

Understanding ISIS

Getting to the root of Extreme Islamist Movements

Who?

Islamic State - This is what they go by now

ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and Levant)

ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham)

IS (Islamic State)

(formerly ISI)

Where do they have control now?

Iraq (about $\frac{1}{3}$)

Syria (about $\frac{1}{3}$)

also, Nigeria, Afghanistan, & Libya

est. 4,000,000 Iraqis & Syrians live under ISIS control

IS' mission in Syria

To overthrow Assad (president of Syria)

Same as the U.S. goal

So if we overthrow Assad, we are helping IS, who will then move right into the leadership role

Who are these people?

A militant Islamic extremist group intent on creating an Islamic caliphate

-caliphate - theocratic Islamic society

Strict readers of the Sunni sect - intolerant of those who disagree

The successors to the group al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)

What do they Want

To continue their takeover of Iraq and Syria

To create an Islamic nation

“We will not stop ... we will raise the flag of Allah in the White House.”
- according to one ISIS member on a VICE video

To break down borders of Jordan & Lebanon, & free Palestine from Israeli control



How do they get their money & resources?

Sell oil on the black market (earns about \$2 million per day)

Stealing weapons from others (incl. US supported groups)

Foreign supporters

Antiquities sales

Ransoms

Capturing banks

When - how long have they been around?

1st appeared on international stage in 2010

When Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi took control

In June 2014 declared themselves a “worldwide caliphate”

-caliphate: a time of rule under a theocratic form of Islam

Important events to know...

2014

- beheaded western journalists
- al-Qaeda “distanced” itself from ISIS
- captured major Iraqi cities (& took \$ from their banks)
- dropped “Iraq & Syria” from their name, to be just called IS

Why would people join ISIS?

Not particularly religious (buy *Islam for Dummies*) before joining

More like social/political radicalization

“moral outrage,” “feeling of being disconnected”

A way to act on their frustration (ie. drone strikes)

Money - ISIS is the highest paid militia in Syria @ \$400 per mo.

The psychology of terrorism

- Feel angry, alienated or disenfranchised.
- Believe that their current political involvement does not give them the power to effect real change.
- Identify with perceived victims of the social injustice they are fighting.
- Feel the need to take action rather than just talking about the problem.
- Believe that engaging in violence against the state is not immoral.
- Have friends or family sympathetic to the cause.
- Believe that joining a movement offers social and psychological rewards such as adventure, camaraderie and a heightened sense of identity.