order⁹³⁶ but was also responsible for collecting intelligence, handling agents, and conducting operations within and beyond IS-controlled territories. As such, '[t]he *emni*, [...] served as ISIS's *de facto* intelligence organization, and was responsible for collecting intelligence on military affairs, ISIS' citizens, and for gathering intelligence for running new attacks and operations abroad.'⁹³⁷ While some analysts argued that IS based the *emni*'s organization on the *Ba'ath* party's *mukhabarat* (secret police)⁹³⁸, others argued that jihadi-salafists had well-established security organizations without much influence from former *Ba'ath*-ists.⁹³⁹ In its *Dabiq* magazine, IS referred to 'the Islamic State's security apparatus'⁹⁴⁰ without providing much detail. IS did mention that its security apparatus was able to record a meeting of a secret enemy cell in IS' held territory and was able to prevent attacks that the cell had planned against IS. Although who, when, where, and how were not mentioned, a remark that the cell coordinated with 'crusaders, the FSA [Free Syrian Army], and the PKK [*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, Kurdistan Worker's Party]⁹⁴¹ suggests that this event had happened in Syria. It illustrated *emni*'s alleged capacities, though.

IS' committees and offices, comprised of specialized personnel, dealt with miscellaneous matters. These committees included the *hijrah* committee, which received foreign volunteers and distributed them among the appropriate *dawawin*; the prisoners' and martyrs' committee, which resolved matters of captured IS fighters and provided aftercare for their families; the administration of distant *wilayat*, which oversaw the provinces outside Iraq and Syria; the public and tribal relations office, which liaised between the IS leadership and the tribal leaders within IS-held territory; and *diwan al-eftaa' wa al-buhuth*.⁹⁴² Established after IS proclaimed the caliphate, the *diwan al-eftaa' wa al-buhuth*, while changing names occasionally⁹⁴³, investigated religious questions and disseminated *fatwas*, thus resolving matters submitted to the office. The *diwan* described its role as 'an independent entity concerned with researching

935 Blair, "ISIS." Also see: Bilger, "ISIS annual reports," 10-1.

936 "The structure of khilafa."

937 Graaf & Yayla, "The ISIS files – Policing as rebel governance," 15-6. Italics in original. Also see: Anne Speckhard & Ahmet Yayla, "The ISIS *emni*. Origins and inner workings of ISIS's intelligence apparatus," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11:1 (2017), 3.

938 Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 357; Graaf & Pothoven, "De Islamitische inlichtingenstaat," 461-4.

939 Aymenn al-Tamimi, "The archivist. The Islamic State's security apparatus structure in the provinces," *Aymenn Jawad*, August 2, 2017.

940 "Islamic State reports," *Dabiq* 6 (1436H|2014), 31.

941 *Ibid.*, 31.

942 "The structure of khilafa."

943 Aymenn al-Tamimi, "The Islamic State research office's self-history," *Aymenn Jawad*, December 4, 2018; "The structure of khilafa."

Shari'i issues and issuing *fatwas* on matters of incidents and events, and it is directly affiliated with the *Amir al-Mu'mineen* [supreme leader, that is, the caliph] or whoso represents him, and it was established by direct order from him.⁹⁴⁴ The office issued dozens of works and instructed which textbooks to use in the training camps.⁹⁴⁵

IS had central management with departments: “[a]ll Islamic State facilities are to be set forth in the service of the military commander and that will take place following a letter to the military *amir* in the Islamic State.”⁹⁴⁶ The focus on the military seemed to offer IS’ military commanders some space for maneuvering. The same document summed up the elements the military commanders had to coordinate with, though: the security officials of the *wilaya*, the provincial governor’s office for an overview of equipment gained and lost during battle, the media office, the camps administration for new *mujahid*, and – perhaps most important – the military *emir*, who oversaw military operations in a specific region.⁹⁴⁷ This structure was applied on lower levels, too, like the *wilayat*, providing these entities significant autonomy.⁹⁴⁸ Such autonomy might explain possible discrepancies between different IS entities.⁹⁴⁹ Other differences occurred within repressive systems, as over time, control decreases.⁹⁵⁰ Especially when the rational actor paradigm struggles to explain such discrepancies, studying IS by applying the organizational behavior paradigm might prove beneficial for understanding IS’ strategic decision-making.⁹⁵¹

4.2.5 Leaders: Baghdadi, Turkmani, and Anbari

IS’ strategic decision-makers in 2014 were selected on political and religious qualities.⁹⁵² Furthermore, IS leadership demanded a robust military element.⁹⁵³ The IS leader to whom the organization’s leadership pledged allegiance was Baghdadi⁹⁵⁴, who, as IS’ self-proclaimed

944 “Clarifications about some of the works of the Maktab al-Buhuth wa al-Dirasat during two years,” *Islamic State*, July 2, 2016, transl. Aymenn al-Tamimi.

945 Aymenn al-Tamimi, “The archivist. Unseen Islamic State fatwas on jihad and sabaya,” *Aymenn Jawad*, September 25, 2015; Tamimi, “The Islamic State research office’s self-history”; “The structure of khilafa.”

946 “Qualities and manners.” Italics added.

947 *Ibid.*

948 Shapiro, *The terrorist’s dilemma*, 94. For type of structure, see: Arturo Bustamante, “U-form vs. M-form. How to understand decision autonomy under healthcare decentralization?” *International Journal of Health Policy Management* 5:9 (2016), 561; Gennaro Guofano, “U vs M-form organization,” *Fourweek MBA*, August 12, 2022.

949 Cf. Shapiro, *The terrorist’s dilemma*, 94-5.

950 Luttwak, *Strategy*, 84.

951 For example: Graaf & Yayla, “The ISIS files – Policing as rebel governance.”

952 “Imamah is from the millah of Ibrahim,” *Dabiq* 1 (1435H|2014), 20-31.

953 “Qualities and manners.” Cf. Naji, *The management of savagery*, 37-40.

954 “From hijrah to khilafa,” 40. Baghdadi was the *kunya* of Ibrahim Awwad Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai.

caliph, adopted the name Ibrahim. Baghdadi ran a war cabinet consisting of himself and his two deputies⁹⁵⁵: for Iraq, Abu Muslim al-Turkmani⁹⁵⁶, and for Syria, Abu Ali al-Anbari.⁹⁵⁷

Baghdadi was the youngest of three⁹⁵⁸ or four⁹⁵⁹ brothers in a middle-class family that – although disputed – traced back its lineage to the prophet Muhammad. Baghdadi supposedly originated from the Albu-Badri tribe.⁹⁶⁰ Through marriage, he obtained influential tribal affiliations with the approximately seven million members of the Duleimi tribe, primarily located in Samarra and Diyala.⁹⁶¹ Born on July 1, 1971⁹⁶², and raised in Samarra, Baghdadi had not experienced any troubles between Sunni and Shia. Yet, during the Iran-Iraq War, at school, Baghdadi was taught to chant '[a]l-mawt lil fars wa al-majooos [death to the Persians and the Shia].'⁹⁶³ Saddam Hussein's persistence and brutality impressed the juvenile Baghdadi. In 1998, Baghdadi started studying for a bachelor's in Islamic Studies⁹⁶⁴, eventually obtaining a doctorate in June 2006 on *tajwid* (pronunciation rules for reciting the Quran). Baghdadi already had become acquainted with Zarqawi, after Baghdadi – then using the *kunya* Abu Du'aa – had co-founded the Islamic militia *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* (Army of the followers of the teachings and the collective)⁹⁶⁵ in 2003 and served as the head of the militia's *shari'a* committee. Baghdadi was arrested in Fallujah in January 2004 and imprisoned in Camp Bucca in southern Iraq, where he met future IS leaders.⁹⁶⁶ Baghdadi was released from prison on December 8, 2004⁹⁶⁷, according to some accounts among a large group of inmates, all assessed as low-level threats by coalition analysts.⁹⁶⁸

955 Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 128; Orton, "The Islamic State's official biography of the caliph's deputy," n6. Also see: Charles Lister, "Islamic State senior leadership. Who's who," *Brookings*, October 20, 2014; Abu al-Waleed al-Salafi, Twitter, no date, transl. Aymenn al-Tamimi, in Tamimi, "An account of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi." For feasibility, this study focuses on the war cabinet.

956 Turkmani was the *kunya* of Fadl Ahmad Abdullah al-Hiyali.

957 "Der Gelehrte," 10; Orton, "The Islamic State's deputy." Anbari was the *kunya* of Abd al-Rahman al-Qaduli.

958 Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 102. Also see: Joby Warrick, *Black flags. The rise of ISIS* (New York: Anchor Books, 2015), 24.

959 Orton, "Governing the caliphate," 16.

960 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 121.

961 Abdel Atwan, "A portrait of Caliph Ibrahim," *Cairo Review* 19 (2015), 69; Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 220. Also see: Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 121.

962 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 161; Orton, "Governing the caliphate," 16.

963 Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 99.

964 Turki al Binali, "Stretch forth your hands to give the bay'ah to Al-Baghdadi," August 5, 2013, transl. Ubaidullah ibn Adam al-Ibrahim, *Kyle Orton's Blog*, January 8, 2015; Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 103.

965 Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 103. Also see: Omer Spahic, "Too many Islamic sects and groups. Which group is right? The emergence of the concept of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah," *About Islam*, January 4, 2018.

966 These included: Abu Muslim al-Turkmani, IS' future Iraq deputy; Abu Muhammed al-Adnani, IS' future chief spokesman; Abu Abdulrahman al-Bilawi, future member of IS' *shura* council; and Abu Mohammed al-Golani, future leader of IS' Syrian branch – and later rival – *JaN*.

967 Hunter Walker, "Here is the army's declassified Iraq prison file on the leader of ISIS," *Business Insider*, February 18, 2015. Also see: Orton, "Governing the caliphate," 14.

968 Atwan, "A portrait of Caliph Ibrahim," 71; Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 99-104. Also see: Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 162-5. Hashim claimed Baghdadi was arrested in Fallujah in February 2004.

Baghdadi joined the *Ba'ath*-salafist faction *Jaysh al-Mujahideen* after his release from prison. Possibly, he served as an AQI agent within the ranks of *Jaysh al-Mujahideen*. Baghdadi's allegiances around 2005-2006 remain disputed.⁹⁶⁹ Yet, AQI's senior leadership, in particular Muhājir, invited Baghdadi and his organization to join the MSC.⁹⁷⁰ The merger occurred on January 29, 2006.⁹⁷¹ Muhājir, with whom Baghdadi maintained a close relationship, asked Baghdadi in MSC's *shari'a* committee.⁹⁷² Later, Baghdadi headed ISI's *shari'a* committee and was a member of its *shura* council.⁹⁷³ Eventually, Baghdadi became responsible for ISI's general committee, overseeing ISI provinces in Iraq. He frequently visited tribes to liaise and requested them to pledge *bay'ah* to ISI's then-*emir*, Abu Umar al-Baghdadi. When Abu Umar al-Baghdadi died, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi became his successor⁹⁷⁴; his battlefield experiences, lineage, and doctorate made him an outstanding candidate.⁹⁷⁵ IS crafted a warrior-scholar image for Baghdadi, which usually preceded live footage as Baghdadi rarely appeared in public.⁹⁷⁶ Bin Laden's death in 2011 might have been a factor here, creating a leadership vacuum within the global jihadi-salafist movement and thus an opportunity for Baghdadi to claim its leadership.⁹⁷⁷

Baghdadi did have battlefield experience in Iraq. As a military leader, he was described 'shrewd and calculating.'⁹⁷⁸ Baghdadi had studied *al-Qaeda* operations abroad, from which he learned to 'immediately order full withdrawal from a battle that cannot easily be won.'⁹⁷⁹ Furthermore, 'Baghdadi's military style was robust and confrontational, favoring hit-and-run strikes and full-on raids.'⁹⁸⁰ The raids in particular resembled the *modus operandi* of seventh century Muslim fighters, who sometimes turned the raids into permanent occupation of territories.⁹⁸¹ Next to such pragmatism, analysts described Baghdadi as vindictive⁹⁸², 'ruthless and menacing,' 'calm and self-possessed,' and 'charismatic.'⁹⁸³ A former IS commander described Baghdadi as 'resolute. He

969 Orton, "Governing the caliphate," 18-9.

970 Atwan, "A portrait of caliph Ibrahim," 72; Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 165.

971 Binali, "Stretch forth your hands"; Fishman, *The master plan*, 151; Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 99-104.

972 Atwan, "A portrait of caliph Ibrahim," 72.

973 Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 99-104.

974 Binali, "Stretch forth your hands."

975 Fishman, *The master plan*, 152.

976 Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 173; Orton, "Governing the caliphate," 22. For example: "In the hospitality of Amir al-Mu'mineen," *Al-Furqan Media Foundation*, April 29, 2019, transl. Halummu; Kyle Orton, "The reappearance of the caliph," *Kyle Orton's Blog*, May 10, 2019. Cf. "Image of Osama bin Laden," no date.

977 Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 17.

978 Atwan, "A portrait of caliph Ibrahim," 68.

979 *Ibid.*, 69.

980 *Ibid.*, 72.

981 Ringmar, *History of international relations*, 74.

982 Atwan, "A portrait of caliph Ibrahim," 68. *Shura* council member Jamal al-Hamdani had voted against Baghdadi as leader of IS and was murdered shortly after Baghdadi's election, allegedly by order of Baghdadi.

983 *Ibid.*, 68; Abu al-Waleed al-Salafi, Twitter, no date, transl. Aymenn al-Tamimi, in Tamimi, "An account of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi." Cf. "Battle of Indochina," cited in Freedman, *Command*, 38.

would not go back on a decision unless he was 100% certain that it was wrong. Only then would he change his mind. He would not admit any faults. Rather, he would try to cover them up.⁹⁸⁴

Abu Muslim al-Turkmani was an ethnic Turkoman who originated from Tal Afar. Turkmani had a long career in intelligence, had a background in special operations within Saddam Hussein's elite Republican Guard, and was a former lieutenant colonel in Iraq's army. He remained with the *Ba'ath* regime until Americans fired him from service and imprisoned him in Camp Bucca in 2003. There, he met Baghdadi in 2004.⁹⁸⁵ Alongside Anbari, Turkmani contributed to integrating Anbari's Tal Afar jihadists with Kurdistan-based AaI by providing military training.⁹⁸⁶ Turkmani in IS combined several roles at the same time.⁹⁸⁷ Baghdadi appointed Turkmani governor of the conquered territories in Iraq in 2014. In that role, he monitored local IS councils and maintained internal security.⁹⁸⁸ Perhaps most significant was Turkmani's position as the deputy to Baghdadi, who officially headed IS' military council and was the direct commander of IS's forces in Iraq. Turkmani took over the military committee in June 2014. Turkmani was skilled in operational security and counterintelligence like his predecessors due to his service in the *Ba'ath* security apparatus.⁹⁸⁹ Nevertheless, a drone strike killed Turkmani near Mosul on August 18, 2015.⁹⁹⁰ During his jihadist career, Turkmani used several other *kunya's*: Abu Mutaz al-Qurayshi and Haji Mutazz.⁹⁹¹

Whereas Turkmani was the governor of Iraq, Anbari held the same position for Syria, being responsible for IS' Syrian affairs and intelligence cells.⁹⁹² Also, Anbari acted as IS' finance minister.⁹⁹³ Some analysts believed Anbari served as Baghdadi's deputy for his political pragmatism, as he lacked the extensive knowledge of *shari'a* that other IS leaders had.⁹⁹⁴ Anbari originated from the Nineveh countryside⁹⁹⁵ but grew up in Tal Afar, where he had

984 Abdul Nasser Qardash, interview, *Al-Arabiya*, May 20, 2020, transl. unknown, in "Captured senior ISIS commander Abdul Nasser Qardash: fanatics in ISIS had the upper hand; new leader not as resolute as al-Baghdadi," *Middle East Media Research Institute*, May 20, 2020. Also see: Salafi, in Tamimi, "An account of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi."

985 Orton, "The Islamic State's deputy."

986 "Der Gelehrte," 11.

987 Whiteside *et al.*, "The ISIS files – The Islamic State's department of soldiers," 7.

988 Cf. Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 109.

989 Orton, "The Islamic State's deputy"; Whiteside *et al.*, "The ISIS files – The Islamic State's Department of Soldiers," 7.

990 Barbara Starr & Jim Acosta, "U.S.: ISIS No. 2 killed in U.S. drone strike in Iraq," *CNN*, August 26, 2015. Also see: Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 109; Orton, "The Islamic State's deputy." IS acknowledged Turkmani's death on October 13, 2015. Others claimed Turkmani was killed in November 2014, December 2014, or February 2015.

991 Orton, "The Islamic State's official biography of the caliph's deputy," n6.

992 *Ibid.*, n9, n12. Also see: Orton, "Governing the caliphate." 29. Anbari used numerous *kunya's*: Abu Iman, Haji Iman, Abu Alaa al-Afri, Abu Abdullah Rashid al-Baghdadi, Abu Jasim al-Iraqi, Abu Umar al-Qurdash, Abu Ali al-Qurdash al-Turkmani, and Dar Islami.

993 Starr *et al.*, "Pentagon."

994 Weiss & Hassan, *ISIS*, 124. Also see: Orton, "Governing the caliphate," 24.

995 Aymenn al-Tamimi, "The biography of Abu Ali al-Anbari. Full translation and analysis," *Aymenn Jawad*,

met Turkmani, who allegedly recruited Anbari for *jihad*. Like Turkmani, Anbari was ethnic Turkoman.⁹⁹⁶ He eventually joined AQL.⁹⁹⁷ Anbari had been a preacher in Mosul during Iraq's *Ba'ath* regime⁹⁹⁸ when he witnessed *Ba'ath*-ist abuses and was harassed by the security services after he spoke out. He moved to Tal Afar and became involved in several jihadi-salafist groups, which assisted mergers, including of JTJ into AQL, in which Zarqawi appointed Anbari as his deputy. Before accepting the position, Anbari was arrested and detained in Abu Ghraib prison. He was released after a few months in late 2003 or early 2004, as American investigators could not verify Anbari's identity or importance. Anbari returned to AQL, assisted in merging into MSC, and was elected MSC's first *emir*. On April 16, 2006, American forces again arrested Anbari, and again, the investigators could not verify his identity or assess his importance. Nevertheless, it took until early 2012 before Anbari was released. After his return, ISI leadership requested Anbari to establish lines of communication with *al-Qaeda* and its affiliates. He was closely involved in the decision to dissolve JaN and establish ISIS. Later, Anbari became responsible for the *shari'a* council and joined the delegated committee in Syria. He liaised with the factions and organizations and guided and facilitated the judges and Islamic courts founded by ISIS in conquered areas. Therefore, Anbari established several *shari'a*-related *dawawin*.⁹⁹⁹ After ISIS had captured Mosul in June 2014, Anbari requested to join the *jihad* in Iraq, participating in battles against the PKK and the KRI *peshmerga* on and around Mount Sinjar. Yet, ISIS summoned him to assume a government position, eventually initiating the Islamic monetary project, for which he met with merchants and administrators within IS territory. Anbari died at age sixty during a coalition raid, allegedly by igniting his explosive belt when almost arrested.¹⁰⁰⁰ Anbari's biographic obituary and other descriptions sketch a fanatic jihadi-salafist who built and maintained relations among like-minded organizations and their leaders and held great authority. He appeared to truly believe in *jihad*, joining fights near Sinjar despite fulfilling leading positions. Anbari's obituary mentioned that he was asked or tasked to perform specific duties within IS and its predecessors, which might have contributed to his authority as a suitable man for the job.

December 17, 2018. Also see: Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 128; Orton, "The Islamic State's deputy." Moubayed and Orton claimed Anbari originated from Mosul.

996 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 176; Orton, "The Islamic State's deputy."

997 Tamimi, "The biography of Abu Ali al-Anbari."

998 Cf. Lister, "Islamic State senior leadership,"; Moubayed, *Under the black flag*, 128; Weiss & Hassan, *ISIS*, 124. Anbari was long believed to have been a senior intelligence officer in the Saddam regime as a major general in the Iraqi army, originating from Anbar

999 These included the departments for judgment and grievances, for the *hisbah*, for *da'wah*, and for *zakat*, as well as the office of research and studies, which investigated religious questions and disseminated *fatwas*, thus resolving matters submitted to the office.

1000 "Der Gelehrte," 10-5. Also see: Orton, "The Islamic State's official biography of the caliph's deputy," n10; Starr *et al.*, "Pentagon."

4.3 The KRI

Forming the largest non-state nation in the Middle East¹⁰⁰¹, Kurds live divided among Armenia, Georgia, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey.¹⁰⁰² Analysts estimated the number of Kurds to be between twenty-five and thirty million, with approximately one million living in the diaspora outside the Middle East.¹⁰⁰³ Analysts estimated the 2012 KRI population to be around 5.3 million.¹⁰⁰⁴ Since around 3,000 bce, the Kurds are among the indigenous people in the Middle East. The Arabs conquered their area in the seventh century.¹⁰⁰⁵ During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Saljuks ruled the Kurds indirectly through tribal families and chiefs.¹⁰⁰⁶ The Ottomans incorporated the area into the Ottoman Empire, leaving the remainder of the Kurdish territory to Persia¹⁰⁰⁷ in 1516.¹⁰⁰⁸ After the First World War, France, Great Britain, and Russia controlled the Kurdish regions. During the Versailles Peace Conference (1919), the Allies supported the idea of forming a Kurdish state, leading to the Sèvres Treaty (1920), in which the Kurds were promised a state by the Allies and the Ottoman government.¹⁰⁰⁹ Yet, the signatories did not ratify the Sèvres Treaty, and the new state of Turkey came into existence with the 1923 Lausanne Treaty.¹⁰¹⁰ The Kurds from the former Ottoman Empire lived in either the new Turkish state or in one of the newly created British or French mandate territories, which eventually became independent states after the Second World War.¹⁰¹¹ However, it was not until after the Second World War and the formation of new nation-states in the Middle East that ethnicity among Kurds became important in reaction to the territory-possessive attitudes of the states where they lived.¹⁰¹² Figure 4.3 indicates the areas where Kurds live in the Middle East and the area according to the Sèvres Treaty.

1001 Noi, "The Arab spring," 15-29; "Syria's Kurds. A struggle within a struggle" (Brussels: *International Crisis Group*, 2013), i.

1002 Harff & Gurr, *Ethnic conflict in IR*, 38-40; Ivan Nasidze *et al.*, "MtDNA and Y-chromosome variation in Kurdish groups," *Annals of Human Genetics* 69:4 (2005), 401-12.

1003 Harff & Gurr, *Ethnic conflict in IR*, 38. Exact numbers are difficult to obtain as some authorities try to diminish the number of Kurds, for example to emphasize national unity. On the other hand, Kurdish leaders tend to overestimate the number to seem more powerful.

1004 Shapland, "Iraqi Kurds' aim of statehood stays out of reach."

1005 Nasidze *et al.*, "MtDNA and Y-chromosome variation," 401-412.

1006 Antony Black, *The history of Islamic political thought*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 92.

1007 Nasidze *et al.*, "MtDNA and Y-chromosome variation," 401-12.

1008 Black, *The history of Islamic political thought*, 196.

1009 Harff & Gurr, *Ethnic conflict in IR*, pp 39-45; Noi, "The Arab Spring," 15-6.

1010 Harff & Gurr, *Ethnic conflict in IR*, 44; Mansfield, *A history of the Middle East*, 170-1; Noi, "The Arab Spring," 15-29.

1011 Barr, *A line in the sand*, 283-97.

1012 Jordi Tejel, *Syria's Kurds. History, politics and society* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 16-7, 42.

Figure 4.3: map indicating Kurdish inhabited areas (brown), the area appointed to form Kurdistan according to the 1920 Sèvres treaty (red), and the area that became the KRI (yellow; indicated here as Iraqi Kurdistan).¹⁰¹³



4.3.1 History (1992-2014): repression, internal fragmentation

The Iraqi Kurds have suffered a history of repression and instigated rebellion against Iraqi regimes. Kurdish rebels benefitted from the mountainous area to seek shelter and as a base for staging attacks. A local saying reflected the Kurdish reliance on the mountains: ‘[I]level the mountains, and in a day the Kurds would be no more.’¹⁰¹⁴ Violent repression and the consecutive rebellion of the Iraqi Kurds started during the British mandate period (1919-1932) and continued since the 1932 creation of modern Iraq. The pan-Arab nationalist *Ba’ath* party longed for a robust Arab nation-state and regarded Kurdish nationalism as a threat to this ideal. During the Iran-Iraq War, both warring parties supported different factions of Iraqi Kurds to weaken the other side. Still, Iranian support for rebellious Iraqi Kurds seemed to confirm the perceived threat of Kurdish nationalism, as Iran tried to weaken Iraq from within by igniting a Kurdish revolt. Although some Kurdish factions negotiated with the Iraqi regime until 1984, Iraq fiercely repressed the Kurdish rebellion, including use of chemical weapons against the Kurdish population.¹⁰¹⁵ Following the 1991 Gulf War, United Nations Security

1013 Hakan Özoğlu, “Lessons from the idea, and rejection of Kurdistan,” *NY Times*, July 5, 2014.

1014 Cited in Harff & Gurr, *Ethnic conflict in IR*, 40. Also see: Marshall, *Prisoners of geography*, 155.

1015 Aziz, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 5-6, 130. Infamous is the Anfal campaign, during which mustard gas was used by Iraqi troops against the population of the Kurdish village of Halabja in 1988.

Council Resolution 688 established a safe haven for Kurdish refugees, including a no-fly zone enforced by American and British airplanes. Iraq withdrew civil administration from the area, leaving 'Iraqi Kurdistan [the KRI] to function de facto independently'¹⁰¹⁶ as a 'de facto state.'¹⁰¹⁷ The KRI came into existence. Iraqi Kurds held elections in 1992 and created the Kurdistan National Assembly as its legislative power and the KRG as its executive power.

A dispute over customs revenues ignited the Kurdish Civil War (1994-1998) between the KRI's two main political factions, the KDP and the PUK.¹⁰¹⁸ Negotiations to end the Kurdish Civil War started in 1996, initiated by Great Britain, Turkey, and the United States. It led to the Washington Agreement, signed by both parties on September 17, 1998.¹⁰¹⁹ The conflict caused approximately eight thousand casualties¹⁰²⁰, and tensions have remained since. Nevertheless, during the 2003 Gulf War, the KRI proved a valuable regional ally for the United States and Great Britain.¹⁰²¹ Considered as one of the allies that defeated Iraq, '[t]he Kurds entered [...] national politics on an equal footing with Iraq's Arabs.'¹⁰²² Also, the KRI's authorities assisted Western special operations forces in targeting jihadi-salafist ANSA *Ansar al-Sunnah* (Partisans of the teachings, AaS) and its allies.¹⁰²³ The new 2005 Iraqi constitution contained the KRI in a federal setting¹⁰²⁴, allowing the KRI to maintain security forces and embassies abroad. Within the Iraqi context, until 2011 – when American troops left the country – the KRI was hardly involved in countering the insurgency. When American troops returned in 2012, the KRI became more actively involved than the nine years before.¹⁰²⁵ In May 2013, the KRI's *peshmerga* moved towards the outskirts of Kirkuk when ISF redeployed to fight ISI.¹⁰²⁶ Tensions between the KRI and Iraqi authorities remained, though. The tensions included control over territory claimed by Iraq and the KRI, notably the oil-rich Kirkuk area.¹⁰²⁷ The tensions led to the KRI allegedly refusing to support ISF during battles with ISIS over Fallujah and Ramadi in January

1016 Noi, "The Arab spring," 21. Also see: Marshall, *Prisoners of geography*, 154-5.

1017 Aziz, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 5; Fliervoet, "Fighting for Kurdistan?" 13; Gunter, "The foreign policy of the Iraqi Kurds," 9.

1018 Romano, "Sub-state actors and foreign policy risk-taking," 350-1; Wladimir van Wilgenburg & Mario Fumerton, "Kurdistan's political armies. The challenge of unifying the peshmerga forces" (Beirut: *Carnegie Middle East Center*, 2015), 1. Also see: "Arming Iraq's Kurds," 5; Fliervoet, "Fighting for Kurdistan?" 14; Shapland, "Iraqi Kurds' aim of statehood stays out of reach."

1019 "Kurdish peshmerga."

1020 Stefano Torelli, "Kurdistan and the Middle East. Historical divisions and international plots," in *Kurdistan. An invisible nation*, Stefano Torelli (ed.) (Milan: ISPI, 2016), 38.

1021 Fishman, *The master plan*, 29.

1022 Noi, "The Arab spring," 22.

1023 Fishman, *The master plan*, 29; Romano, "Sub-state actors and foreign policy risk-taking," 353. AaS was mainly active in northern Iraq and consisted of many former Aal-members.

1024 Shapland, "Iraqi Kurds' aim of statehood stays out of reach."

1025 Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 185.

1026 "Iraqi Kurds 'fully control Kirkuk' as army flees," *BBC*, June 12, 2014.

1027 Albert Charara, "Why Kirkuk matters. A Kirkuk-centric approach to Iraqi election and the country's most immediate challenges," *Notes Internationals* 197 (2018), 2; Nahwi Saeed, "The problem of Kirkuk. Its complexity and importance" (Suleimaniyah: *Kurdistan Conflict and Crisis Research Center*, 2017).

2014¹⁰²⁸, and Iraqi authorities cutting the 17 percent of the Iraqi national budget allocation for the KRI.¹⁰²⁹

4.3.2 Strategic goal: pursue autonomy

The KRI's aim in its publicly available 2013 document "Kurdistan Region of Iraq 2020. A vision for the future" was that '[i]n the Kurdistan Region–Iraq, all people will enjoy the benefits of freedom, health, welfare, and economic security and opportunity.'¹⁰³⁰ The document referred to the post-First World War plan for a Kurdish state.¹⁰³¹ Although the KRI's official narrative is not to strive for independence, an implicit undertone seemed to claim otherwise and the KRI aimed for more political autonomy.¹⁰³²

Political scientist Hajar Sadoon observed that 'the KRI can be said to be a strategic rational actor matching its policies with its available power.'¹⁰³³ Yet, internally, the KDP and the PUK were 'unable to formulate a consistent and cohesive political and military strategy, they had developed the federal region through competitive clientelistic networks.'¹⁰³⁴ In their analysis of relations between Iraqi authorities and the KRI from 1991 to 2019, political scientists Kamaran Palani *et al.* concluded that 'despite the internal divisions between key political actors [the KDP and the PUK], neither abandoning the goal of de facto independence, nor the complete reintegration into the parent state [Iraq], is considered a realistic policy option by any of the players, due to the longevity of de facto independence and the prevailing mistrust between the de facto state population, leadership, and the parent state.'¹⁰³⁵ Externally, other countries with a Kurdish minority were cautious and shared an interest in prohibiting the formation of a Kurdish state out of fear of a 'domino effect in the region.'¹⁰³⁶ The rivalry between the KDP and the PUK created an opportunity for external actors to maneuver between the two parties to pursue their own goals:

[o]n the one hand, Turkey has forged increasingly close ties with the Kurdish Regional Government, especially with the KDP, in order to contrast the PKK and to create its own sphere of influence in northern Iraq. On the other, the PUK has continued to seek and

1028 "Offensive manoeuvres. The Islamic State advances on the Kurds in northern Iraq," *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, August 8, 2014.

1029 "Oil sales obstacles"; Sadoon, "The Islamic State and the independence referendum," 8.

1030 "Kurdistan Region of Iraq 2020. A vision for the future," *Kurdistan Regional Government - Ministry of Planning*, 2013, 1.

1031 *Ibid.*, 2.

1032 Fliervoet, "Fighting for Kurdistan?" 12.

1033 Sadoon, "The Islamic State and the independence referendum," 15.

1034 Joost Jongerden, "Governing Kurdistan. Self-administration in the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq and the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria," *Ethnopolitics* 18:1 (2019), 69.

1035 Palani *et al.* "De facto states engagement with parent states," 787.

1036 Noi, "The Arab Spring," 26.

obtain the support of Iran, in turn interested in extending its influence in Iraq through an alliance with local actors. Moreover, the PUK tolerates the presence of the PKK in the Qandil area, thus indirectly counterbalancing the hegemony of the KDP in Iraqi Kurdistan's internal balances. As a result of the emergence and the advance of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq since 2014, Iraqi and Syrian Kurds have also assumed another role, that of the vanguard in the fight against the caliphate's jihadism.¹⁰³⁷

Historically, however, 'the *Peshmerga* have always been a defensive force, retreating back into the mountains in very small groups, absorbing the punishment inflicted upon them by the Iraqi Army, and then undermining their opponents over a long period of low-intensity warfare.'¹⁰³⁸

In 2005, the Iraqi constitution allowed the KRI a Department of Foreign Relations¹⁰³⁹, established in September 2006 under a KDP minister. The department administered KRG foreign policy and bolstered the KRI's international relations.¹⁰⁴⁰ Next to informal external networks through parties, tribal relations, or the diaspora, this indicates that the KRI invested in the diplomatic instrument to achieve foreign policy goals. The KRI maintained a neutral position towards other Middle Eastern conflicts, using its secular profile to remain distant from Sunni-Shia rivalries.¹⁰⁴¹ Furthermore, the KRI used its economic instrument, trade with Turkey, to establish and enhance foreign relations.¹⁰⁴²

4.3.3 Ideology: Kurdish nationalism

A rational actor paradigm historical background would explain Kurdish aspirations as rational interests of a single unitary actor, that is, the KRI. The paradigm would fall short of addressing the complexities within the Kurdish communities, though: '[t]he group which is known and recognized under the generic name of "Kurd" is far from being homogenous. It includes several dialects, religious denominations (Sunnism, Shi'ism, Alevism, and Yazidism), and various social and geographic identities (both tribal and nontribal).'¹⁰⁴³ Therefore, analysts labeled

1037 Torelli, "Kurdistan and the Middle East," 39. Also see: Wietse van den Berge, "PKK and Turkey. Time for peace?" *Leiden Security and Global Affairs Blog*, March 9, 2015; Kyle Orton, "Turkey fears a Kurdish state more than the Islamic State," *Kyle Orton's Blog*, July 28, 2015.

1038 Stansfield, "The Islamic State," 1,346. Italics added.

1039 Abbaszadah, "KRG's military help to Kobane."

1040 "Falah Mustafa Bakir," *University of Kurdistan*, accessed July 16, 2023; "H.E. Falah Mustafa Bakir, former Minister and Head of Department of Foreign Relations (DFR) Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)," *Department of Foreign Relations – Kurdistan Regional Government*, September 6, 2020.

1041 Shapland, "Iraqi Kurds' aim of statehood stays out of reach."

1042 Sibel Kulaksiz *et al.*, "Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Economic and social impact assessment of the Syrian conflict and ISIS crisis," (Washington D.C.: *World Bank*, 2015), 21. Also see: Kirschner, *Trust and fear in civil wars*, 158; "Oil obstacles."

1043 Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, 3

Kurdish ethnicity as ‘macroethnic.’¹⁰⁴⁴ While the rational actor paradigm would consider the Kurds as one entity, the organizational behavior paradigm would focus on bureaucratic entities within Kurdish society, and the governmental politics paradigm on Kurdish key individuals. The latter two seemed intermingled in the Iraqi-Kurdish context, separated by ideologies and interests. While Kurds based their identity on ‘common culture, including a contiguous homeland, a myth of common origin, a shared faith in Islam, similar languages, and a history of bitter conflict with outsiders’¹⁰⁴⁵, among Iraqi Kurds, two dominant Iraqi Kurdish groups emerged that operated as guerrilla groups fighting against the Iraqi regime, and eventually transformed into the KRI’s two main political parties: the KDP and the PUK.

‘Following the first parliamentary elections in May 1992, they [the KDP and the PUK] set themselves the task of governing, while keeping real power in the parties, supported by their respective security forces. Based on historical, cultural and linguistic differences, the KDP extended its reach throughout Erbil and Duhok governorates, while the PUK’s stronghold was Suleimaniya, as well as, after the 2003 U.S. invasion, Kirkuk governorate, outside the Kurdish region in disputed territories.’¹⁰⁴⁶

Or: ‘[w]hile the KRG’s parliament passes legislation, it is up to the independent bureaucracies of the PUK and KDP to enforce that legislation and govern in their respective regions.’¹⁰⁴⁷ Ideologically, officially, the KDP is more Kurdish nationalistic oriented, whereas the PUK holds a more social democratic posture, occasionally adopting the PKK’s socialist stance.¹⁰⁴⁸ In practice, both approach the ideological difference pragmatically; who joined which party is typically a matter of kinship or tribe, the KDP being dominated by the Barzani family and the PUK by the Talabani family. The tribal differences translated into geography, leading to two Iraqi-Kurdish quasi-states.

4.3.4 Organization: two quasi-states

Historically, the KRI is internally divided.¹⁰⁴⁹ In the 2006 document “KRG Unification Agreement,” the KDP and the PUK equally divided the ministries among the KDP and the

1044 *Ibid.*, 70. The term macroethnic is Tejel’s and implies the internal divisions described in the previous quote.

1045 Harff & Gurr, *Ethnic Conflict in IR*, 39.

1046 “Arming Iraq’s Kurds,” 5.

1047 “Kurdish peshmerga.”

1048 For PKK’s ideology see: Abdullah Öcalan, *Prison writings. The PKK and the Kurdish question in the 21st century*, transl. Klaus Happel (City unknown: Transmedia, 2011), 86-91; Abdullah Öcalan, *Prison writings. The roots of civilization*, transl. Klaus Happel (London: Pluto, 2007), 255-61.

1049 Romano, “Sub-state actors and foreign policy risk-taking,” 349-50. Also see: Fliervoet, “Fighting for Kurdistan?” 12; Hamzeh Hadad & Brandon Wallace, “The Iraqi Kurdish security apparatus. Vulnerability and structure,” *Small Wars Journal*, September 29, 2017.

PUK. The document included ‘KRG representations abroad.’¹⁰⁵⁰ The Department of Foreign Relations had to be established at the time, which the Iraqi constitution allowed since 2005, separate from Iraqi foreign affairs.¹⁰⁵¹ Despite fourteen representations abroad by 2014, Kurdish foreign relations still occurred along party lines¹⁰⁵² and included international oil companies.¹⁰⁵³ The “KRG Unification Agreement” also included the Ministry of *Peshmerga* Affairs, assigned to the KDP.¹⁰⁵⁴ However, in practice the KDP and the PUK maintained their fighting capacity.¹⁰⁵⁵

Both *peshmerga* forces officially became part of a single, joint Ministry of *Peshmerga* Affairs in 1992. Nevertheless, rivalries between the KDP and the PUK emerged. A dispute over customs revenues ignited in 1994 the Kurdish Civil War between the KDP and the PUK.¹⁰⁵⁶ The complexity of the conflict is illustrated by a seemingly ad hoc cooperation between the KDP and the PUK when trying to expel the PKK from the KRI. However, the PKK secretly worked together with the PUK.¹⁰⁵⁷ Also, regional powers intervened; the ‘[t]wo Iraqi Kurdish parties had partially lost control over their fates due to ongoing civil war since the KDP was supported by Turkey, whereas PUK was backed by Iran.’¹⁰⁵⁸ Despite hostility among their Iraqi-Kurdish proxies, Iran and Turkey tried to prevent the formation of a Kurdish state between 1992-1995, fearing secessionist movements among their own indigenous Kurdish minorities. Eventually, Turkey intervened militarily with around 35,000 troops to fight the PKK. The KDP supported the intervention, while the PUK objected, as did Iran. More Turkish interventions took place in the KRI, aimed at destroying the PKK, strengthening the KDP, weakening Iran’s relationship with the PUK, and preventing Iranian domination in the region.¹⁰⁵⁹

After the Kurdish civil war, the KDP and the PUK re-established the joint KRG. They governed the KRI from its capital, Erbil. Yet, in practice, from 1996 onwards, the KRI existed of two countries: ‘[h]alfway from Erbil to Suleimaniyah, the flags change from yellow to green, as do the posters of martyred fighters. This is the non-official border between the KDP and the PUK, which, in spite of both being part of the KRG, have distinct command structures.’¹⁰⁶⁰ The KDP and the PUK ‘retained de facto parallel systems of governance, with their own military

1050 “Kurdistan Regional Government Unification Agreement,” *KRG*, January 21, 2006.

1051 Abbaszadah, “KRG’s military help to Kobane”; “Kurdistan Regional Government Unification Agreement.”

1052 Romano, “Sub-state actors and foreign policy risk-taking,” 352-4. Also see: Jongerden, “Governing Kurdistan,” 73-74n12; “KRG: no foreign offices will be closed,” *Rûdaw*, August 9, 2016.

1053 Mustafa, “Iraqi Kurdistan independence referendum,” 902.

1054 “Kurdistan Regional Government Unification Agreement.”

1055 Fliervoet, “Fighting for Kurdistan?” 13; Romano, “Sub-state actors and foreign policy risk-taking,” 353-4.

1056 Wilgenburg & Fumerton, “Kurdistan’s political armies,” 1; “Arming Iraq’s Kurds,” 5.

1057 “Arming Iraq’s Kurds,” ii.

1058 *Ibid.*, 21. Also see: Berge, “PKK and Turkey?”; Kirschner, *Trust and fear in civil wars*, 91-127.

1059 Eyal, “Introduction,” 4-5.

1060 Vicken Cheterian, “Turkey in 2017. A focus on the Kurdish question and military formations in Middle Eastern battlefields,” in *The war report. Armed conflicts in 2017*, Annysa Bellal (ed.) (Geneva: Geneva Academy, 2017), 142; Jongerden, “Governing Kurdistan,” 63-4, 73n12. Also see: “American Kurdistan,” *Dabiq* 10 (1436H[2015]), 32-3.

and security agencies, patterns of co-optation, rules of advancement and reporting lines for both civil servants and *peshmerga* fighters, imposing party loyalty throughout.¹⁰⁶¹ Adding to the cleavage are the two significantly different dialects of Kurdish that are spoken in the KDP-dominated area and the PUK-dominated area.¹⁰⁶²

In practice, the KDP and the PUK party structures decided on 'recruitment, appointments, promotions, and deployments of their *peshmerga* affiliates.'¹⁰⁶³ As this proved highly ineffective and inefficient, the KDP and the PUK gradually merged their parallel structures from 2008 onwards due to a resurgent Iraqi central government. A joint Ministry of *Peshmerga* Affairs reappeared in 2009, as did mixed units and a *hawalgry* (intelligence) department operated by KDP and PUK officers. Next to its *kargerri* (administrative) departments, the Ministry of *Peshmerga* Affairs existed of the *harakat* (operations) departments, with teams attached to *peshmerga* units in the field. By 2014, the joint Ministry of *Peshmerga* Affairs comprised twelve brigades with around 150,000 men. The merger claimed by the Ministry of *Peshmerga* Affairs is only partial, though. While merged administratively and professionalizing, the KDP's *yekey* (unit) 80 and the PUK's *yekey* 70 remained under their respective party's control, as did 'the most sensitive recruitment and appointments issues.'¹⁰⁶⁴ In early 2014, analysts estimated the KDP *peshmerga* at 10,000 strong and the PUK *peshmerga* at 15,000.¹⁰⁶⁵

The KDP-PUK rivalry eventually caused the establishment of a breakaway party of the PUK, named *Gorran* (change), as a third political party in 2009.¹⁰⁶⁶ After the KRI's parliamentary elections of 2013, *Gorran* became the second-largest party after the KDP.¹⁰⁶⁷ Since 2014, a *Gorran* minister led the Ministry of *Peshmerga* Affairs. Still, the KDP and the PUK kept dividing commanding positions evenly, with deputies from the other party, and recognizing the traditional zones of influence¹⁰⁶⁸: '[i]n important areas of the Kurdistan Region's functions, the two parties [the KDP and the PUK] maintain separate administrations. This is the most significant in terms of security and intelligence.'¹⁰⁶⁹ *Gorran* lacked a fighting capacity, which

1061 "Arming Iraq's Kurds," 5. Italics added. Also see: Shapland, "Iraqi Kurds' aim of statehood stays out of reach"; Stansfield, "Iraq," 19-20.

1062 Hadad & Wallace, "The Iraqi Kurdish security apparatus."

1063 "Arming Iraq's Kurds," 9. Italics added.

1064 *Ibid.*, 9. Also see: Barzani, "Protecting Kurdistan," 26-7.

1065 "PUK and KDP likely to agree in government in Iraqi Kurdistan," *Jane's Intelligence Weekly*, March 12, 2014.

1066 Shapland, "Iraqi Kurds' aim of statehood stays out of reach"; Torelli, "Kurdistan and the Middle East," 69.

1067 Shapland, "Iraqi Kurds' aim of statehood stays out of reach"; "KRG's fiscal dependency on central Iraqi government ensures support for a Maliki government after April parliamentary election," *Jane's Intelligence Weekly*, February 24, 2014.

1068 "Arming Iraq's Kurds," 9, 22. Also see: "New ministers join KRG cabinet, others to keep their posts," *Rûdaw*, April 14, 2014.

1069 "KRG's fiscal dependency"; Shapland, "Iraqi Kurds' aim of statehood stays out of reach."

the KDP and the PUK did possess.¹⁰⁷⁰ The *peshmerga*, thus, consisted of three parts: one commanded by the KRG, one commanded by the KDP, and one commanded by the PUK.¹⁰⁷¹

In her 2015 study on civil-military relations within the KRI, political scientist Verena Gruber found that the KRI's 'president (Masoud Barzani) heads the General Command Staff [...]. The president is in charge of all military decisions and is advised by his General Command Staff. Decisions of war lie with him [Barzani], and the management of day-to-day affairs with the Ministry.'¹⁰⁷² Of the General Command Staff's six members, four were members of the KDP, one of the PUK, and one of *Gorran*¹⁰⁷³, which suggests that the KDP dominated the KRI's military strategy.

Next to the fighting capacities, the parties' intelligence agencies – the KDP's *parastin* and the PUK's *zanyari* – remained under party control.¹⁰⁷⁴ The responsibility of the KRI's security agency, *asayesh* (security), is typically situated with the Ministry of Interior, unless the *asayesh* operates near the front line. In that case, the military commander of the region is in control. The party that controls the region chooses the commander there.¹⁰⁷⁵

4.3.5 Leaders: Barzani versus Talabani

Within the KRI, the organizational behavior and governmental politics paradigms seem intermingled when examining strategic decision-making. The rivalry between the Barzani and Talabani families, controlling the KDP and the PUK respectively¹⁰⁷⁶, led to actors in international relations – acknowledging the intra-Kurdish rivalries – to deal 'with politicians from the region as [...] party leaders and not with them as KRG government officials.'¹⁰⁷⁷ Masoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani signed the Washington Agreement on September 17, 1998, on behalf of the KDP and the PUK, respectively. After the 2003 Gulf War, Masoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, together with three independent Kurds, became members of the transitional Iraqi governing council.

1070 "PUK and KDP likely to agree." Also see: Fliervoet, "Fighting for Kurdistan?" 20n53; Shapland, "Iraqi Kurds' aim of statehood stays out of reach."

1071 Fliervoet, "Fighting for Kurdistan?" 5.

1072 Verena Gruber, "Revisiting civil-military relations theory. A case of the Kurdish Regional Government of Iraq." MA thes., Lund University, 2015, 39. Also see: Fliervoet, "Fighting for Kurdistan?" 15.

1073 Wilgenburg & Fumerton, "Kurdistan's political armies," 9n28.

1074 "Arming Iraq's Kurds," 9. Also see: Shapland, "Iraqi Kurds' aim of statehood stays out of reach."

1075 Gruber, "Revisiting civil-military relations theory," 39-42. Also see: Fliervoet, "Fighting for Kurdistan?" 14.

1076 Mustafa, "Iraqi Kurdistan independence referendum," 897; Torelli, "Kurdistan and the Middle East," 38.

1077 Jongerden, "Governing Kurdistan," 73-74n12.

Based on the legacy of Kurdish tribal leader Mulla Mustafa Barzani, his son Masoud Barzani became the KRI's president in 2005.¹⁰⁷⁸ His term officially ended in July 2013 but was extended by the KRI's parliament until August 19, 2015, based on an apparent need to amend the constitution before new elections.¹⁰⁷⁹ As the president, Masoud Barzani tried to manifest himself as the leader of all Kurds, including Syrian Kurds, openly calling for independence and striving to deliver a Kurdish state before he died.¹⁰⁸⁰ Barzani's personal involvement in brokering a peace settlement between Turkey and the PKK had consolidated his status.¹⁰⁸¹

Among KDP senior ranks, a rivalry for who would succeed the aging Masoud Barzani seemed at stake. The rivalry included Masrour Barzani, Masoud Barzani's son, who might be considered his father's natural successor. Masrour Barzani was the head of KDP's intelligence apparatus, became the commander-in-chief of security operations next to his father, held primary decision-making powers and the ability to shape KRG domestic and regional politics.¹⁰⁸² Furthermore, Masrour Barzani, since July 2012, headed the *Encumena Asayîşa Herêma Kurdistanê* (Kurdistan Region Security Council), which was established in 2011 and administratively is part of the president's office.¹⁰⁸³

Considered Masrour Barzani's rival, is Nechirvan Barzani, KRG prime-minister and son of Masoud Barzani's late older brother. Nechirvan Barzani has well-established connections with the PUK and the PKK, as well as with Iran and Turkey. According to Nechirvan Barzani, Kurdish independence is not a priority.¹⁰⁸⁴

Responsible for the KRI's foreign policy was Falah Mustafa Bakir. Bakir had studied Development Studies and Government in the United Kingdom in the 1990s. On behalf of the KDP, he served as the KRG's deputy minister of Agriculture and Irrigation between 1999 and 2002. Later, Bakir was the KRG's liaison officer to the CPA in 2003 and to the Multi-National Forces' Korean Contingent stationed in Erbil in 2004, while also being senior advisor to the KRG prime-minister from 2002 until 2004. In September 2006, when the KRI established the Department of Foreign Relations, Bakir became the KRI's first minister of Foreign Relations. He again assumed the position from June 2014 until July 2019.¹⁰⁸⁵ The Department of Foreign Relations was not involved in military affairs¹⁰⁸⁶ and appeared restricted to diplomatic affairs.

1078 "Masoud Barzani."

1079 Shapland, "Iraqi Kurds' aim of statehood stays out of reach."

1080 "Arming Iraq's Kurds," 7, 7-8n30.

1081 Sadoon, "The Islamic State and the independence referendum," 8. Also see: Eyal, "Introduction," 4-5.

1082 *Ibid.*, 7-8n30.

1083 "President Barzani inaugurates the security council of the Kurdistan Region," *Kurdistan Region Presidency*, July 8 2012.

1084 "Arming Iraq's Kurds," 7-8n30.

1085 "Falah Mustafa Bakir"; "H.E. Falah Mustafa Bakir."

1086 Gruber, "Revisiting civil-military relations theory," 39.

With its leading political figure, Jalal Talabani, on his sick bed for years, the PUK's internal struggle has been between security figures such as Mulla Bakhtiar and Jalal Talabani's ex-wife Hero, who both marginalized Barham Salih, a pro-Western figure who maintained good relations with the KDP.¹⁰⁸⁷ Jalal Talabani's son, Lahour Talabani, was the head of PUK intelligence, and, as a fluent English speaker due to education abroad, played a prominent role in the coalition against IS. The PUK's internal power struggle made the party an unreliable partner for the KDP in governing the KRI, causing political instability.¹⁰⁸⁸

4.4 Other ANSAs

Apart from IS and the KRI, other actors were involved in the conflict that featured these ANSAs. Without claiming to be conclusive, this paragraph focuses on other ANSAs involved, recognizing that state actors such as Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey, and the United States, influence the situation too.¹⁰⁸⁹ The sections below address the Syrian Kurds, *al-Qaeda*, and the Shia in Iraq.¹⁰⁹⁰

4.4.1 Syrian Kurds

Syrian Kurds mainly live in three Kurdish cantons in northern Syria, along the Syrian-Turkish border, from West to East: Afrin/Kurd Dagh, Kobani/Jarablus, and Hasakah/Jazira.¹⁰⁹¹ Figure 4.4 contains a map indicating the Kurdish inhabited areas in Syria.

Syrian Kurds faced repression under the Syrian *Ba'ath* party and were rendered ineffective as a political power. Nevertheless, they never picked up arms against the Syrian regime. Syrian Kurds did not inhabit a compact, continuous region and lacked state sponsors.¹⁰⁹² Also, they could not benefit from a mountainous area to seek shelter.¹⁰⁹³ Consequently, the Syrian Kurds counted as an acceptable partner to negotiate with for the Syrian regime once they became a relevant political power during the Syrian Civil War.¹⁰⁹⁴ When Syrian regime forces withdrew from the Kurdish cantons at the start of the Syrian Civil War, Syrian Kurds took over control.

1087 "Arming Iraq's Kurds," 8n32.

1088 Shapland, "Iraqi Kurds' aim of statehood stays out of reach."

1089 Mustafa, "Iraqi Kurdistan independence referendum," 893. For example: "Iraq and Syria increasingly becoming one battlefield, with foreign arms heightening risk of prolonged conflict," *Jane's Intelligence Weekly*, June 27, 2014; "Islamic State ascendant"; "Kurds' ability to hold Kirkuk will increasingly be challenged by Islamic State and Shia militias in Iraq," *Jane's Intelligence Weekly*, July 23, 2014; Leonard, *The age of unpeace*, 100; Shapland, "Iraqi Kurds' aim of statehood stays out of reach."

1090 Cf. Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 9.

1091 "Syria's Kurds," 6. Also see: Katherine Wilkens, "A Kurdish Alamo. Five reasons the battle for Kobane matters," *Carnegie Middle East Center*, October 10, 2014.

1092 Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, 42, 65. Also see: Fisk, *The great war for civilisation*, 1004-6.

1093 "Syria's Kurds," 6. Cf. Harff & Gurr, *Ethnic conflict in IR*, 40.

1094 Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, 136-7.

They became one of the successful actors in the Syrian Civil War.¹⁰⁹⁵ Almost three years into the Syrian Civil War, the dominant *Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat* (Democratic Union Party; PYD) declared Syrian Kurdistan an autonomous political entity named Rojava.

Figure 4.4: ethno-religious map of Syria in 2014, indicating Kurdish inhabited areas in grey along the Turkish border.¹⁰⁹⁶



Next to the PYD, the *Encûmena Nîştîmanîya Kurdi li Sûriyê* (Kurdish National Council, KNC) was a prominent political bloc.¹⁰⁹⁷ While the Syrian Kurdish political parties appeared somewhat similar in their goals, fierce inter-party rivalries existed, nonetheless.¹⁰⁹⁸ The PYD

1095 Gunter, "Iraq, Syria, ISIS and the Kurds," 102; Voller, "Rethinking armed groups and order," 860; Watson, "The conflict with ISIS," 14-5.

1096 Watson, "The conflict with ISIS," 15.

1097 Rodi Hevian, "The resurrection of Syrian Kurdish politics," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 17:3 (2013), 46; Hokayem, *Syria's uprising*, 78-9.

1098 Wietse van den Berge, "Syrian Kurdish political activism. A social movement theory perspective," *META-journal* 4 (2015), 160.

and the KNC emphasized the struggle for an autonomous and democratic Syrian Kurdistan that would guarantee minority rights.¹⁰⁹⁹ But neither outlined what the blocs meant by these critical concepts.¹¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, their resources differed significantly¹¹⁰¹, and foreign actors influenced both blocs. Whereas the PYD was linked to the PKK, the KNC's parties had strong connections to foreign parties like the KDP and the PUK. Still, some KNC parties sympathized with the PKK as well.¹¹⁰² Overall, next to historical repression, political choice in Rojava mainly depended on leadership.¹¹⁰³ Apart from the client-patron relationship, other factors caused intra-Kurdish differences, such as rivalries between clans or families.¹¹⁰⁴

4.4.2 *Al-Qaeda*

One of IS' rivals was a jihadi-salafi organization, *al-Qaeda*¹¹⁰⁵, including its Syrian affiliate JaN. *Al-Qaeda* was established in Afghanistan in 1988, at the end of the jihadist fight against Soviet forces there. The organization established training camps in Taliban-run Afghanistan to prepare for large-scale terrorist attacks.¹¹⁰⁶ Whereas most jihadist organizations targeted local regimes, *al-Qaeda* aimed at the so-called far enemy. *Al-Qaeda* leader bin Laden assumed that jihadi-salafists could not defeat regional governments that were supported by the United States. Therefore, bin Laden suggested attacking the United States instead, forcing the United States to withdraw the support of local regimes, leaving them vulnerable to jihadist attacks and possible overthrow.¹¹⁰⁷ However, despite executing spectacular terrorist attacks abroad, *al-Qaeda* proved incapable of mobilizing enough Muslims to achieve a significant political change.¹¹⁰⁸

Al-Qaeda's more long-term approach at the time seemed contrary to Zarqawi's direct-action approach. Nevertheless, in Afghanistan, *al-Qaeda* supported Zarqawi in establishing a training

1099 Christian Sinclair & Sirwan Kajjo, "The evolution of Kurdish politics in Syria," *Middle East Research and Information Project*, September 2, 2011.

1100 Eva Savelsberg, "The Syrian-Kurdish movements. Obstacles rather than driving forces for democratization," in *Conflict, Democratization, and the Kurds in the Middle East. Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria*, David Romano & Mehmet Gurses (eds.) (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 102.

1101 Hevian, "The resurrection of Syrian Kurdish politics," 47.

1102 Savelsberg, "The Syrian-Kurdish movements," 94-6.

1103 Wietse van den Berge, "The cleavage in Syrian Kurdish politics. Equality versus non-violence," in *Expanding research on countering violent extremism*, Sara Zeiger (ed.) (Abu Dhabi: Hedayah, 2016), 66.

1104 Cf. Stathis Kalyvas, "The ontology of 'political violence.' Action and identity in civil wars," *Perspectives on Politics* 1:3 (2003), 475-94.

1105 Fishman, *The master plan*, 18. Also see: Carmon *et al.* "Understanding Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi"; Chigudu, "Sectarianism and the ideology of the Islamic State," 5,154; Freedman, *Command*, 445; Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 255-313; Aaron Zelin, "The war between ISIS and al-Qaeda for supremacy of the global jihadist movement," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, June 26, 2014.

1106 Bakker, *Terrorism and counterterrorism studies*, 60-1; Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 13-4. Also see: Bakker & Boer, "The evolution of al-Qaedaism," 8-14.

1107 Fishman, *The master plan*, 12; Last, *Strategic culture*, 222. Also see: Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 115.

1108 Kepel, *Fitna*, 203-4.

camp. Zarqawi received money and logistical support in return for allegiance to *al-Qaeda*. In practice, Zarqawi's organization remained independent.¹¹⁰⁹ *Al-Qaeda* tried to control Zarqawi, urging for reluctance on violence towards the population.¹¹¹⁰ *Al-Qaeda* – like most jihadi-salafists – did not attack individuals or organizations not explicitly mentioned as legitimate targets. Zarqawi turned the logic around: violence was legit unless explicitly stated it was not. Stated differently, '*al-Qaeda*'s leaders believe that most people who call themselves Muslims actually are, whereas the Islamic State's leaders do not.'¹¹¹¹ The controversy increased when IS' predecessors behaved more independently of *al-Qaeda*. When bin Laden died on May 2, 2011, this created an opportunity for ISI to challenge *al-Qaeda*'s position as the global jihadi-salafist vanguard.¹¹¹² Still, JaN leader Golani claimed to have pledged *bay'ah* to Ayman al-Zawahiri, successor of bin Laden, not to Baghdadi. ISIS did not accept that Golani and Baghdadi would be equals under the supervision of *al-Qaeda* and dissolved JaN.

In reality, from 2006 onwards, *al-Qaeda* did not have any supervision over ISI or its successors.¹¹¹³ When Baghdadi proclaimed ISIS on April 8, 2013, he rejected *al-Qaeda* as the vanguard of jihadi-salafism and challenged Zawahiri's authority.¹¹¹⁴ Eventually, Zawahiri renounced ISIS on June 9, 2013, claiming JaN to be *al-Qaeda*'s Syria branch. Baghdadi's countermove was to join the Syrian Civil War, fighting any other organization to control territory and establish a caliphate, including JaN.¹¹¹⁵ The conflict between IS and *al-Qaeda* culminated when IS proclaimed its caliphate on June 29, 2014¹¹¹⁶, and claimed that *bay'ah* to only one caliph was allowed¹¹¹⁷, basically outmaneuvering *al-Qaeda*.¹¹¹⁸ Research found no evidence of outbidding between *al-Qaeda* and IS in 2014, where the actions of the other should overtake the activities of one party.¹¹¹⁹ Still, in 2014-2015, IS hardly fought Syrian regime forces. Despite calls for rapprochement between IS and JaN in September 2014 by prominent jihadists¹¹²⁰, IS in Syria focused on eliminating ANSA rivals, especially JaN¹¹²¹; while in Iraq, IS fought ISF, the KRI, and Shia militias.¹¹²²

1109 Fishman, *The master plan*, 17-9, 58-9.

1110 Atiyah, untitled letter to Zarqawi; Zawahiri, untitled letter to Zarqawi. Also see: Shapiro, *The terrorist's dilemma*, 87.

1111 Fishman, *The master plan*, 63. Italics added. Also see: Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 262.

1112 *Ibid.*, 112, 153-63. Also see: Hashim, *The caliphate at war*, 131; Khalil, "Partners to foes."

1113 *Ibid.*, 173-91; Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 159; Powell & Florea, "Introducing the Armed Nonstate Actor Rivalry Dataset," 199.

1114 Baghdadi, "Give good news to the believers," in Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 154; Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 154, 157.

1115 Fishman, *The master plan*, 173-91.

1116 Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, "This is the promise of Allah," *Islamic State*, June 29, 2014, transl. unknown.

1117 "Allegiance to the caliph," *Islamic State*, no date, transl. Aymenn al-Tamimi.

1118 Carmon *et al.* "Understanding Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi"; Gartenstein-Ross & Joscelyn, *Enemies near & far*, 269-70. Also see: "Declaration of caliphate in Iraq and Syria likely to increase infighting between ISIL and other Sunni insurgents," *Jane's Intelligence Weekly*, June 30, 2014.

1119 Chuang *et al.*, "Local alliances and rivalries," 20,898-902.

1120 "Islamic State-Jabhat al-Nusra divergences are unlikely to be mended despite calls for truce," *Jane's Intelligence Weekly*, October 8, 2014.

1121 Powell & Florea, "Introducing the Armed Nonstate Actor Rivalry Dataset," 178, 181.

1122 "Iraq and Syria increasingly becoming one battlefield"; "Kurds' ability to hold Kirkuk."

4.4.3 Shia

Zarqawi had written to the *al-Qaeda* leadership about the threat that Shia people posed to Sunni Iraqis by cooperating with American forces to take over power in Iraq and taking revenge on Sunnis. In his view, the Shia are pivotal for change, reason for Zarqawi to lure the Shia into a sectarian war which would mobilize the Sunni masses.¹¹²³ Baghdadi continued the anti-Shia rhetoric in his second speech as ISI's leader, urging 'jihad against the Safavid Rafida – the Magian Shiites.'¹¹²⁴ In line with IS' animosity against the Kurds was the Shia's supposed involvement in suppressing the Sunni population by denying Sunnis a state-like political entity, which the Shia and the Kurds did already have.¹¹²⁵

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter observed Iraq as a historically internally fragmented state. By 2014, a situation occurred where different ANSAs fought the state and one another, reminiscent of the new mediaeval model.¹¹²⁶ IS and the KRI actively contributed to and tried to profit from that situation, aiming for territory and autonomy. They both suffered from internal ideological and organizational fragmentation. IS' religious ideology was disputed among other jihadi-salafist organizations – notably *al-Qaeda* and its affiliates – while IS' internal organization was strictly hierarchical with undisputed leaders. Within the KRI, fragmentation led to different interpretations of Kurdish nationalism within the Barzani- and Talabani-dominated areas. Within international relations, the KRI maintained good relations with its Western allies, whereas IS was a pariah. Nevertheless, that pariah was able to push back ISF from northern Iraq in 2013-2014.

This chapter provided the background from where the key events within the conflict between IS and the KRI occurred in 2014. The chapter provided that background along the lines of the paradigms that the following three chapters apply.

1123 Zarqawi, untitled letter to *al-Qaeda* leadership. Also see: Ingram *et al.*, *The ISIS reader*, 37-54.

1124 Baghdadi, "Allah will not allow." Italics added. *Rafida* (rejectors) was the term used by ISI to refer to Shia in general, whereas Magian referred to the Zoroastrian cults among the Shia.

1125 Masri, "Islamic State caliphate on the prophetic methodology."

1126 Bull, *The anarchical society*. 245. Also see: Brown, "Purposes and pitfalls," 244-5, 255.

