

A **WND**® SPECIAL REPORT

ISIS RISING

PRELUDE TO A NEO-OTTOMAN CALIPHATE

BY F. MICHAEL MALOOF

ISIS RISING

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“O soldiers of the Islamic State … erupt volcanoes of jihad everywhere. Light the Earth with fire. America and its allies are terrified, weak and powerless. God has ordered us to fight. For that reason the soldiers of the Islamic State are fighting … they will never leave fighting, even if only one soldier remains.”

—ISIS LEADER ABU BAKR AL-BAGHDADI

Mustafa Kader struggled to hold back tears as he described the scene left behind in his wife's home village by fighters of the self-declared Islamic State. The fleeing family returned to find the bodies of Kader's sister-in-law and an eight-year-old niece lying in pools of blood.

“They had been raped, and their hearts were cut out of their chests and left on top of the bodies,” he told the *Guardian* newspaper of London. “I buried them with my own hands.”

Kader and his family are among hundreds of thousands who have fled the unfathomably brutal jihadist army's march of terror across Syria and Iraq, which killed more than nine thousand civilians

and wounded more than seventeen thousand in the first eight months of 2014, according to the United Nations.

It's the same Islamic State, also known as ISIS and ISIL, which seized global attention with the videoed grisly beheadings of Western hostages, including American journalists Steven Sotloff and James Foley and now former US Army ranger and humanitarian Peter Kassig.

Unlike typical armies, the ISIS military juggernaut flaunts its atrocities as a calculated weapon of terror against its enemies, deftly employing social media and justifying specific acts of horror such as beheading, rape, and slavery by citing the Islamic holy book, the Quran, and Islamic jurisprudence.

In the Islamic State's de facto capital of Raqqa, Syria, in April 2014, the bodies of men who had been crucified were tossed in the street for all to see the consequence of defying ISIS rule under strict Islamic law, or Shariah.

By August, among the thousands of "apostate" Muslims, Christians, and other minorities ISIS had slaughtered were more than five hundred members of the Yazidi sect in Iraq. Some Yazidis were buried alive, and the world's attention was drawn to their plight when five thousand became trapped atop a mountain without food or water after fleeing their homes.

In October 2014 in a town on the Euphrates River west of Baghdad, ISIS paraded through the streets thirty tribal leaders accused of collaborating with the Iraqi government, shouting through loudspeakers that the men were apostates. The leaders, according to witnesses, then were lined up and shot dead with assault rifles.

ISIS also is accused of beheading and crucifying children, using chemical weapons that burn victims from the inside out, chopping off fingers for smoking, and stoning to death women found in the company of a man who is not a relative.

In the ancient Syrian town of Aleppo in May, ISIS rounded up Kurdish boys and forced them to study the Quran in a mosque. Those who failed to progress in their studies were beaten with electric

cables, according to the international group Human Rights Watch.

So, what exactly is ISIS all about, and how did it arise from being dismissed by President Obama as “the JV team” to becoming a serious threat not only to stability in the Middle East but to the United States itself?

ISIS is a Sunni jihadist movement that seeks to establish a vast Islamic state, or caliphate, that would subject the population in its conquered territory to strict Islamic law and erase the political boundaries of the Middle East.

In so doing, it envisions “purifying” the region’s predominantly Sunni population of all other religions and subjecting it to an extreme form of Islamic law, based on an ultraconservative Sunni interpretation of the Quran called Wahhabism that emanated from Saudi Arabia some two hundred years ago and remains intertwined in Saudi culture to this day.

ISIS seeks to force all the population within its caliphate to convert to its Wahhabi doctrine or face death.

According to Shariah and as outlined in the Quran, non-Muslims, particularly Christians and Jews, can either convert, leave, or enter into a *dhimma*, or a “protection” contract, in which they must pay a *jizya*, or tax. Those who don’t comply are to be killed.

Already, however, tens of thousands of Christians, Yazidis, Kurds, and Shiite Muslims have been summarily slaughtered without the choice of conversion or paying a *jizya*.

The area of the Middle East that ISIS seeks to place under its caliphate is the Levant, which includes Iraq, a portion of Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and even Israel and Palestine. ISIS also is accepting *bayah*, an oath of allegiance, from other like-minded jihadi groups in other Arab and non-Arab countries.

These pledges could enable ISIS to expand its caliphate into non-contiguous areas of the Arab world that are outside the portions of northern and eastern Syria and western and central Iraq that constitute ISIS’s current territorial conquests.

The new annexations, with more to come, create an even more

complex threat environment for the US-led, anti-ISIS coalition, which has bombed ISIS locations in Iraq and Syria.

“O soldiers of the Islamic State … erupt volcanoes of jihad everywhere,” ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced in a rare public statement following a US airstrike in November 2014 that almost killed him.

“Light the Earth with fire,” he said. “America and its allies are terrified, weak, and powerless. God has ordered us to fight. For that reason the soldiers of the Islamic State are fighting … **they will never leave fighting, even if only one soldier remains.**”

In addition to Sunni-dominated areas of the Levant, ISIS seeks to annex territories occupied by jihadi groups in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, the Jund al-Hkilafah in Algeria, the Majis Shura Shabab al-Islam in Libya, and the Ansar Beit al-Maqdis in the Sinai Peninsula.

Those areas will become new *wilayat*, or provinces, of the Islamic State, ruled by appointed *wulat*, or governors.

One significant potential ISIS ally is Al-Qaida in the Arab Peninsula. AQAP is known for its excellence in bomb making and is one of the few far-flung jihadi groups in the world capable of directly threatening the US homeland.

With AQAP’s capabilities, the prospect of a merger with ISIS would be very troubling to Western intelligence. While elements of AQAP have sworn allegiance to ISIS, and there is general sympathy for what ISIS has accomplished, **AQAP leadership isn’t prepared** yet to swear loyalty to Baghdadi and consequently lose its separate identity.

For now, AQAP remains loyal to ISIS’s main competitor, al-Qaida, led by Ayman al-Zawahiri.

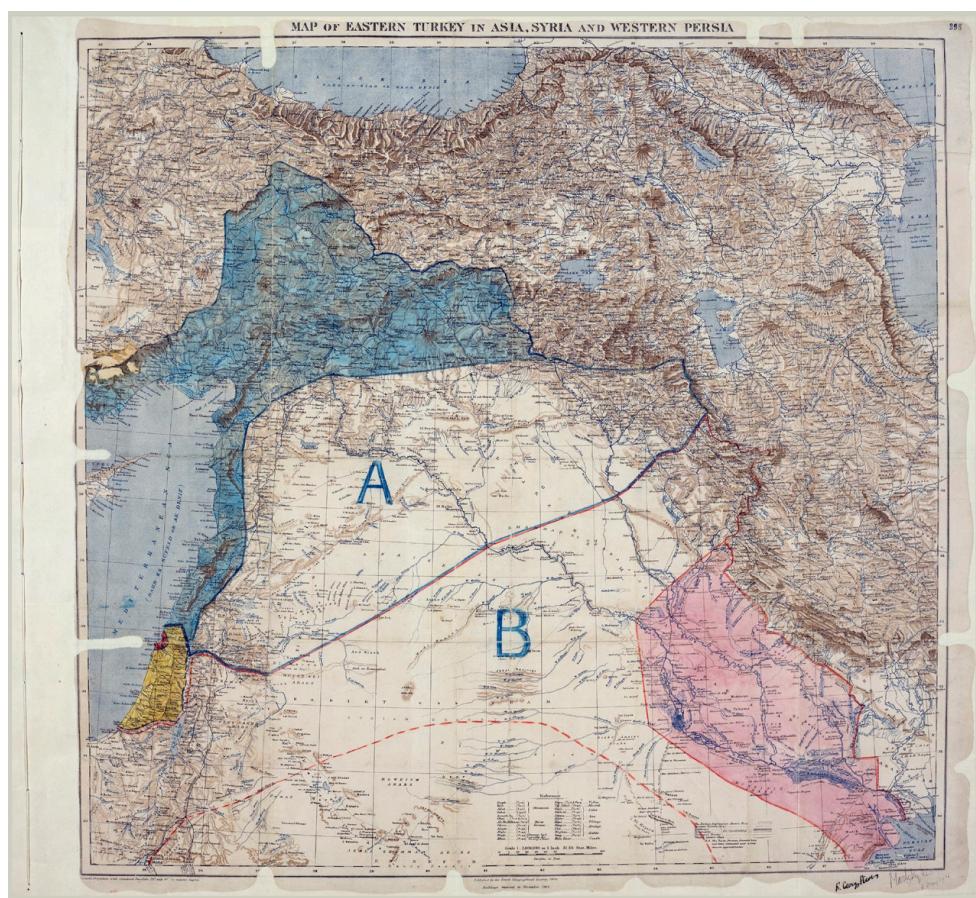
Nevertheless, any ISIS annexation in these Arab countries would indicate that like-minded jihadi groups have sufficient control over their territories and can follow the same economic model of sustainability that ISIS has pursued in Iraq and Syria over the past few years.

The union would enable the jihadi groups to tie into traditional criminal enterprise networks that have been used for trafficking, smuggling, and other black-market activities.

ERASING THE HISTORIC PACT THAT DIVIDED THE OTTOMAN CALIPHATE

As an increasing number of Sunni jihadi groups across Central Asia, the Arab Peninsula, the Maghreb, and Somalia begin to swear allegiance to ISIS, the possibility emerges of an ISIS caliphate encompassing all the lands conquered after the death of Muhammad in AD 632.

The Arab empire includes what later became part of the Ottoman Caliphate, which was divided up between the Western powers after World War I. The current Sunni Muslim leadership of Turkey sees



Map of Sykes-Picot Agreement showing Eastern Turkey in Asia, Syria, and Western Persia, and areas of control and influence agreed between the British and the French. Royal Geographical Society, 1910-15. Signed by Mark Sykes and François Georges-Picot, May 8, 1916.

ISIS's intentions as a complement to its own aim of establishing a neo-Ottoman Caliphate approximating the old empire prior to World War I. It would encompass much of the territory now coming under ISIS influence.

As a consequence, a synergy has developed between ISIS's caliphate ambitions and Turkey's interest in reviving the Ottoman Caliphate.

The name Islamic State evolved from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS. It also has been referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL. In the Middle East, ISIS is referred to as ad-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fil-Iraq wa ash-Sham, or DAESH, the initials of the jihadist group in Arabic.

ISIS seeks to erase political boundaries established under the secretly crafted 1916 Sykes-Picot Treaty by Britain and France to divide the Ottoman Caliphate in the Levant once World War I ended.

Named after two diplomats, the British Sir Mark Sykes and the French Francois Georges Picot, the treaty and the boundaries it set for the countries that today comprise the Levant have become the rallying cry of ISIS.

Muslims cite Sykes-Picot as the source of sectarian and ethnic divisions for almost a century. Near constant turmoil has reigned from revolts, riots, and civil wars, with the various sectarian factions fighting among each other.

The British obtained territory divided into Palestine and Transjordan, from which Iraq emerged. France got Greater Syria and coastal state lands that included modern-day Lebanon and Syria.

In creating the state of Iraq, the treaty joined non-Arab Sunni Kurds in the north, Sunni Arab Muslims in the western and central portions of the country, and Shiite Muslim Arabs in the south.

At the time, the British also created the modern state of Jordan out of the Transjordan region and promised the Jews a homeland and state within a state under the Balfour Declaration.

In Lebanon the French gave the Christian Maronites status and carved out borders that gave them a majority over Sunni and Shiite

Muslims. Syria similarly was divided, giving the Alawites and the Druze their own portions of the country while the Sunni Muslims were granted Damascus and Aleppo. Syria, however, didn't become a united country until World War II.

ISIS claims it is out to rectify these past wrongs. However, the jihadist group still **must demonstrate it can govern the caliphate** it seeks to create, even though its initial dramatic military successes have sparked the imagination of disgruntled, unemployed young people.

As ISIS seeks to establish administrative control over the lands it takes militarily, the creation of a caliphate is drawing Sunni jihadist fighters from other groups.

The caliphate has turned into a **magnet to attract these young recruits**, who are estimated to number some fifteen thousand foreign fighters, to join the estimated two hundred thousand jihadist fighters who already belong to ISIS. In its appeal to the young recruits, ISIS has skillfully employed social media, including Facebook and Twitter.

Various al-Qaida affiliates also have begun to swear allegiance to ISIS. The groups include elements of Al-Qaida in the Arab Peninsula, or AQAP; Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, or AQIM; al-Shabaab in Somalia; the **Pakistani Taliban**, or Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, also known as the TTP; and now the Afghan Taliban.

ORIGIN OF ISIS

ISIS is an outgrowth of al-Qaida, the Sunni jihadi organization currently led by Ayman al-Zawahiri. He assumed the leadership of al-Qaida after the death of its founder and previous leader, Osama bin Laden, who was killed in May 2012 by US Navy SEALs in Pakistan after a decade of tracking him.

ISIS originated as the Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, or Unity and Jihad Group, in 1999 led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was part of al-Qaida but had a more violent and brutal approach than the al-Qaida leadership liked in pursuing its goals.

Zarqawi believed in a more violent form of persuasion of even

fellow Sunnis to form a caliphate. Bin Laden and Zawahiri favored a more peaceful approach of gaining popular Muslim support and ultimately overthrowing “apostate” governments in the Middle East supported by the West.

The effect was to discourage even Sunni recruits out of fear of not being strict enough in their beliefs of the Quran, raising concern with al-Qaida central.

The al-Tawhid movement under Zarqawi then became the Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Blad al-Rafidayn, referred to as Al-Qaida in Iraq, or AQI, following Zarqawi’s swearing of allegiance to bin Laden in 2004. **Zarqawi grew in strength and by 2006 was in a position to undertake attacks against the United States and coalition forces in Iraq as well as Iraqi security forces.**

It was during this period that the United States purged the Iraqi military of Baathist party followers of deposed Sunni Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. The Sunnis who were purged began working with AQI to go after coalition forces, which by then were regarded as occupiers in Iraq.

Even though Zarqawi had sworn allegiance to bin Laden, he continued to operate in a more brutal fashion, provoking sectarian conflict principally with the Shiites and using violence to gain Sunni supporters.

His strategy continued to be at odds with bin Laden and the al-Qaida leadership, which outlined the concerns to Zarqawi in various correspondences. On July 9, 2005, for example, Zawahiri, then the deputy leader of al-Qaida, sent Zarqawi a letter sharply criticizing his efforts toward all-out sectarian warfare and violence in Iraq.

Zawahiri said Muslims – even Shiites – needed to be united to fight a greater enemy, the United States and its allied “occupiers.”

On June 7, 2006, however, Zarqawi was killed by a US airstrike. It’s been claimed that because he refused to listen to the al-Qaida leadership, Zarqawi’s position was made known to the United States. However, there has been no proof of the contention.

Another report suggests two of Zarqawi’s followers had been

captured and gave away his position, which was visited by a direct hit from two five-hundred-pound bombs from a US F-16 fighter jet. Against all odds, Zarqawi survived his wounds, but he died soon thereafter once **US Delta Force operators** who were nearby to laser guide the bombs reached the site.

Zarqawi was succeeded in the AQI leadership by Abu Ayyub al-Masri and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi.

In October 2006 AQI joined other Sunni jihadist groups to form the Mujahidin Shura Council, which further consolidated into the Islamic State of Iraq, or ISI, making remarkable advances in the Iraqi provinces of Al Anbar, Nineveh, and Kirkuk, among other Sunni enclaves. The intention was to create a caliphate in the Sunni Arab majority areas of Iraq.

By this time, most of ISI's fighters no longer were Iraqis but foreign fighters streaming into Iraq from Syria. Many of the foreign fighters came from other countries in the Middle East, North Africa, south Asia, and Europe.

However, increasing numbers of Sunni Iraqis were becoming more disgruntled over the political backlash by the Shiite prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, against ex-Baathist Sunnis and increasingly began to join ISI.

Then in April 2010 Masri, who was the ISI war minister, and Abu Omar Baghdadi were killed in a joint US-Iraqi operation. On May 16, 2010, Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali Al-Badri Al-Samarrai, better known as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, was chosen to lead ISI, the precursor to ISIS.

JUST WHO IS BAGHDADI?

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was born in 1971 in Samarra, Iraq, some fifty miles north of Baghdad. **He earned his bachelor's degree**, a master's degree, and a PhD in Islamic Studies from the Islamic University of Baghdad in the Baghdad suburb of Adhamiya.

He claims to be a descendent of Muhammad, thereby calling



Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Caliph of the Islamic State, addressing followers in Mosul, Iraq.

himself Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi al-Husseini al-Qurashi.

In his capacity as the new “emir” of ISI, Baghdadi quickly replaced the group’s leadership by appointing former Baathist military and intelligence officers who had served while Saddam Hussein was president.

Ironically, nearly all of them had spent time imprisoned by the US military and became a third of his top twenty-five commanders.

Baghdadi, for example, was imprisoned at Camp Bucca in southern Iraq as a “civilian internee” by US forces. The length of internment is open to question. US Department of Defense records say he was

held at Camp Bucca from February until December 2004.

Other news accounts say he was captured as a mid-ranking, anti-US Sunni insurgent in 2005 and remained at Camp Bucca until 2009, when he was released under an amnesty program, according to reports from the former commander of Camp Bucca, US Army Colonel Kenneth King. However, his account doesn’t comport with Department of Defense records of Baghdadi’s internment.

At the time of his internment, Baghdadi was considered “unremarkable” and was not held in Compound 14 at Camp Bucca, where extremist Sunnis were held.

At Camp Bucca, King was commander of a New York National Guard unit. Upon Baghdadi’s release in 2009, King said Baghdadi told his captors, “I’ll see you guys in New York.”

A former commander at Camp Bucca, James Skylar Gerrond, said Baghdadi's internment at the prison "contributed to his radicalization, or at least bolstered his extremism." Others said the compound was an "al-Qaida school."

In July 2012 Baghdadi announced he was returning to the Sunni strongholds he abandoned after being driven out by US forces and their Sunni allies. In an audio statement, Baghdadi announced a new offensive in Iraq called "Breaking the Walls." The aim was to free ISI members in Iraqi prisons.

A year later, the Breaking the Walls effort ended when the group simultaneously raided Taji and Abu Ghraib prisons, freeing more than five hundred prisoners, many of whom were veterans of the Iraqi insurgency.

With events leading up to the civil war in Syria in March 2011, many ISI fighters, now under the leadership of Baghdadi, began to send in fighters to join the Syrian opposition to overthrow Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The Syrian president is an Alawite, an offshoot of Shiite Islam that is backed by Shiite Iran.

Baghdadi appointed Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani, a Syrian, to lead the fighters and establish ISI cells throughout Syria.

CREATION OF ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND AL-SHAM

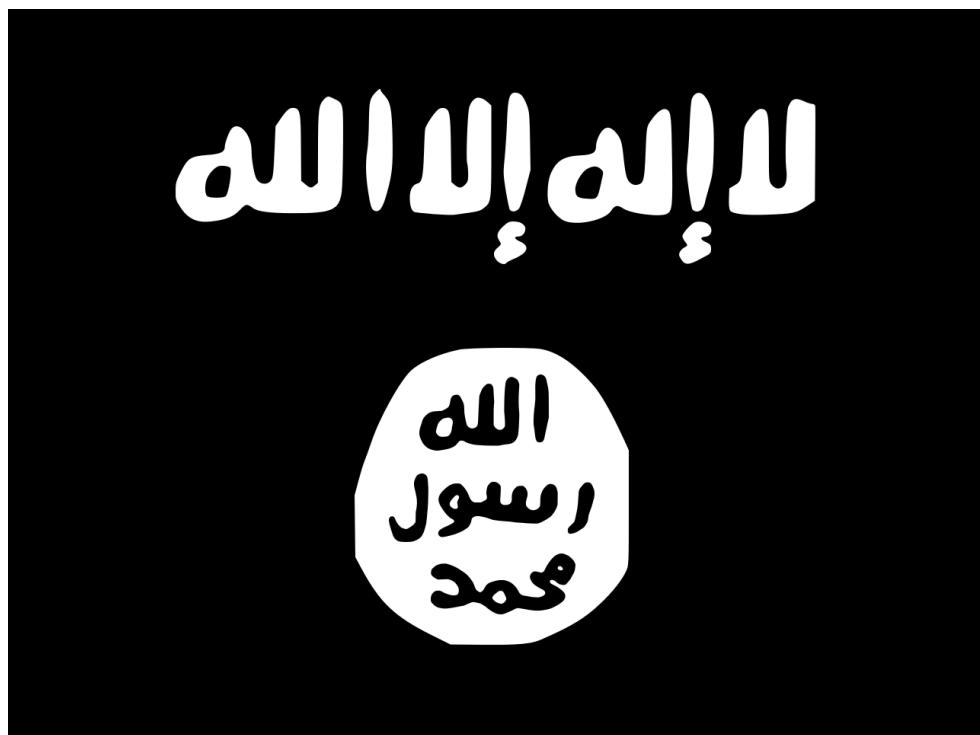
In April 2013 Baghdadi announced the formation of the Jabhat al-Nusra li Ahl as Sham, or the Jabhat al-Nusra Front, to represent the fighters in Syria. Al-Nusra was financed and backed by Baghdadi's ISI.

In the announcement, **Baghdadi revealed the creation of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham**, or ISIS, which he said would be a merger of his ISI with al-Nusra.

However, Jawlani balked at the merger and issued a statement of his own, complaining that he and his al-Nusra leadership never were consulted about the merger.

There were major differences between al-Nusra under Jawlani's leadership and Baghdadi's ISIS.

While Jawlani was working to overthrow the Assad government, ISIS was determined to build an Islamic state that would carry out sectarian attacks and impose strict Islamic law.



Flag of ISIS

While both groups had a number of foreign fighters, Nusra was comprised mostly of Syrians while ISIS fighters were regarded more as foreign occupiers by many Syrian refugees.

In June 2013, the Middle East news service Al Jazeera – which often has been used by al-Qaida to relay written and video messages from its leadership – said it had received a letter from al-Qaida leader Zawahiri, addressed to both Baghadtadi and Jawlani, objecting to the merger.

In his decision, Zawahiri announced he was appointing an emissary to mediate between Baghadtadi and Jawlani.

Zawahiri asserted Baghadtadi had “made a mistake” in announcing the merger “without consulting us.”

He declared the merger plan was “damaging to all jihadists,” adding that the “al-Nusra Front is an independent branch of al-Qaida.”

Later in June 2013, however, Baghdadi rejected Zawahiri’s order to break up the union between ISI and al-Nusra.

“The purported remarks by head of Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in the message posted on jihadist forums on Saturday indicate tensions between ISI and al-Qaida’s central command,” Al Jazeera reported.

While Jawlani had acknowledged there was a relationship between the two groups, he denied the merger and publicly pledged allegiance to al-Qaida’s Zawahiri.

“The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant will remain, as long as we have a vein pumping or an eye blinking,” Baghadtadi said. “It remains and we will not compromise nor give it up … until we die.”

In commenting on Zawahiri’s order, Baghadtadi said, “When it comes to the letter of Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri – may God protect him – we have many legal and methodological reservations.”

He added that after consulting with his consultative council of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, “I chose the order of God over the orders that contravene Allah in the letter.”

The internal dispute between Zawahiri and Baghadtadi prompted confusion among his fighters, and many rejoined al-Nusra to remain affiliated with al-Qaida. This in turn prompted al-Nusra and ISIS to begin attacking each other’s fighters to establish dominance over the leadership in Syria.

Underlying Zawahiri’s concern over the merger also was the brutality Baghadtadi’s fighters exhibited publicly, particularly beheadings, amputations, and crucifixions not only against Shiites and Christians, but also Sunnis whom Baghadtadi’s fighters didn’t believe were devout enough.

Zawahiri also saw the increasing rise of Baghadtadi and his achievements in just a year and a half as a threat to al-Qaida’s existence, suggesting that al-Qaida would have to undertake an

operation at least as spectacular as the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center Towers and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, to regain the initiative.

With Baghdadi's surging successes in such a short time, many fighters affiliated with al-Qaida began to jump ship to join Baghdadi's ISIS. Even among those groups that chose to stay with al-Qaida, fighters showed a begrudging praise for ISIS.

The development soon was to become increasingly apparent in the swelling support for ISIS not only in Syria and Iraq, but also in Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and even Libya.

Then, in December 2013, clashes in western Iraq began after Iraqi security forces tore down a year-old Sunni protest camp in the city of Ramadi in predominantly Sunni Anbar province. In an effort to lessen tensions, the Iraqi Army withdrew from Anbar.

However, ISIS immediately rushed in fighters to occupy Ramadi and parts of Fallujah. Some of the groups supporting ISIS were elements of the Sunni opposition to the Iraqi government of then Iranian-backed Shiite Prime Minister Maliki.

Maliki had made a point of excluding Sunnis from his government, perhaps in response to the years Shiites were excluded from the governmental process under Saddam.

Sunni elements, led by former military leaders under the deposed president, joined ISIS to take Ramadi and Fallujah.

One prominent former military leader was **Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri**, who was Saddam's former deputy. His group, the Army of the Men of the Naqshbandi Order, or JRTN, fought alongside ISIS fighters to take over the two cities.

In addition to the JRTN, other groups that assisted ISIS included a number of those involved earlier in the Iraqi insurgency – the **1920 Revolution Brigade**, the Islamic Army in Iraq, the Jaish al-Rashideen, Iraqi Hamas, and the former Mujahidin Shura Council of Abdullah al-Janabi.

Their goal was to remove the existing Iraqi government, which in turn prompted eleventh-hour calls from the United States and other

Western countries for Maliki to make his government more inclusive to stave off the rising support the Iraqi opposition was garnering.

BEGINNING OF ISIS ‘BLITZKRIEG’ INTO IRAQ

In early January 2014 ISIS began issuing leaflets announcing a new “Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice” – in effect announcing that it was bringing Ramadi and Fallujah under Shariah.

In addition to these two cities, ISIS went on to control the Anbar cities of Al-Karmah, Hit, Khaldiyah, Haditha, Al-Qaim, Abu Ghraib, and smaller towns.

By March 2014 the Iraqi government had recaptured Ramadi and portions of Fallujah. However, ISIS soon turned that around and reoccupied the two cities.

As an implicit admission of Baghdadi’s increasing triumphs, Zawahiri in May 2014 ordered al-Nusra to stop its attacks on ISIS. A month later, the al-Nusra branch in the Syrian town of al-Bukamal, Syria, pledged allegiance to ISIS.

In what was to be the beginning of an ISIS “blitzkrieg” or lightning war, ISIS and its Sunni tribal allies then captured several cities and territory. They included Samarra on June 5, followed by the seizure of Mosul on June 9. In just one day, ISIS captured various military installations around Mosul and looted some \$500 million from banks.

On June 11 ISIS captured Saddam’s hometown of Tikrit. As ISIS pushed the Iraqi army further south, Kurdish forces then took control of the rich oil fields at Kirkuk, which always had been part of the disputed territories in northern Iraq.

On June 12, 2014, ISIS took over the towns of Sinjar and attacked a convoy of some sixty trucks with hundreds of border police on them. The officers either scattered or were killed, leaving behind their vehicles.

By June 22 ISIS captured the Al-Qaim border crossing with Syria, eliminating the political boundary between Syria and Iraq.

That effort also resulted in ISIS wiping out an entire Iraqi Security Force brigade near Al-Qaim. It then made its way up to the border crossing with Jordan.

After taking northeastern Syria and western and central Iraq, ISIS on June 29 removed “Iraq and the al Sham” from its name and referred to itself only as the Islamic State. At the same time, it proclaimed the establishment of a caliphate, with Baghdadi being named Caliph Ibrahim ibn Awwad.

For many Muslims, the announcement of the caliphate helped curb the humiliation they say Muslims faced in the 20th century after the 1916 Sykes-Picot Treaty.

While many Muslims don’t adhere to the concept of the caliphate, ISIS has bolstered its legitimacy with the establishment of the Islamic State, accompanying its selection of Baghdadi as its caliph with references to the Quranic and oral traditions attributed to Muhammad, along with quotes from classical scholars.

To underscore Baghdadi’s legitimacy to be caliph, ISIS claims he is descended from Muhammad’s grandson, fulfilling the requirement that all caliphs be a member of their prophet’s Quaraish tribe.

Baghdadi’s Quranic justification for creating the ISIS caliphate, however, was challenged in September 2014 in an eighteen-page open letter signed by some 120 Muslim scholars worldwide, denouncing the ISIS “fighters and followers” as un-Islamic.

The letter, written in Arabic, made reference to classical religious texts and religious scholars. It offered a point-by-point rebuttal of ISIS’s justification of the violence it had perpetrated in taking over territories to create its caliphate.

Among some of its refutations: “It is forbidden in Islam to torture”; “It is forbidden in Islam to kill the innocent” (an apparent reference to ISIS’s slaughter and beheadings of women and children); “It is forbidden in Islam to attribute evil acts to God”; and “It is forbidden in Islam to declare people non-Muslims until he (or she) openly declares disbelief.”

The last point was an apparent reference to Baghdadi’s vow to summarily kill all Shiites.

Other points included: “It is forbidden in Islam to harm or mistreat – in any way – Christians or any ‘People of the Scripture’”; “The re-introduction of slavery is forbidden in Islam. It was abolished by universal consensus”; “It is forbidden in Islam to force people to convert”; it is forbidden in Islam to deny women their rights”; “It is forbidden in Islam to deny children their rights”; and “It is forbidden in Islam to declare a caliphate without consensus from all Muslims.”

“Please stop calling them the ‘Islamic State,’ **because they are not a state and they are not a religion**,” said Ahmed Bedier, a Muslim and president of United Voices of America.

In addition to moderate Muslims worldwide questioning the Quranic legitimacy of the ISIS caliphate, **Charles Lister of the Brookings Centre Doha** said Baghdadi’s announcement posed a “huge threat” to al-Qaida and would prompt it and its affiliates to renounce the Islamic State.

He added that there cannot be “two competing international jihadist representatives, al-Qaida, with a now more locally focused and gradual approach to success, and the Islamic State, with a hunger for rapid results and total hostility for competition.”

With its continuing conquests in both Syria and Iraq, ISIS in August 2014 captured Kurdish-controlled territory and massacred a large number of Yazidis, a Kurdish ethno-religious community akin to Zoroastrianism and other ancient Mesopotamian religions that follow a four-thousand-year-old faith.

As with Shiite Muslims, ISIS regards the Yazidis as well as other minorities such as Christians, as infidels, to be killed.

Some five thousand Yazidis took refuge up an open road leading to the top of the barren Sinjar Mountain in northwestern Iraq where they became stranded without food, water, or shelter. Many died, resulting in an international outcry for the survivors to be rescued as ISIS fighters gathered at the foot of the mountain preparing an all-out assault on the mainly women and children.

However, the ISIS fighters were repelled by Iraqi Kurdish fighters called the Peshmerga, who prevailed even though they were

outgunned. The Peshmerga managed to open a passageway for the Yazidis to escape into Syria, **aided by the belated entry of US warplanes**, which dropped laser-guided missiles on ISIS positions to cover the Peshmerga fighters.

The slaughter of many Yazidis brought international calls for an urgent humanitarian mission, prompting the United States to begin airdrops of food and water and aerial bombing of ISIS positions.

As a twist of irony, **Raghad Hussein, the eldest daughter of Saddam Hussein**, who now lives in asylum in Jordan, praised ISIS and the uprising against the Maliki government. She especially praised Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, the former military deputy to her father, for his leadership of former Baath officers to support the advance of ISIS forces.

While she enjoys asylum in Jordan, the same jihadist group that she praises for its alliance of convenience with her father's former Baathist supporters also wants to "slaughter" Jordanian King Abdullah I bin al-Hussein, who is aligned with the West but is plagued with internal dissension within his kingdom.

With ISIS having taken the nearest checkpoint in Iraq into Jordan, concern began to mount that it could soon make its move there as part of its promise to take over all of the Levant.

LAUNCH OF US-LED, ANTI-ISIS COALITION

As "pinprick" bombing of selective ISIS targets continued in early September 2014, it was apparent that the jihadist group was seeking refuge and obtaining new fighters through Syria at an increasing pace. It already had established the Syrian city of Raqqa as the capital of the ISIS caliphate.

US bombing began August 8, 2014, but by mid-September only 194 targets had been hit. US lawmakers and military advisers then began to call for attacks on ISIS positions in Syria, where its militant network is based.

On September 23, 2014, the pinprick bombing of Iraq suddenly became a larger campaign. **The United States, along with five Arab**

countries, began intensive airstrikes and cruise missile attacks against ISIS targets in Syria.

The targets included groups of jihadi fighters who much of the time had traveled in the open, along with training camps, headquarters, command-and-control facilities, and armed vehicles.

The bombing operation included a combination of F-16 and F-18 fighter jets, B-1 bombers, Predator drones, and forty-seven Tomahawk missiles launched from two submarines – the USS *Arleigh Burke* and USS *Philippine Sea* – located in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. The F-18s flew from the USS *George H.W. Bush* in the Persian Gulf.

“I have made it clear that we will hunt down terrorists who threaten our country, wherever they are,” said President Barack Obama in announcing the coalition bombing. “That means I will not hesitate to take action against ISIL (ISIS) in Syria, as well as Iraq.”

US Lt. Gen. William Mayville Jr., director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the operation was “[the beginnings of a sustained campaign](#).” Also targeted was the so-called Khorasan Group, made up of al-Qaida veterans, headquartered in the northwestern Syrian city of Aleppo. The Pentagon said the Khorasan Group posed an imminent threat with a plan to attack US interests.

Few people had ever heard of the group before the Pentagon made it known publicly.

US and allied Arab airstrikes against ISIS targets soon left the impression that the United States was siding with embattled Syrian President Assad, whom the United States once sought actively to have removed from power by force through the support of Syrian opposition fighters.

However, the initiative began to wane when it was determined that many jihadist groups had joined with the Syrian opposition, and any training and logistical support inevitably could wind up in the hands of the jihadist fighters.

Just prior to the initial bombing in Syria, the [Obama administration informed the Syrian representative at the United Nations](#) of the plan and was warned “not to engage US aircraft.”

State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki insisted to reporters that the United States **did not “coordinate” its actions with the Syrian government.**

But the Obama administration insisted its focus in Syria was ISIS, not ousting the regime. However, it quickly became apparent that the new, loosely formed **anti-ISIS coalition had different objectives** that could potentially undermine the entire operation.

The Arab countries of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Jordan that had joined the coalition just to bomb inside Syria sought to weaken the Assad government and replace it with a Sunni regime.

The Western countries that also formed the Iraqi portion of the bombing coalition – Britain, Denmark, Belgium, and Australia – were concerned for the more than four thousand foreign soldiers fighting on behalf of ISIS who would return to their respective countries to wage jihad.

To help placate the Arab countries’ concern about the continued survival of the Assad regime, the Obama administration announced a \$500 million program to train some five thousand Free Syrian Army (FSA) and other Syrian opposition forces in Saudi Arabia over a period of a year.

The FSA and the other so-called moderate fighting groups, however, had either fought alongside ISIS, pledged allegiance to it, or at least **signed a nonaggression pact with it**, as the FSA had done, saying Assad remained its main target.

For the Arab members of the coalition, the view was that the air attacks on ISIS positions in Syria would ease pressure on the Syrian opposition forces so they would not need to fight Damascus and ISIS at the same time.

It became apparent that the Arab countries were prepared to put pressure on the Obama administration to begin bombing Syrian government targets or else consider pulling out of the coalition altogether, leaving the United States the only country bombing ISIS sites in Syria.

The Europeans had decided they would not undertake bombing in Syria, because they view the Syrian government as legitimate and, like Russia and Iran, two of Syria's main supporters, they wouldn't do it without a mandate from the United Nations Security Council.

WHERE'S TURKEY IN THE COALITION? IT ISN'T

Glaringly absent from the coalition is Turkey. Like the Arab countries, Turkey regards Assad as its primary foe, not ISIS. For that reason, it has reneged on allowing its base at Incirlik to be used by the United States to launch attacks against ISIS in Syria.

In addition, Turkey, a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, **won't commit any of its fighter jets or troops to attack ISIS**, even though other NATO members are part of the coalition. However, it did agree to help train Free Syrian Fighters and other "moderate" jihadist groups as Saudi Arabia had offered to do.

It soon became apparent that bombings wouldn't be enough to rout ISIS, which had begun to recede into the population to dodge the aerial bombings. There would need to be "boots on the ground" to mop up the ISIS fighters.

Consequently, Syrian Kurds who, like the Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga, have been battling ISIS, which had reached the northern Syrian city of Kobane in the Kurdish-controlled region of the country bordering southern Turkey.

Historically, the Kurdish minority and the Turkish government have been at odds, with Turkey declaring the Kurdish Workers Party, or PKK, a terrorist group, which the United States likewise had done years earlier.

The Syrian Kurds also had an alliance with Assad, another reason for not coming to their assistance in defending Kobane from being taken over by ISIS.

Yet, Turkey has continued to keep open its borders to allow ISIS fighters to cross and to launder money to finance jihad.

For a few years, **Turkey has been a major gathering point for fighters** throughout the world to obtain training and logistical sup-

port to join various jihadist groups and the Syrian opposition to fight Syrian forces.

Turkey, for a time, claimed the forty-seven Turkish diplomats whom ISIS took hostage when it stormed Mosul in June 2014 were the reason it couldn't become more engaged in going after the jihadist group.

Once released, however, ISIS admitted it exchanged the Turkish diplomats for 108 ISIS fighters detained in Turkish jails.

Turkey's quiet support for ISIS didn't go unnoticed by ISIS itself when its leadership offered to reward Turkish businesses with contracts in ISIS-occupied Sunni areas of Iraq.

Turkey's minister of economy, **Nihat Zeybekci**, appeared to be receptive to the ISIS offer and openly has encouraged Turkish businesses to invest in Iraq's ISIS-controlled areas.

"Our exports to Iraq are down to 35 percent, but Iraq cannot easily substitute other sources," Zeybekci said. "We think there will be a boom in demand soon. We also know that IS (ISIS) is contacting individual Turkish businessmen and telling them, 'Come back, we won't interfere.' That is not easy, of course. But when the future Iraq is rebuilt, it will be Turkey doing it."

In addition, Turkey continues to offer hospital assistance to ISIS fighters to recover from wounds received in fighting in Syria.

According to Middle East expert Daniel Pipes, a photo surfaced in April 2014 showing **ISIS commander Abu Muhammad in a bed in Hatay State Hospital receiving treatment**.

There also are claims that energy-starved Turkey has been sending close to \$1 billion to ISIS for oil shipments, predominantly from ISIS-occupied Syria and Iraq. ISIS is known to be working oil drilling installations in areas it occupies to raise revenue from illicit oil sales.

Estimates are that ISIS is exporting up to four thousand tons of fuel to Turkey daily and is earning in return \$15 million each month from energy sales. Because Turkish border guards tend to look the other way when such shipments occur, villages along the border with Syria continue their smuggling virtually in the open.

MARCHING TOWARD A NEO-OTTOMAN CALIPHATE

Turkey's complicity in furthering ISIS's caliphate to the point of conducting business with the jihadist group, according to regional sources, ultimately is to further designs Ankara has to re-create the Ottoman Caliphate, which reached its zenith in 1683.

In effect, Turkey sees ISIS as its instrument to achieve that goal.

ISIS has received an increasing number of pledges from al-Qaida affiliates, including elements within Al-Qaida in the Arab Peninsula, the main al-Qaida franchise headquartered in Yemen. Oaths also have come from non-Arab and Arab jihadist groups stretching from Central Asia and South Asia, including Pakistan into Yemen, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and the Sinai.

When all of the territories occupied by these al-Qaida affiliates are combined, the extent of what once was the Ottoman Empire begins to emerge.

[Middle East expert Nawaf Qadimi](#) has provided further evidence of the subtle cooperation between Turkey and ISIS.

“We have witnessed the severity of the (ISIS) organization in demolishing all the shrines, temples, and tombs, even those that are attributed to the prophets and the companions, as being a manifestation of shirk (polytheism), as said by them,” Qadimi said.

“However, when it comes to the shrine of the grandfather of the Turkish Ottomans, Suleiman Pasha, inside Syria and in the areas under (ISIS) control, not only did (ISIS) refrain from destroying it, but facilitated the entry of Turkish troops to such shrines and protected them,” he said. “The ISIS



The Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. This image is taken from the [Government of Chile](#) website.

forces are to date protecting it and did not destroy it.”

Further underscoring Turkey’s quest to reestablish the Ottoman Empire, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a devout Muslim, made a telling comment in July 2012 before an audience of his Justice and Development Party.

Erdogan, who at that time was prime minister, **made the statement to justify efforts to overthrow Syria’s Assad** and openly allow jihadist fighters to use Turkey to train and stage attacks in Syria.

“The Justice and Development Party is a party in which the spirit of the Seljuks and the Ottomans is deeply rooted,” Erdogan said.

He regards the Turkish people as the Seljuks, remnants of the Ottoman Empire.

Historically, the Seljuk state was a medieval Turko-Persian empire extending from eastern Anatolia – the old name for Turkey – and from Central Asia to the Persian Gulf into the Khorasan region.

In September 2012 Erdogan **made another reference to reestablishing the Ottoman Empire** stemming from its Seljuk roots.

“We are walking in our conqueror ancestors’ footsteps, starting from Sultan Alp Arslan reaching to Fatih Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror,” Erdogan said.

Alp Arslan was the second Seljuk ruler, assuming power in AD 1046.

Middle East expert Israa al-Fass points out Arslan undertook initiatives similar to ISIS caliphate leader Baghdadi. Arslan captured territory through wars, and he looked on those holding other Islamic doctrines, such as the Fatimids, as infidels and attacked them.

“Perhaps al-Arslan’s inheritance, which Erdogan is glorifying, helps us understand Turkey’s policy not only in terms of its interference in the Syrian crisis, but even regarding its support for the Takfiri (accusing another Muslim of apostasy) organizations, the foremost (being) (ISIS),” Fass said.

“The Seljuks drew the policies to expand their influence, and their tools were the advocates of takfiri and the recruiting of fighters in the name of religions,” Fass said. “Here is Erdogan in actual fact

walking in the footsteps of the ancestors and painting policies, and the tools are the texts of takfiri for which he is recruiting fighters in the name of religion itself! That is how history is enabling us to understand our present.”

Even Erdogan’s current prime minister, [Ahmet Davutoglu](#), in [March 2013](#) before an audience of his fellow AKP members, when he then was the Turkish foreign minister, waxed nostalgic for the Ottoman Caliphate.

His comments clearly called for the re-creation of the Ottoman Caliphate. In those remarks he said:

“Without going to war with anyone, without declaring enemies and without disrespecting anyone’s borders, we will be connecting Sarajevo to Damascus and Erzurum (in Turkey) to Batum (Batum, Georgia) once again. This is the source of our strength. They may now appear to be separate countries. However, 110 years ago Yemen and Skopje were both part of the same country. The same can be said for Erzurum and Benghazi. However, when we have reference to this, we are labeled as ‘neo-Ottomans.’ Those who have united Europe are not referred to as neo-Romans, yet those who unify the Middle Eastern geography become neo-Ottomans. It is an honor to be tied to the history of the Ottomans, the Seljuks, the Artuqids, and the Ayyubids. However, we have never set our sights on another nation’s land.

“It is our obligation to reestablish regional order in this geography and we will be embarking on achieving this day and night. We have to give our history its justice.”

Kamal Alam, a fellow on the Middle East for The Institute for Statecraft and an adviser to the British Army on Syrian affairs, has underscored Turkey’s neo-Ottoman [Caliphate quest by showing Erdogan](#) ultimately has designs to bring all of Syria back under the Islamic empire.

“Erdogan, despite his critics, is set to take Turkey back into Syria and East through to Asia,” Alam said.

He said Syria was born through a struggle against colonial

powers who had taken away not just the coastlines of the Ottoman Empire, but its imperial capital.

“If the British, French, and Russians had had their way, Turkey would have been left as landlocked Anatolia, much like Afghanistan,” he said. “Turkey has not lost sight of its history and how the destruction of its mainland began over a hundred years ago.”

In an article in the *Nikkei Asian Review*, Alam referred to the tomb of Suleiman Shad, the grandfather of the first Ottoman Sultan, which resides in Syria today. It’s the same tomb ISIS protected after it took over territory in Syria and continued to allow Turkish troops to guard it.

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, founder of the Republic of Turkey and its first president, had negotiated with the French in 1921 to allow the tomb to remain Turkish within what then had become French territory under the Sykes-Picot Treaty and subsequently independent Arab Syria. Turkish troops guarded the tomb, since the area has remained Turkish territory to this day.

Indeed, ISIS, for all of its destruction of ancient tombs and holy sites of other religions in modern-day Iraq and Syria, went out of its way not to destroy Shad’s tomb, underscoring the closeness of ISIS and Turkey.

“Whatever the European Union, NATO, or, indeed, the comical Arab League might be thinking, it is Turkey that shall have the final say on who wins over northern Syria and Iraq,” Alam said.

In referring to northern Syria and Iraq, Alam said the Turks even now, a hundred years later, regard the cities of Aleppo, Mosul, and Kirkuk as the “grand prize,” not Baghdad, Beirut, or Damascus.

“That is because Aleppo was a Turkish city long before the Ottomans took root,” Alam said, noting the Turks over the decades after World War I tried to bring Aleppo back under its influence through trade and local community engagements.

He pointed out that the father of current Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Hafaz al-Assad, made the Kurds a major obstacle to Turkey’s control over northern Syria and Iraq.

Once Bashar became president, however, Turkey drew closer to

Syria, with Turkish businesses once again thriving throughout Syria, which became a free-trade zone for Turkey.

All of that has now changed. Erdogan seeks Assad's removal altogether, with visions of making Syria and ultimately Iraq its areas of influence once again.

OBSTACLES TO TURKEY'S VISION OF A CALIPHATE

As Turkey envisions re-creating the Ottoman Caliphate, however, **it will have to deal with Saudi Arabia**, which believes it is the rightful heir to reviving the caliphate, based on its strict Wahhabi beliefs.

Wahhabi clerics believe that any Muslims other than themselves are unqualified to revive the caliphate.

“As they consider themselves to represent the only true and pure Islam, (Wahhabi clerics) endorse the view that if such a caliphate is to return, they should take the lead in shaping its creed and outlook,” said Madawi Al-Razheed, professor at the Middle East Center at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

“They are therefore determined to denounce any contemporary Muslim who may entertain the idea that one day all Muslims will be united under the umbrella of a single polity,” she said. “If such a unification were ever possible, they themselves should be the only active agents in its birth, regardless of how remote or unrealistic this possibility might be.”

For centuries, Saudi Wahhabi clerics have denounced Turkish Islam “as innovation amounting to blasphemy and fought the Ottoman Empire,” she said.

Just as Turkey sees ISIS as its instrument to re-create a neo-Ottoman Caliphate, it is questionable whether ISIS Caliph Ibrahim would even be willing to hand over his territorial conquests to Turkey.

After all, he has inspired and recruited young jihadists from all over the world through the use of the modern technology of social media to join him in making his caliphate a reality.

In a relatively short time, he has developed one of the most

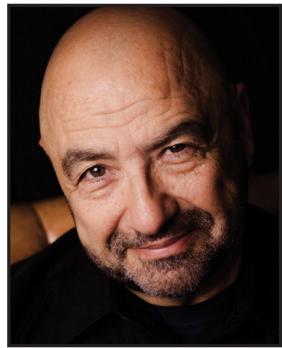
modern jihadist military insurgency groups in the world, steeped in guerrilla tactics that would rival any modern standing army.

In so doing, he has obtained allegiances from a number of affiliates of ISIS's competitor, al-Qaida, amassing vast territorial holdings to add to his caliphate.

ISIS also has become the richest Islamic jihadist entity there ever was through his acquisition of vast energy production and distribution facilities, with the potential of acquiring more. In a year and a half, Baghdadi's exploits have far outmatched anything al-Qaida has achieved since its creation in 1998.

In the end, would Baghdadi just hand it all back over to Turkey? Probably not.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



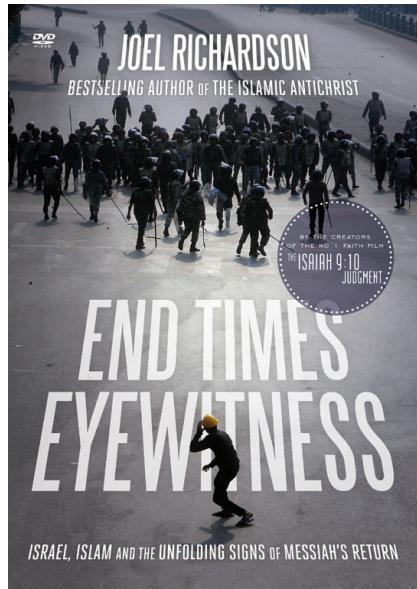
F. Michael Maloof, a former security policy analyst in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, is a senior staff writer for WND specializing in international coverage, especially of the Middle East where he has done extensive reporting. Maloof also is the author of the bestselling WND book *A Nation Forsaken—EMP: The Escalating Threat of an American Catastrophe*.

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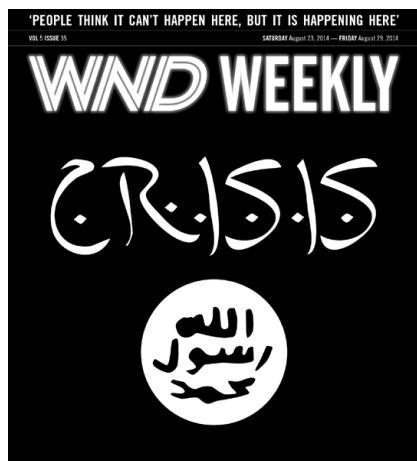


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