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DOI:
[10.1080/01436597.2017.1282818](https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1282818)

Document Version
Accepted author manuscript

[Link to publication record in Manchester Research Explorer](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Jacoby, T. (2017). Culturalism and the Rise of the Islamic State: Faith, Sectarianism and Violence. *Third World Quarterly*, 38(7), 1655-1673. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1282818>

Published in:
Third World Quarterly

Citing this paper
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Culturalism and the Rise of the Islamic State: Faith, Sectarianism and Violence

Prof Tim Jacoby
Global Development Institute
School of Environment, Education and Development
Room 1.014
Arthur Lewis Building
Oxford Road
University of Manchester
UK M13 9PL
44 (0)161 275 0414
tim.jacoby@manchester.ac.uk
<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/research/tim.jacoby/>

Abstract

This paper looks at the ways in which culturalist discourses have influenced our understanding and representation of the rise of the so-called Islamic State. It argues that, in keeping with older narratives on the motives of “bad” Muslims, its political and economic objectives have been overlooked and/or downplayed. Instead, I propose, there has been a strategically efficacious focus on its appeal to Islam, on its sectarian rhetoric and on its use of violence. By continuing to emphasise the ethical over the political in these ways, the culturalism that underpins the dominant representation of the Islamic State’s emergence has, I conclude, served three key purposes – the mobilisation of the “good” Muslim, the exculpation of Western foreign policy and the legitimisation of force.

Introduction

Near the start of 2011, large numbers of young Iraqis took the streets. Rioting continued throughout the year. Government officials and minority groups were attacked and the councils of the predominantly Sunni provinces of Saladin and Diyala (two of Iraq’s 19 governorates) publicly declared their intention to secede.¹ When the government responded by sentencing the Vice-President, Tariq al-Hashimi, to death *in absentia* for terrorism offences, a plethora of armed groups mobilised or stepped up their activities – including the long-standing counter-occupation composite network, The Islamic State in Iraq (*ad-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fil Iraq*). Increasingly strong during 2012, it enlarged its presence in Syria (adding *wa ash-Sham* to its name the

following year) and initiated a campaign of prison breaks culminating in the release of at least 500 inmates from Abu Ghraib in July 2013. By then, the number of suicide bombings had risen from an average of less than 10 to over 30 per month and the UN had announced that monthly fatalities in Iraq had surpassed 1000 for the first time since 2008.² The fact that many of these lives were lost as a result of the ongoing suppression of Sunni activism by the al-Maliki government (the massacre of over 40 Sunni protesters near Kirkuk in April 2013 was an important case in point) extended and radicalised Sunni support still further, especially in the governorates of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Saladin and Nineveh. By the end of 2014, these had been partially incorporated into a swathe of territory stretching more than 800km from the eastern outskirts of Aleppo to just north-east of Baghdad that was no longer under state control. To emphasise its cross-border autonomy, it was announced that this area would henceforth be known as simply *ad-Dawlah al-Islamiyah* (the Islamic State) with its leader, Abubakr al-Baghdadi, as its Caliph. According to Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, its citizens just call it *ad-Dawlah*.³

Amid a general sense of ‘bewilderment as to how the present situation could have come about with such speed’, President Obama authorised air-strikes in August 2014 to arrest *ad-Dawlah*’s advance on Iraqi Kurdistan.⁴ This eventually became Operation Inherent Resolve – an alliance of 60 states (of which eight have been involved in direct military interventions). Amongst its five key priorities outlined in December 2014 is ‘exposing ISIL/Daesh’s true nature’. Organised through the State Department’s Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (now called the Global Engagement Center) and managed by former *Time* magazine editor, Richard Stengel, this has substantiated an extensive programme of ‘ideological delegitimization’ – defined as ‘burying its false appeals to religious legitimacy and glory through rapid response messaging to expose its true nature as a barbaric and criminal enterprise devoted to mass murder of innocents’.⁵ The result has been the emergence of a dominant (although not uncontested) discourse that has, I argue below, three principal elements – each of which provides a framework both for presenting *ad-Dawlah*’s motives and for legitimising the contingent response from the West.

The first is that the insurgency is principally mobilised by faith. It is, more specifically, driven not by political or economic objectives, but by a particular interpretation of Islam. This, it is suggested below, helpfully offers policy-makers an interpretation of the threat faced that is simultaneously global, yet also limited to what Mahmood Mamdani calls “bad” Muslims who must be defeated in the type of modernising act of liberation that underpinned the invasion of Iraq. The second is that *ad-Dawlah*’s success is best understood as a result of ancient sectarian hatreds bubbling over once the guiding hand of Western occupation ended in 2011. In a similar discourse to that which persuaded President Clinton little could be done to save Bosnian Muslims once Yugoslavia crumbled in the early 1990s, this precept has the convenient corollary of absolving Western states from any responsibility for the pattern of violence that has emerged in Iraq since its troops came home. The third is that *ad-Dawlah* has deployed an exceptional (in some discourses unique) level of brutality. This is not purposive, or – in Mamdani’s terms – “modern” violence, but senseless, cultish and nihilistic. It therefore cannot be reasoned with and can only be confronted with force, the preferred policy of the West to date. Connecting each of these three discourses is a fundamental commonality – the primacy of culture – and it is thus here that the paper will begin.

Good Muslim, Bad Muslim

The starting point is to identify the nature of the battle. It is against Islamist extremism. ...We have to unite with those in the Muslim world, who agree with this analysis to fight the extremism.⁶

As Mahmood Mamdani has observed, the post-Cold War period has been ‘marked by the ascendancy and rapid politicizing of a single term: culture’.⁷ This has, Etienne Balibar argues, reintroduced the older idea that ‘the historical cultures of humanity can be divided into two main groups, the one assumed to be universalistic and progressive, the other supposed irremediably particularistic and primitive’.⁸ Accentuated by the apparently growing “religious” flavour of Muslim militancy at home and abroad, attention has moved away from political explanations of motive towards an emphasis upon faith and ideology within which, Mamdani observes, there exists a clear distinction between moral commentaries on bloodshed in defence of modernity and the apparent “senselessness” of violence that cannot be justified by progress. Instances of the

latter, he continues, predominantly remain within “premodern” societies (such as the “communal” conflicts of Asia or “ethnic” wars of sub-Saharan Africa) and are principally presented in cultural terms. When these confront the apparently unimpeachable values of the West, such challenges are seen as self-evidently anti-modern and theologically evil. Largely ignoring materialist and power motives, the key premise here is, for Mamdani, the assumption ‘that every culture has a tangible essence that defines it’. Politics and economics are, he continues, thus presented as merely ‘a consequence of that essence’. It is, he concludes, ‘no longer the market (capitalism), nor the state (democracy), but culture (modernity) that is said to be the dividing line between those in favor of a peaceful, civic existence and those inclined to [participate in] terror’.⁹

Nowhere is this dualism more apparent than in the West’s representation of the Middle East. Here, culturalist narratives rest upon four principal dogmas, first identified by Edward Said. These are 1) that the West is normatively better (measured in ways that suit contemporary foreign policy imperatives) 2) that conclusions drawn from ancient traditions, “classic” texts or “sacred” ideas are more insightful than the direct experience of modernity 3) ‘that the Orient is eternal, uniform, and incapable of defining itself’ and must therefore be understood through the scientifically objective lens of the Western perspective 4) that the East is intrinsically antithetical, dangerous and needs to be controlled (‘by pacification, research and development, outright occupation whenever possible’) or feared.¹⁰ In elevating Western values without resorting to the overtly ethnicised narratives of yesteryear, these helped to structure the West’s view of the Middle East by extending ‘discourses structured around categories of hierarchy and superiority to one in which cultural difference is argued to be the key operational factor’.¹¹ In its crudest form, then, culturalism establishes a simplistic dualism in which a dynamic and vibrant West is contrasted with a moribund and static East. As Mamdani observes, ‘except for a founding prophetic moment and some monuments, Muslims are simply born into a culture, and are said to live it like a destiny’.¹² Muslims do not make culture, culture makes Muslims.

Many policy intellectuals have, however, maintained that such broad-brush assumptions are unlikely to prove productive in a Global War on Terror in which Muslim allies will be essential. The result has been a more refined form of culturalism that has sought to distinguish between

different types of Muslims. President Bush's Manichean ultimatum that 'either you're on the side of freedom and justice or you aren't' must, it was argued, be pressed upon the Muslim world as a means of securing the support of the steadfast and of isolating the disloyal.¹³ Bernard Lewis, for instance, called upon the Bush administration to make a distinction between "good" and "bad" Muslims and that it not confront Muslims directly but identify good Muslims, organize them, resource them, and get them to confront and quarantine the bad ones'.¹⁴ After all, as Secretary of State Powell, put it, the war on terror is principally intended 'to defend Muslims from other Muslims'.¹⁵

Ideally, the former should consist of what RAND call 'secularists' – Muslims that 'hold liberal or social-democratic values that form the core of a Western-style "civil religion"', including 'anti-clericalists', but not 'Ba'athists, Nasserites [and] neo-Communists'. Almost as dependable, RAND continues, are "liberal Muslims", defined as those broadly 'analogous to the European Christian Democrats'. Rather less reliable and far from ideal, RAND warns, are 'moderate traditionalists and sufis' – especially those that 'stress[] emotive and personal experiences of the divine... [and] oppose[] political activism'.¹⁶ Countering these "good" Muslims is what President Bush called, 'a fringe form of Islamic extremism' that has, through 'evil' intent, 'hijacked' an otherwise peaceful faith.¹⁷ Not motivated by politics, but zealotry and blind obedience, "bad" Muslims are presented as principally concerned with advancing their antediluvian antipathy to contemporary Western values. The West's war on terror is thus not a civilisational conflict, nor a result of what some see as Islam's innately inimical *Weltanschauung*, but a struggle against radicalisation and fanaticism. Simplistic Huntington-esque commentaries on the generic bellicosity of the Muslim "other" are therefore seen as too indiscriminate to 'win the hearts and minds of the Muslim community' and stimulate the kind of 'Islamic *Kulturkampf*' necessary to ensure the loyalty of the "good" Muslim.¹⁸ By the time President Obama took office in 2009, this more nuanced form of culturalism had come to predominate, cementing the idea that, by identifying and celebrating "mainstream" Islam, the West 'could win over moderate Muslims and help isolate and defeat extremism'.¹⁹

The next three sections will look at how this basic policy premise – defined by former Indonesian President, Abdurrahman Wahid, as 'right Islam vs. wrong Islam' – has helped to

determine the way that the rise of *ad-Dawlah* has been understood.²⁰ Firstly, it will be argued that, in presenting its militancy as principally mobilised by faith (specifically a particular, “bad”, interpretation of Islam), culturalist narratives have the advantage of both identifying potential allies and portraying “our” response as progressive, emancipatory and *modern*. Secondly, by focussing on the apparently innate sectarianism of the region’s “bad” Muslims, such discourses serve to conceal the actual origins of the violence and the role of the Western Powers therein. Thirdly, by portraying the violence of the “other” as anti-modern and therefore apolitical, nihilistic and especially barbaric, culturalism facilitates a military response based on a fallacious distinction between “our” violence as necessary and proportionate and “theirs” as senseless and, as Mamdani concludes, ‘simply the result of evil’.²¹

The Recidivous Salafiyye

Analysing the Islamic State as a revolutionary actor that happens to be Islamist is a much more promising avenue of interpretation than seeing it as either simply an Islamist actor or a sectarian one.²²

Representations of *ad-Dawlah*’s “anti-modernity” have mostly focussed on the mobilising force of a particular type of Islam, rather than the broad-brush eschatology of the 1990s. Two terms have come to dominate: *Wahhabism* and *Salafism*. Bernard Haykel from Princeton, for instance, has called it ‘a kind of untamed Wahhabism’ while Ed Husain, from the Council on Foreign Relations, claims that ‘Al Qaeda, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, Boko Haram, the Shabab [sic] and others are all violent Sunni Salafi groupings’.²³ Sometimes, the two expressions are put together. Former Assistant Chief of Staff and overall commander for south-east Iraq in 2007, Major-General Jonathan Shaw, for example, points to what he sees as ‘the fundamental problem of Wahhabi Salafism as a culture and a creed, which has got out of control and is still the ideological basis of Isil’.²⁴

In reality, this crude effort to separate “good” Muslims from “bad” has little connection to actual Middle-Eastern dynamics. Muslims do not accept the term *Wahhabi*, regardless of how much she or he might admire the Eighteenth Century’s eponymous campaigner. The Saudi government has stated that the ‘unsubstantiated use of this invented connotation must end’, while *ad-Dawlah*

itself has rejected the appellation as a “fabricated lie[]”.²⁵ With neither self-identifiers nor a clearly demarcated criterion for definition, then, it is very difficult to see the *Wahhabi* epithet as a viable basis upon which to substantiate a viable category of “bad” Muslims. Its use continues, though, because, as Mamdani has noted, its actual purpose is, to “culturalise” – and therefore depoliticise – faith-orientated resistance to Western influence. Similarly extravagant claims are made for *salafism* (Ed Husain’s dubious contention that ‘ISIS atrocities started with Saudi support for Salafi hate’ for instance), but here, at least, there are Muslims prepared to be associated with the term.²⁶ These are, though, extremely varied, with a very wide range of Muslims seeking to connect to Islam through the example of the *al-salaf al-salih* (literally the pious ancestors).

None of these maps easily onto *ad-Dawlah*’s view of itself. It is scathing about almost all contemporary Islamic scholarship. This includes the Palestinians, Abu Qatada and Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, who have been described respectively as ‘one of the most important ideologues of jihadi-salafism’ and a ‘leading jihad-salafi scholar’.²⁷ In *Dabiq*, though, both are dismissed as ‘misleading’.²⁸ Castigating ‘self-styled jihadist ideologues and quasi-mujahidin’ as part of the “apostate media... of the Arab tawaghit [idolatrous tyrannies]”, *Dabiq*’s writers go on to ridicule Al Qa’eda leaders such as Ayman adh-Dhawahiri and Harith an-Nadhari as compromised and ineffectual.²⁹ Instead, they rely heavily on in-house *fatawa* from current and deceased members of the Iraqi resistance like Abu-Mus’ab az-Zarqawi and Abu Muhammad al-Adnani (neither of whom had any formal religious training).

Eschewing clerical input, then, the writers of *Dabiq* generally prefer to approach exegetic sources directly in order to present an action-orientated discourse in which the ends – the establishment of a Sunni homeland – justify the means. As Adnani put it when subpoenaed to a shari’a court: ‘the only law I subscribe to is the law of the jungle’.³⁰ *Ad-Dawlah* is, in other words, not principally mobilised by any particular branch/distortion of Islam. Neither Wahhabi nor *salafi*, it is driven forward by the quintessentially *political* objective of state-building. It is not the very broad debating positions that it shares with other “bad” Muslims that explain its social power, but the fact that it has converted these into a potent set of policies which distribute political goods to its constituents. Focussing on its interpretation of complex jurisprudential

matters as part of a misplaced attempt to portray *ad-Dawlah* as an example of a particular cultural orientation misses the vital (or perhaps, defining) issue of political expediency. Reinforcing an exclusive category for the Sunni believer in contra-distinction to the “*rafidi*” (rejectionist) Shi’a, the “Crusader” Westerner or the “*murtadin*” (apostate) forces of Damascus and Baghdad and then applying “shari’a” punishments with neither mercy nor restraint have legitimised the looting of antiquities worth over \$200 million and the implementation of a forceful legal regime which places *ad-Dawlah* officials (and their associates) at the centre of the new state’s authority.³¹

In many ways, the revival of the *Khilafah*, or Caliphate (announced in June 2014), represents an astute strategy to manage this plurality of opinion. Although met with typically shrill opprobrium (Australian Prime Minister, Tony Abbot, told the UN’s Security Council that, ‘in declaring itself a caliphate, [*ad-Dawlah*] has declared war on the world’), al-Baghdadi’s proclamation actually emerged from internal threats to his own leadership and the challenge – so typical of insurgent movements the world over – of how to convert battlefield success into sustainable political direction.³² In military terms, it helped to intensify recruitment pressures both on non-aligned Sunni groups locally and on those considering leaving the West to settle in the new proto-state (the dominant theme of *Dabiq*’s third edition). Politically, it similarly serves domestic and international purposes. Since the *Khalifah* has rationally ruled through semi-autonomous local elites, the declaration (which was accompanied by an important statement promising to return its subjects’ ‘dignity, might, rights, and leadership’) was also intended to reassure already affiliated Sunni tribes that their interests will continue to be represented.³³ More broadly, it marks a powerful rejection both the Anglo-French borders that divide the region and Iran’s projection of its international doctrine, the *Wilayat al-Faqih* (or Guardianship of the Jurists), through which it claims to have authority over Iraq and Syria’s Shi’a.

Moreover, the symbolic significance of the move is, far from representing the apogee of *salafism*’s virulent Islamism, also to be found in its geo-political resonance. Traditionally, the leadership of the *Khilafah* has never been, as the *Abbasi* scholar, al-Mawardi, makes clear, the most pious or the most knowledgeable, but simply those best able to protect the well-being of the people.³⁴ The result has been a separation of powers between administrative authority and a

largely independent class of theologians headed, for most of the last six centuries, by a *Şeyülislam*. The drive to re-establish a Caliphate, even for its most ardent advocates such as *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, has therefore been grounded upon the *political* need for a home-grown alternative to neo-colonialism's comprador domination of the Muslim world, rather than a serious attempt to engage what are, in actual fact, extremely sparse exegeses on the subject. With al-Baghdadi preferring to 'surround[] himself with former Baathist army officer, rather than ideologues' and yet to secure the support of any significant jurists, *ad-Dawlah* is similarly prosaic, choosing to conclude its *Khilafah*-themed issue of *Dabiq* with an article stressing the sagacity of its political *imamah* (leadership).³⁵ As Mamdani points out, such an instrumental use of faith references tends to work in favour of the temporal, 'making it easier to redefine the core content of religion and subordinate it to a political project'.³⁶ In this way, faith identities can be used to bring 'people into the political arena [in order] to increase political participation through mass mobilization'.³⁷

Sectarianism, Occupation and Ancient Hatreds

It was not because they are Shia, but because... the American army was facilitating the takeover of Iraq and giving the country to them.³⁸

Culturalism holds that the violence of "bad" Muslims in general, and that of *ad-Dawlah* in particular, can be found in the ancient hatreds that are said to have always existed between Shi'a and Sunni. In a discourse strikingly similar to commentaries on the role of Tito in Yugoslavia, it is said that the Hussein and Assad families kept a lid on these tensions through Ba'athism's repressive patrimonialism. As soon as people had the opportunity – via a combination of rebellion and external intervention – to express their identities more freely, then, the narrative goes, a return to confessional chauvinism becomes all but inevitable. As Tony Blair puts it, 'once the regime changes, then out come pouring all the tensions – tribal, ethnic and of course above all religious; ...the sectarian divisions become even more acute and the result is the mess we see all over the region'.³⁹

In the immediate aftermath of the 2003 invasion, there was a general sense that there would be some settling of old scores in Iraq (freedom is untidy, Donald Rumsfeld explained). As the scale

of the resistance became clear, however, the Coalition increasingly represented its forces as caught between two primordial and incommensurate blocs – thereby distancing the impact of its policies from the source of the violence. Az-Zarqawi’s ‘fear and loathing of Iraq’s Shi’ite majority’ and his attempts at ‘goading them into a sectarian civil war’ were said to be the primary impetus behind the violence of a ‘clandestine Salafist presence’.⁴⁰ The origins of *ad-Dawlah*’s ideology is, the former spy Alastair Crooke concludes, ‘deeply rooted in bigotry: a hatred of the “other”, and for the Shi’i [sic] and Iran in particular’.⁴¹ The distinguished historian, Michael Burleigh, concurs thus: ‘at the heart of the terrifying meltdown in Iraq is the centuries-old hatred between two Muslim ideologies: Sunni and Shia’.⁴² Such narratives are both a corollary to the culturalist discourse on faith discussed above and an extension of its depoliticising functions. They usefully move attention away from any possible extra-regional influences over Iraq and Syria’s disintegration and towards a sense of hopeless inevitability, to which the West can only respond with a combination of resignation and securitisation. As defence analysts at the House of Commons explain, the origins of the current conflagration ‘must be traced back’ to the intrinsic cultural incommensurability of the region’s component parts – which render Iraq ‘fundamentally fractious (and perhaps fundamentally not viable)’.⁴³ We must therefore, Tony Blair concludes, ‘liberate ourselves from the notion that “we” have caused this’.⁴⁴

In actual fact, the UK has, perhaps, primary responsibility for the politicisation of sectarian consciousness in Iraq. Its mandate, 1920 to 1932, was established via the largely Sunni officer corps of the former Ottoman army which, along with directly controlled Christian Assyrian militia, was used to suppress an uprising co-led by Nuri al-Maliki’s grandfather. British authority was then solidified by importing and empowering a Sunni monarchy ejected from Syria by a French regime keen to offer the Druze and Alawite Shi’a ‘administrative autonomy in an attempt to induce a strain of separatism’ that would render its mandate easier to manage.⁴⁵ Iraqi Sunnis were similarly given the governance of all but one of the country’s then 14 provinces, filling 52 of 57 cabinet appointments made before 1936.⁴⁶ Post-independence politics were, as a consequence, marked by considerable instability, with seven political coups and a large-scale massacre of Assyrians occurring within the first decade.

The imposition of Ba'athism as the dominant political form in Iraq was, in many ways, an attempt to manage these conflicts. Its multi-denominational origins and fierce secularism appealed across the confessional divides that had so strengthened during the colonial period. The party was founded by a Shi'a (Fuad al-Rijabi) and, following its vital role in the military coup of 1958, remained dominated by Shi'a leaders (such as Talib al-Shibib) until the late 1960s.⁴⁷ By then, a more pan-Arabist and mostly Sunni faction (eventually headed by Saddam Hussein) had attracted Western backing based on its anti-communist credentials and risen to power. All political organisations that opposed the Ba'ath were vigorously and indiscriminately repressed, but secular Shi'a leaders continued to serve under Saddam (such as Sa'dun Hammadi who was Oil Minister, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Speaker of the National Assembly between 1974 and 2003).

By the late-1980s, of the party's eight-man Revolutionary Command Council, there were three Sunnis, three Shi'as, one Christian and one Kurd, leading the United States to conclude that 'Shias were represented at all levels of the party roughly in proportion' to the country's last nationwide census of 1987. Indeed, the same report also presents data that suggest little discrepancy in social indicators between Sunni and Shi'a-majority regions. Sunni Anbar, for example, had one doctor for every 3971 people, while the similarly densely populated (5.9 versus 6.1 people per square kilometre) Shi'a Muthanna governorate had one doctor for every 627 people.⁴⁸ In all, then, there is no easy relationship between wealth, power and confessional identity in Iraq – a reality well illustrated by the Hussein government's ongoing policy of continuing to repress Shi'a clerics linked to Tehran while promoting nationalist Shi'a politicians (such as Prime Minister Mohammed Hamza Zubeidi and Foreign (then Information) Minister Muhammad Saeed al-Sahhaf). As a consequence, of the 55 people depicted on the Coalition's "most wanted" playing cards following the invasion of 2003, 35 are thought to be from a Shi'a background.⁴⁹

This presented an acute problem for the Coalition's attempts to find Iraqis with which to govern. Since the preference was – as per RAND's recommendations – for staunchly secular, or at least "liberally" religious, "good" Muslims, it turned to the "moderate" Shi'a, Ahmad Chalabi. Described by Al Gore as a 'spokesperson for millions', he had considerable influence in the

make-up of the Iraqi Governing Council appointed by the Coalition in July 2003.⁵⁰ With 13 Shi'a Arabs, five Sunni Arabs, five Kurds, one Turkmen and one Assyrian, this marked a considerable departure from the confessional structure of the previous regime, despite little demographic evidence to support such a division. According to Thomas Ricks, Chalabi was also instrumental in persuading Coalition Administrator, Paul Bremer, not only to dismiss around 85,000 Ba'ath party members (including the removal of all pension rights for ranks of colonel equivalent and above), but also to disband both the 385,000-strong Iraqi army and the entire staff of the Interior Ministry (285,000 individuals including the police force).⁵¹ Forced through against the advice of the military, this created a 'vast pool of humiliated, antagonized, and politicized men'.⁵² The result was an explosion of violence stretching from Sunni Fallujah to Shi'a Najaf. Muqtada al-Sadr, dispatched a contingent of his Mahdi Army to support the insurgency in Anbar during 2004 and a 21-party summit of former regime loyalists and Shi'a militia commanders was held in Baghdad in February 2005 with the objective of co-ordinating a multi-denominational resistance campaign.⁵³ This extended Tehran's already well-established funding of the latter to Sunni insurgents such as az-Zarqawi (and his *Tawhid wal-Jihad* network) who was said by Jordanian intelligence to have been able to move in and out of Iran at will while also receiving the support of the Assad regime in Syria.⁵⁴

An externally-baked, joint Sunni/Shi'a war of liberation represented the worst possible scenario for the Coalition. Frustrated by the amount pre-invasion intelligence that was proving groundless and increasingly suspicious of Chalabi's relationship with Tehran, it dismissed the Council and appointed another secular – but less pro-Iranian – Shi'a, Iyad Allawi, to the post of interim Prime Minister in June 2004. Known to MI6 and the CIA (who had helped him to organise a bombing campaign against the Ba'athist regime during the 1990s), he recognised the need to modify the Coalition's search for "good Muslim" allies and brokered a deal in which the Shi'a's clerical leadership determined a candidate list for the January 2005 elections in return for the incorporation of its Badr Brigades into the reformed Iraqi police service.⁵⁵ With an almost universal Sunni electoral boycott, bringing the major Shi'a political parties into power succeeded in splitting the resistance, but greatly exacerbated the growing Balkanisation of elite politics. Increasingly, violence against the occupying forces became perceived as also an attack on the Shi'a. As extra-judicial killings rose steadily and 'as US offensives utilized more and more Shia

troops to fight against Sunni guerrillas’, political violence in Iraq gradually became more internecine in character⁵⁶.

So, far from ancient hatreds, *ad-Dawlah*’s violence against Shi’a civilians actually has its roots in the early dynamics of the occupation. The motive was not the efficacy of “classic” texts or “sacred” ideas (the second of Said’s culturalist dogmas), but the fact that Sunni Arabs were excluded from political power and disadvantaged by the Coalition’s marketisation of the Iraqi economy (which saw the dismantling of the rentier structures that underpinned tribal support for Ba’athism). Dismayed at the collapse of social development indicators within their governorates (infant mortality rates in Anbar and Diyala, for example, rose from 30 and 39 per 1000 in 2006 to 38 and 46 in 2011 respectively, many senior Sunni leaders came to view secession as the only viable future.⁵⁷ This led to an instrumental and contingent relationship with foreign volunteer forces such as az-Zarqawi’s *ad-Dawlah* progenitor, *Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn* (dubbed *Al-Qaeda in Iraq* by Western policy-makers still keen to link the 2001 attacks on New York and Washington to Baghdad). As Andrew Phillips puts it, ‘to the protean constellation of ex-Ba’athists, nationalists and tribal rebels that form the backbone of the insurgency, foreign jihadists provided a useful source of... “martyrdom” operations against the Coalition and its local allies’.⁵⁸

It also proved a highly effective means of leveraging more autonomy for the Sunni regions and, by the end of 2007, more than 100,000 so-called *sahwa* (awakening) irregulars had largely replaced the state’s security forces in Anbar, Diyala and Saladin governorates. Facing over 1000 attacks per week and enjoying little confidence in their Iraqi counterparts, Coalition forces gradually added the *sahwa* to its bio-metric, photographic payroll (worth \$150 million in 2008 alone) and started to describe them as “concerned local citizens”.⁵⁹ While this reduced the power of the *Tanzim* and formed a basis for more than 800 negotiated ceasefires, the Coalition’s policy of relying on ‘the extra-legal authority of local sheiks or neighborhood strongmen’ – many of whom had been at the forefront of the insurgency – represented the abandonment of the search for a “good” Muslim in Iraq.⁶⁰ Returning to the British colonial approach of ‘play[ing] prominent elements of Iraqi society off one another and [thereby] forc[ing] political compromises’ also tended to reinforce sectarian fissures, thereby ‘prevent[ing] the development of a genuinely

unified Iraqi state'.⁶¹ So, when the Maliki government strengthened de-Ba'athification measures in time for the 2010 elections, disbanded much of the *sahwa* once American funding came to an end and attempted to effect the 'forceful suppression of Sunni autonomy efforts' through its 10,000-strong and mostly Shi'a Counter Terrorism Service, the scene was set for a renewed alliance between the Sunni elders and the *Tanzim* – now rebranded *ad-Dawlah*.⁶²

For az-Zarqawi's successors, then, this involved a shift from insurgent violence based on the reasoning that 'the quickest way to achieve th[e] ejection of the U.S. presence may be to start a civil war' to a secessionist campaign aimed at redrawing the colonial borders which 'entrench the ummah's division'.⁶³ *Ad-Dawlah*'s narrative of the *safawi* threat is thus primarily about building a platform of political support from a wide range of tribal, religious and Ba'athist organisations. Its violence, discussed further below, is neither motivated by an extremist faith nor by ancient hatreds, but is, in the words of one its members, principally aimed at 'getting rid of th[e] sectarian government, ending th[e] corrupt army and negotiating to form a Sunni Region'.⁶⁴ Contrary to culturalism's talk of a "war within Islam" (defined by Ahmed Rashid as 'a conflict of Sunni against Shia, but also between... Wahhabism... and those who support a pluralistic vision of Muslim society'), *ad-Dawlah* is actually driven by more prosaic concerns that have their roots neither in the misty past of Islamic history nor in a global "*salafi*" conspiracy, but in the divisive outcome of colonialism, the occupation and the consequent collapse in law and order.⁶⁵

Wanton Barbarity and the Proto-State

Rapid social changes in history have always been facilitated by violence. Violence is never aimless: it is always directed to a specific end; it always serves the interests of a particular group, or individual, and undermines that of another.⁶⁶

Given its sophisticated use of news media and its penchant for gruesomely murdering Westerners, it is perhaps unsurprising that *ad-Dawlah*'s violence has received so much attention. Influenced by the informational apparatus of Operation Inherent Resolve, culturalist perspectives have predominated, leading to the emergence of three inter-related discourses. The first is *ad-*

Dawlah's criminality. Since, as President Obama made clear, it is 'a terrorist organization, pure and simple... [with] no vision other than the slaughter of all who stand in its way', it must be pacified and punished. After all, he continues, 'the only language understood by killers like this is the language of force'.⁶⁷ Secondly, *ad-Dawlah*'s violence is seen as pathological. Commonly discussed alongside 2014's other great moral panic, the West African Ebola outbreak, it is, according to the eminent journalist, Kurt Eichenwald, 'willing to engage in the most brutal and sordid forms of violence without any hesitation born of normal human morality'.⁶⁸ Al-Baghdadi has, apparently, 'demonstrated nothing short of annihilationist intention, following in the dark pathological tradition of al-Zarqawi'.⁶⁹ In a similar vein, Frederick Kagan told the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade that militancy in Iraq is like 'a virulent pathogen that opportunistically attacks bodies weakened by internal strife and poor governance'.⁷⁰ Thirdly, and in keeping with accounts of Muslim political violence generally, *ad-Dawlah*'s battlefield tactics are, as Mamdani predicts, 'to be explained as simply the result of evil'.⁷¹ 'Ugly, savage, inexplicable, nihilistic, and valueless evil... ISIL and the wickedness it represents must be destroyed' Secretary of State Kerry tells us, while President Obama warns that 'there can be no reasoning, no negotiation, with this brand of evil'.⁷²

Contrary to such hyperbole, though, *ad-Dawlah* does not meet the United States government's own definitional criteria of a terrorist organisation. The CIA, for instance, is clear that 'the desire to control a particular area... [is what] differentiates insurgent groups from purely terrorist organizations, whose objectives do not include the creation of an alternative government'.⁷³ Once *Tanzim*'s agents moved from small urban cells to territorialised military units, they effectively became soldiers in an emerging proto-state. Although easy to dismiss as 'barbaric terrorist acts' (in the Chinese Ambassador to the UN's words), *ad-Dawlah*'s violence is more fruitfully understood as a constitutive element in this claim to sovereignty. Its mass casualty attacks in urban centres, at home and abroad, are intended to demonstrate the extensiveness of its authority, the execution of its prisoners of war reduces enemy moral and its aggressive battlefield campaign had greatly denuded Damascus' and Baghdad's territorial reach. Its violence is, in other words, 'neither spontaneous nor some populist adventure, but rather reflects very professional well-prepared military planning'.⁷⁴ In all, *ad-Dawlah* has used a fairly standard

version of what security analysts call “terror shock value” to project ‘a force multiplier more valuable than weapons or numbers’.⁷⁵

Its highly punitive domestic regime has used comparable tactics to stifle dissent and violently exclude or remove minority groups as part of what Charles Lister from the Brookings Doha Centre identifies as an attempt ‘to present itself as the protector of true and pure Sunni ideals’.⁷⁶ However, the fact that it is equally willing to massacre recalcitrant Sunnis wherever necessary – such as the *Shaitat* tribe which attempted to prevent access to the rich oilfields near Deir ez-Zor in August 2014 – demonstrates that, far from being motivated simply by pathological hatred or criminal acquisitiveness, *ad-Dawlah* tends to balance the need to maintain popular support with the imperative of funding its proto-state. This approach saw it secure the control of 15 and 60 per cent of Iraq and Syria’s respective hydrocarbon production (garnering between \$1million and \$3million per day in income), several thousand miles of arterial transportation routes and Iraq’s biggest hydro-electric dam near Mosul (it has also threatened the second-largest at Haditha, as well as the oilfields around Kirkuk). From its capital at Raqqa, in the heart of Syria’s breadbasket, it uses these revenues to administer a complex bureaucracy overseeing taxation, welfare, communication, political, education and health provisions, thereby ‘making a substantial investment in developing lasting institutions’ and, in Lister’s view, meeting ‘a popular desire for a workable and stable form of Sunni governance’.⁷⁷ Each of these social structures is underpinned by a largely corruption-free system of justice that – away from the battlefield – has vigorously imposed order which, within a ‘context of intractable civil conflict, subsequently led to relative stability and tacit popular acceptance’.⁷⁸

This does not look like the actions of ‘psychopathic thugs’, as CIA Director Brennan recently called *ad-Dawlah*. Although dismissed by NBC News as merely ‘deviant and pathological’, its violence actually follows the rational precepts of Abu Bakr al-Naji’s 2004 military manual, *Idarat al-Tawahhush* (or *The Management of Savagery*). Described by Jessica Stern and J. M. Berger as ‘a compilation of lessons learned’, it advocates drawing Western Powers into a direct confrontation with insurgents followed by attritive guerrilla activities intended to amass casualties and diminish their domestic support – a strategy common to rebels facing a much stronger external force (particularly a democracy).⁷⁹ *Ad-Dawlah*’s use of violence is therefore

‘not some whimsical, crazed fanaticism, but a very deliberate, considered strategy’.⁸⁰ Its execution videos are theatrical and carefully judged using highly staged symbols of American power (orange jumpsuits, Guantanamo-style cages and so on) to project the most political of challenges. In line with al-Naji’s recommendations, these combine direct addresses to Western leaders in which the actions to follow are presented as recompense for the arrival of the “crusaders” on Muslim (ie. Sunni) lands with graphic violence intended to provoke moral outrage. This is based on his highly instrumental reasoning that, in the pursuit of an expected greater good, it is acceptable to disregard the restraints of mainstream Islamic jurisprudence and equate jihad with ‘naught but violence, crudeness, terrorism, frightening (others), and massacring’.⁸¹

In carrying these out with great effectiveness, *ad-Dawlah* forces have, contrary to President Obama’s view, neither been ‘unique in their brutality’ nor even exceptionally so. Their actions are thus difficult to see as a pathological deviation from commonplace conduct during warfare. It is, for example, generally agreed that the vast majority of civilians estimated to have been killed in Syria since 2011 died during major confrontations with the Assad regime, to which *ad-Dawlah* has been largely peripheral. During 2014, Iraqi Body Count believes that around 4,300 civilians were killed by *ad-Dawlah*, with another 1,900 fatalities caused by Operation Inherent Resolve airstrikes and a further 10,000 dying at the hands of unknown assailants. While a substantial proportion of this latter figure is likely to be a result of *ad-Dawlah*’s expansion and governance, it is also probable that, as a UN report from September that year makes very clear, many died at the hands of the burgeoning Shi’a militia now being extensively deployed by Baghdad.⁸² Following *ad-Dawlah*’s defeat at Amerli in August 2014 (amid heavy bombardment from the United States Air Force), for example, Human Rights Watch reported the targeted ransacking of 47 Sunni Arab villages with indeterminate loss of life.⁸³

While Western leaders have vigorously continued to portray *ad-Dawlah*’s violence as theologically, or ‘deeply’, evil (as Archbishop Welby told the BBC in 2015), little attention has been given to the growing litany of egregious human rights abuses (to the point by March 2014 of embarrassing al-Sadr into standing his contingents down) at the hands of these irregular “popular mobilization units” (PMUs). At between 100,000 and 120,000 strong, they are now

thought to be more than twice as large as the Iraqi armed forces which are, according to one their most senior generals, Ali Wazir Shamary, increasingly under the command of former Minister of Transport and founder of the Badr Brigades, Hadi al-Amiri.⁸⁴ Even though Washington believes al-Amiri has been personally responsible for murdering at least 2,000 Sunni civilians, it announced its intention to supply his government with 175 M1 tanks and a \$400 million shipment of explosive ammunition in December 2014 and May 2015 respectively.⁸⁵ This is in addition to Congress' previous authorisation of a \$1.6 billion "Train and Equip Fund" which specifically provides military aid for security forces 'associated with' the government of Iraq.⁸⁶

These include *Kata'ib Hizballah* which remains a "Designated Foreign Terrorist Organization" by the State Department for its role in the deaths of two United Nations employees in November 2008. Despite this, its forces have recently been photographed operating one such M1 tank and its leader, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis (who has a conviction for the bombing of the American and French embassies in 1983), currently chairs the PMU committee.⁸⁷ Perhaps an even larger element of the Iraqi state's deployment, though, is drawn from the *Asaib Ahl al-Haq* militia which claimed responsibility for over 6,000 attacks on Coalition forces during the occupation and, like both *Kata'ib* and the Badr Brigade, is backed by the commander of Iran's *Quds* branch of the Revolutionary Guard, Major-General Qasem Soleimani.⁸⁸ Described by al-Amiri as his 'dearest friend' and a close associate of his 'proxy', Interior Minister Mohammed Al-Ghabban, Soleimani is said to have led the recapture of Amerli personally, while also organising an 8,000 to 15,000 strong PMU contribution to the Syrian Army.⁸⁹ As a result, the United States is, in the words of its longest serving official in Iraq, Ali Khedery, 'now acting as the air force, the armory, and the diplomatic cover for Iraqi militias that are...beholden to ...Iran, and which often resort to the same vile tactics as the Islamic State itself'.⁹⁰

Such a *Realpolitik* approach to involving the Syrian and Iranian regimes (both were founding members of President Bush's "axis of evil" and remain two of only three "state sponsors of terrorism" designated by the Department of State) in the practicalities of defeating *ad-Dawlah* reveals the spuriousness of the war on terror's foundational premise – defined by President Bush as a 'conflict between good and evil'.⁹¹ In reality, no such dichotomy exists. During the first 18 months of the occupation alone, for instance, the Coalition and its allies killed, according to an

epidemiological cluster survey published in *The Lancet*, over 100,000 people – half of which were found to be women and children.⁹² Further research funded by the United States Army Medical Research and Materiel Command found that 28 per cent of marines and 14 per cent of soldiers who had returned from duty in Iraq admitted ‘being responsible for the death of a non-combatant’.⁹³

Today’s rhetorical trope of *ad-Dawlah*’s apparently exceptional wickedness is thus part of a broader effort to justify the extraordinary levels of violence deployed by the West in Iraq. Once, as Mamdani points out, ‘the struggle against political enemies is defined as a struggle against evil... there can be no compromise. Evil cannot be converted; it must be eliminated’. Since, he continues, ‘the righteousness of self goes alongside the demonization of the other as evil’, “our” violence is, as per culturalist dogma, presented as ‘necessary to historical progress’ and is thus normatively better (measured in ways that suit contemporary foreign policy imperatives).⁹⁴ A moral taxonomy of good versus evil therefore tends to be particularly powerfully invoked when the “communal”, “sectarian” or “ethnic” conflicts of “bad” Muslims spill over and threaten the progressive intervention of the West – after all, ‘the Islamic State became impossible to ignore not when it conducted mass executions, on camera, of hundreds of Iraqi and Syrian fighters, but when it beheaded western hostages’.⁹⁵ This serves to remove the enemy from the political realm, to legitimise the “progressive” violence of the West and to disable alternative responses. In reality, the terms “moderate” and “extremist” are ‘not adjectives describing the attitude of Muslims to Islam. They [a]re actually adjectives describing the attitudes of Muslims to the West’; not, in other words, a shared understanding of the faith, but a political response to the West’s post-911 insistence that all “good” Muslims are ‘now under obligation to prove their credentials by joining a war against “bad Muslims”’.⁹⁶

Conclusion

Using a culturalist approach to move the distinction between “good” and “bad” Muslims away from the political criteria of support for Western policy and towards an ethical distinction has three great advantages. The first, noted by Mamdani, is that it deflects accusations of facile generalisation by offering a more nuanced focus on conflict within civilisations. As Arthur

Schlesinger put it after the 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, ‘retaining the support of moderate Muslim states’ relies on meeting the challenge of ‘disproving Huntington’.⁹⁷ Instead, the enemy must be clearly defined as ‘a more specific variant or even a perversion of Islam’.⁹⁸ By particularising the war on terror in this way, it has been recast as an emancipatory endeavour ‘intended to liberate “good” Muslims from the political yoke of “bad” ones’.⁹⁹ The invasion of Iraq was thus ‘supposed to be a realisation of this inspiration. It was said that once the bad Muslim was overthrown, the good ones would rise to the occasion’.¹⁰⁰ As Mamdani observes, though, since ‘the war on terror demands nothing less than capitulation as the seal of recognition of a “good” or “moderate” Muslim’, those defined as “bad” Muslims concluded that they may be ‘next on the American agenda [and we]re smart enough to know that they better make a stand in Iraq rather than wait their turn’.¹⁰¹ As this became more and more apparent, Muslim political violence in general, and *ad-Dawlah* in particular, were increasingly identified with the principle ideological foe of the post-Cold War era – a global Wahhabi/*salafi* conspiracy against the West and its “moderate” Muslim friends. In keeping with culturalists’ tendency to disregard what the “Orient” says about itself, this expediently obfuscates the political character of Muslim mobilisation behind a paper-thin discourse on “Islamic extremism”.

Culturalism’s second advantage has been that, when Iraq did not go according to plan, it offered an explanation of Muslim “badness” that did not implicate the occupation. Since the invasion was a modern and progressive force for change, violent resistance must be motivated by endemic backwardness. Overlooking both the divisive legacy of colonialism and the Coalition’s policy of arming the two largest factions of Iraqi society, this discourse ‘conveniently explained politics as not the result of a relationship between two or more, but as the inevitable outcome of the culture of one party’.¹⁰² The bloodshed which followed the “liberation” of Iraq was thus not a political response (or even an attempt to retake the oilfields), but a result of an internecine and incomprehensible ancient hatred between Shi’a and Sunni given free reign by Rumsfeld’s post-war “nation-building lite”. Such a process, Mamdani points out, is intrinsic to the culturalist logic of the war on terror: ‘the implication is unmistakable and undisguised: whether in Afghanistan, Palestine, or Pakistan, Islam must be quarantined and the devil exorcized from it by a Muslim civil war’.¹⁰³ This is, many believe, the only way to deal with ‘the Islamic State’s medieval religious nature’.¹⁰⁴ As Douglas Murray concludes, ‘the region as a whole may be

starting to go through something similar to what Europe went through in the early 17th century during the Thirty Years' War, when Protestant and Catholic states battled it out. This is a conflict which... will re-align not only the Middle East, but the religion of Islam'.¹⁰⁵

Culturalism thus facilitated a third advantage; that because the violence of the “bad” Muslim is not driven by a rational engagement with the policies and presence of the West, it cannot be reasoned with and should, instead, be met with force. After all, if conflicts ‘are understood as no more than settled history or human nature rearing its ugly head, then there is nothing that can be done in the present to resolve the tension except repress or ignore such struggles’.¹⁰⁶ Since, in broad terms, ‘bad Muslims are doctrinal, antimodern, and virulent, ...[and] productive of fear and preemptive police or military action’, culturalist explanatory commentaries stress exegetic and ideological concerns over possible political and economic motives.¹⁰⁷ The result has been a generalised and prospectively efficacious sense that social engagement is likely to be of limited value. As Richard Jackson observes, by ‘denying the rational political demands of insurgent groups... the “Islamic terrorism” discourse normalizes and legitimizes a restricted set of coercive and punitive counter-terrorism strategies, whilst simultaneously making non-violent alternatives such as dialogue, compromise and reform appear inconceivable and nonsensical’.¹⁰⁸ Such robust remedial action seems more reasonable if the culprit is considered to be criminal, dangerously deviant or evil-minded. ‘Jihadist leaders’, are therefore characterised by commentators such as Frederick Kagan, ‘evil and, by our standards, insane’.¹⁰⁹ By viewing *ad-Dawlah* as ‘a cancer’ apparently responsible for ‘a level of atrocity towards mankind that, post-Nazism, we hoped we would never again witness’, Western leaders place its violence within a ‘moral category, defined as absolute evil and divorced from any social, strategic or quite simply political context’, thereby precluding critical debate and justifying their own strategic policy preferences.¹¹⁰

Notes

¹ Sowell, *Iraq's Second Insurgency*, 4-5

² Lewis, *Al-Qaeda in Iraq Resurgent*, 7

³ Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS*, xi.

⁴ van Veen and Grinstead, *Iraqi Imbrolio*, 7.

⁵ <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20141210/102795/HHRG-113-FA00-Wstate-McGurkB-20141210.pdf>.

⁶ <http://www.tonyblairoffice.org/news/entry/iraq-syria-and-the-middle-east-an-essay-by-tony-blair/>.

⁷ Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, 17.

⁸ Balibar, "Is there a Neo-Racism?" 25.

⁹ Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, 17-18.

¹⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, 300-301.

¹¹ Duffield, "The Symphony of the Damned," 175.

¹² Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, 106.

¹³ Quoted in McAdams, *George W. Bush*, 212.

¹⁴ Mamdani, "The Secular Roots," 154.

¹⁵ Quoted in Croft, *Culture, Crisis*, 74.

¹⁶ Rabasa et al., *Building Moderate*, 70-74.

¹⁷ quoted in Bartolucci, "Terrorism Rhetoric," 572.

¹⁸ Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 160; Bar, "Religious Sources," 17.

¹⁹ Kundnani, *The Muslims*, 74.

²⁰ Wahid, "Right Islam".

²¹ Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, 4.

²² Kalyvas, "Logic of Violence," 36.

²³ Haykel quoted in Kirkpatrick, "ISIS' Harsh Brand"; Husain, "Saudis Must Stop".

²⁴ Quoted in Blair, "Qatar and Saudi Arabia".

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<http://embassies.mofa.gov.sa/sites/uk/EN/AboutDiplomaticMission/MissionNews/Pages/ennews22082014.aspx>

²⁶ Husain, "Saudis Must Stop".

²⁷ Hegghammer, "Jihadi-Salafis," 255; Paz, "Debates," 279.

²⁸ Issue Six: 38

²⁹ *Dabiq* Issue Four: 43

³⁰ Quoted in Gerges, "ISIS," 340.

³¹ Arraf, "Islamic State".

³² <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-25/tony-abbott-speaks-at-un-general-assembly/5767576>;

Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants".

³³ *Dabiq* Issue One: 7

³⁴ Lambton, *State and Government*, 85.

³⁵ Gerges, "ISIS," 342.

³⁶ Mamdani, "Whither Political Islam?" 153.

³⁷ Shaikh, *The Present as History*, 100.

³⁸ Abu Ahmed, former *ad-Dawlah* member, quoted in Chulov, "Isis".

³⁹ <http://www.tonyblairoffice.org/news/entry/iraq-syria-and-the-middle-east-an-essay-by-tony-blair/>.

⁴⁰ Phillips, "How al Qaeda," 70.

⁴¹ Crooke, "The ISIS",.

⁴² Burleigh, "The Ancient Muslim Hatreds".

⁴³ researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06915/SN06915.pdf.

⁴⁴ <http://www.tonyblairoffice.org/news/entry/iraq-syria-and-the-middle-east-an-essay-by-tony-blair/>.

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- ⁴⁵ Neep, *Occupying Syria*, 31.
- ⁴⁶ Simmons, *Iraq*, 195.
- ⁴⁷ Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 135-140.
- ⁴⁸ Chapin Metz, *Iraq*, 97, 261.
- ⁴⁹ Davies, *Blood on Our Hands*, 233.
- ⁵⁰ MacLeod, "Gore to Rebels".
- ⁵¹ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 104-5.
- ⁵² Jabar, "Postconflict Iraq," 6.
- ⁵³ Davies, *Blood on Our Hands*, 174.
- ⁵⁴ Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS*, 54; <http://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publications/swp-comments-en/swp-aktuelle-details/article/us-led-air-campaign-challenges-is.html>.
- ⁵⁵ Schwartz, *War without End*, 243
- ⁵⁶ Schwartz, *War without End*, 244
- ⁵⁷ <http://cosit.gov.iq/en/>.
- ⁵⁸ Phillips, "How al Qaeda," 71.
- ⁵⁹ Long, "The Anbar Awakening," 77.
- ⁶⁰ MacDonald, *Networks of Domination*, 214.
- ⁶¹ MacDonald, *Networks of Domination*, 204, 214.
- ⁶² Sowell, *Iraq's Second Insurgency*, 5.
- ⁶³ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 436; *Dabiq* Issue Seven: 1.
- ⁶⁴ <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/06/23/isis-joins-forces-with-saddam-loyalists-in-bid-to-take-baghdad/>.
- ⁶⁵ Rashid, "ISIS".
- ⁶⁶ Mamdani, *Imperialism*, 52.
- ⁶⁷ Quoted in Miller, "Obama Calls on World".
- ⁶⁸ Eichenwald, "ISIS's Enemy List".
- ⁶⁹ Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS*, 124.
- ⁷⁰ <https://www.aei.org/publication/missing-the-target-why-the-us-has-not-defeated-al-qaeda/>.
- ⁷¹ Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, 4.
- ⁷² <http://www.businessinsider.com/john-kerry-james-foley-murder-isis-2014-8#ixzz3VJ1CzUE1>
- ⁷³ http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/Fishman_Al_Qaeda_In_Iraq.pdf.
- ⁷⁴ Crooke, "The ISIS'".
- ⁷⁵ Nance, *The Terrorists of Iraq*, 311.
- ⁷⁶ Lister, *Profiling the Islamic State*, 18, 26.
- ⁷⁷ Caris and Reynolds, *ISIS Governance*, 14, 18.
- ⁷⁸ Lister, *Profiling the Islamic State*, 26.
- ⁷⁹ Stern and Berger, *ISIS*, 23.
- ⁸⁰ Crooke, "The ISIS'".
- ⁸¹ al-Naji, *The Management*, 72.
- ⁸² www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRreport1May31October2015.pdf.
- ⁸³ <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2015/03/18/after-liberation-came-destruction-0>.
- ⁸⁴ Sly, "Pro-Iran Militias'".
- ⁸⁵ George, "Breaking Badr".

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- ⁸⁶ Katzman et al, “Iran’s Role,” 14.
⁸⁷ Sly, “Pro-Iran Militias’,”
⁸⁸ Khedery, “Iran’s Shiite Militias”.
⁸⁹ van Veen and Grinstead, *Iraqi Imbroglia*, 16.
⁹⁰ Khedery, , “Iran’s Shiite Militias”.
⁹¹ Quoted in McAdams, *George W. Bush*, 212.
⁹² Roberts et al., “Mortality,” 1863.
⁹³ Hoge et al., “Combat Duty,” 2004.
⁹⁴ Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, 3, 190, 193.
⁹⁵ Freedland, “Isis and Ebola”.
⁹⁶ Mamdani, “The Secular Roots,” 154; *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, 15.
⁹⁷ Schlesinger, “Sand Trap,”.
⁹⁸ Wuthnow, *Be Very Afraid*, 112.
⁹⁹ Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, 24.
¹⁰⁰ Mamdani, “The Secular Roots,” 154.
¹⁰¹ Mamdani, “The Secular Roots,” 160.
¹⁰² Mamdani, “The Secular Roots,” 154.
¹⁰³ Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, 25.
¹⁰⁴ Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants”.
¹⁰⁵ Murray, “Iran,”.
¹⁰⁶ Campbell, *National Deconstruction*, 84.
¹⁰⁷ Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, 24.
¹⁰⁸ Jackson, “Constructing Enemies,” 421.
¹⁰⁹ <https://www.aei.org/publication/missing-the-target-why-the-us-has-not-defeated-al-qaeda/>.
¹¹⁰ Miller, “Obama Calls on World”; Dent, “If Teenage Girls”; Roy, *The Politics of Chaos*, 53.

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