

Islamic State (ISIS) – Its History & Impact

This organisation became prominent in the second decade of the 21st Century. Since 2014 they claim to have been behind many of the greatest atrocities against human society that we have witnessed since then—most particularly in Syria and Iraq. By mid-2018 their influence has diminished as both Syria and Iraq have been able to successfully counter their insurgencies. Does this mean that their era is over?

From a Biblical perspective, Christians can be confident that in spite of their impact internationally, Jesus [Christ] is sovereign. In the Book of Revelation, John is seeking to encourage pressured and persecuted believers by showing them where the problem they face lies – but also, importantly, who it is who has the final victory over all the power of the Evil One. He assures them that it is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world who will conquer. He is opposed by Satan, who “opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven” Rev.13:7. Satan and His followers “will make war with the Lamb” of God, who is also known as the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” but what wonderful assurance it is that “the Lamb will overcome them, for He is the Lord of lords and King of kings”. Be assured that we who trust in the Lord Jesus, who experience His grace and love are “those who are with Him ... called, chosen and faithful” (Rev.17:14). We are the Bride of Christ, whom the Lord will save from all that is evil.

We live in a day and age when anyone making a statement that appears to criticise a person or group is immediately accused of an ill-informed, inordinate bias and pathological prejudice – especially when Islam is in focus. One is immediately accused of Islamophobia. That is not my perspective. Having lived and worked with Muslims, having studied Islam and its effects, I have a high regard and respect for Muslim people – but I believe that their beliefs are misguided. The title of my book ‘Love Your Muslim Neighbour’ I believe states my position clearly. But we should be free to examine the claims of Islam openly and without prejudice. Unfortunately, it appears that certain elements in society wish to prevent this from happening – and it appears they want us to believe certain claims about Islam that are not actually true and don’t hold up to scrutiny. Many in the UK, Muslims among them, would be disturbed that we should look into the subject of Islamic State. Our task would be very easy if we could refer to a definitive Manifesto of Islamic State, but that is not the case. There are many documents of intent and purposes that come from the Islamic State camp – these include videos and online material, often constituting warnings and threats. It appears that the one fundamental – the assumed foundation of Islamic State – is the fact that they are Muslim. That statement alone justifies everything, and needs no further explanation as far as Islamic State is concerned.



Many Muslims in the UK are embarrassed by the claims and activities of Islamic State. Islamic State was at the forefront of world politics for about 3 years (2014 – 2017): we witnessed its impact on both Syria and Iraq, though in recent months there has been a concerted effort to diminish their power. However, it represents a philosophy that is not going to go into hiding. Islamic State is an entity that we wish might simply disappear without trace, but it is going to remain with us in one form or another. The truth also is that [this] is no new thing – this philosophy has been around in connection with Islam for 1,300 years. We need to have some understanding of what it is and why it exists.

What does Islamic State mean?

Their original Arabic name, coined in 1999, is: Jama’at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad. However, in the aftermath of the Iraq War, they stepped into the political scene with their own agenda, and on entering Syria changed their name to ‘Islamic State of Iraq and Syria’ (ISIS) in 2014, reflecting its new Arabic name: al-Dawla al-Isliya al-Iraq al-Sham.



Alternatively, they are also known as 'Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant' (ISIL); but their simplest Arabic Name is: 'Daesh' which is an acronym for the Arabic phrase al-Dawla al-Isliya al-Iraq al-Sham. Muslims do not like us using the term because it is rather similar to the Arabic word 'Daes' that means 'one who crushes something underfoot' and also 'Daes': 'one who sows discord' – both definitions are significantly appropriate!



The Symbol of Islamic State

Their flag has become notorious – a black background adorned with Arabic lettering, that has become symbolic of a powerful propaganda machine, inspiring bloody terror attacks across the world. But it is not exclusive to this group – they simply adopted it. Its base is the 'Black Standard', or 'The Banner', and also known as 'the Banner of the Eagle'. Monochrome flags are an ancient tradition in ancient Eastern, Arabic, and Islamic tradition. Some people believe one of the Prophet's original banners was black. Modern jihadists therefore adopted this style to legitimise their causes. Islamic tradition claims that it was one of the flags flown by Mohammed – and it was used by Abu Muslim, a Persian general in his uprising (coup) that led to the Abbasid Revolution in 747, and thus it is associated with the Abbasid Caliphate (3rd Caliphate) – they founded the city of Baghdad in 762 – lasting until 1517, when the Ottoman rulers took over, whose caliphate that was abolished in 1922. The black flag became known as 'the eagle' because this was the standard that the Romans used to identify their Roman legion named 'the Eagles', as they went into battle. Then a Muslim hadith claims that the coming of the Mahdi would be signalled by Black Standards proceeding from Khorasan (in mid-Persia, now Afghanistan). The Mahdi is the prophesied redeemer of Islam who will rule from between 5 and 19 years (depending on interpretations) before the final Day of Judgement. As Arab nationalism developed in the 20th century, from within Pan-Arab colours of black, green, white and red, black was chosen as representing the black banner of Mohammed – hence the flag of the Arab Revolt in Hejaz during World War 1, and in Egypt in 1922, include the black colour. In 1939 the infamous Ahmadiyya employed a flag of black and white, their leader explaining that black and white represented the concepts of 'revelation' and 'prophethood'.¹ The Pushtans (Muslims of Afghanistan and NW Pakistan) used the black flag with the Islamic Creed as a military ensign, harking back to its use in the 18th century. Whereas the original black banner never had any inscription, a series of extremist organisations employed the Muslim shahada, the foundational pillar of the Muslim faith. The phrase at the top reads, 'There is no god but Allah', below which a white circle contains letters that read, 'Mohammed is the prophet of Allah'. This motif is claimed to represent 'the seal of Mohammed'. In other words, this organisation is inherently asserting Mohammed's authority.

This banner was used by the Taliban and followed by Al Qaeda in the 1990's, and later in the early 21st century by the Islamic Courts Union and Hizbul Islam – both within Somalia. By the early 21st century it was more generally adopted by the global jihadist movement, and then by 2004 by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and also represented a coalition with Al-Qaeda. Later that same year another variation was adopted by Islamic State and a further variation was adopted in 2006 and used by ISIS in their horrific videos. It is also used by al-Shabaab (East Africa). This is now the accepted form for IS since achieving global recognition in 2014.



What is the history behind IS?

The most obvious indication of its origin is within the name, 'Islamic State' indicating the desire Muslims have to re-instate the revered Muslim caliphate. The Muslim caliphate is simply 'a government under a caliph' who is a spiritual leader of Islam who claims succession from Mohammed. The Arabic kalipha means 'successor'. The Ottoman Empire, established in AD1354, used the historic symbolism of caliphate to expand their rule into Arab countries, but it wasn't until the 18th century that

the role of caliph referred to political power rather than spiritual leadership. The impact of the Ottoman Empire (centred on modern Turkey) had been far-reaching in the countries around the Mediterranean (apart from Europe). By the 1900's it had shrunk considerably to countries of the Eastern Mediterranean. It was now centred on Turkey who had an alliance with Germany in the First World War, which guaranteed its demise. Thus, at the end of the war, the Ottoman Empire came to a close, and the allies deliberately abolished the caliphate in 1922. Consequently, the term caliphate is sensitive issue today. All this quietly upset many Muslims, attacking their sensitivity. Following the end of hostilities, the Empire was carved up into Protectorates. Over time, these became independent countries. Among the fall-out was the establishing of Israel as Western Powers supported a Jewish State. The forming of Israel was a major issue for Muslims who had considered the land to be theirs for many centuries. Over the rest of the 20th Century there were various political rumblings and independence issues within Muslim States. Over the next 60 years or so, until the 1980's and 90's there was a resurgence of the Islamic voice in the world, through wielding its political muscles through the power of their oil. ISIS then was the inevitable symbol of Muslim discontent.

Islamic State is a very modern manifestation of Islam which has rocked both secular European countries and what many had considered the more moderate Muslim countries. It is a symptom of popular Muslim disappointment with the secular nation states and westernizing powers that had been dominating even the Muslim world since 1918. The Arab Spring of 2010 was a Muslim awakening along fundamentalist ideas – though the Western politicians seemed to be totally unaware of this. Islamic State should therefore be seen as an inevitable consequence of the political scene that unravelled, a time in which Muslims reviewed their identity, when they also discovered considerable power and influence through oil wealth.

How is Islamic State Viewed?

There have been mixed reactions! Many Muslim voices in this country seek to distance themselves from Islamic State, claiming that their views are “misinterpretations of Islam” and they vocally denounce extremism and terrorism. What many don't recognise is that one of the loudest voices in this is the leader of a particular Muslim sect, the Ahmadiyya, who has called for believers to “reject all forms of extremism”, instead to “promote the true, peaceful teachings of Islam”. We hear many sincere Muslims in the UK who express similar views. However, things are not always what they seem. In 2016 a 615 page survey among British Muslims prepared for ‘Channel 4’ came up with some interesting thoughts. It showed

- (1) 88% of British Muslims believe Britain is a good place for Muslims to live, because “the tolerance they enjoy in Britain allows them to do whatever they want.”
- (2) Many British Muslims do not share the values of their non-Muslim compatriots, and claim they want to lead separate lives under Islamic Shariah law.
- (3) 100,000 British Muslims (4%) sympathise with suicide bombers and people who commit other terrorist acts.
- (4) Only 1 in 3 British Muslims (34%) would contact the police if they believed that somebody close to them had become involved with jihadists.
- (5) Muslims want to be part of Britain – but believe that Islam offers a better future.

This leads to the logical conclusion that Muslims have a different agenda for ‘British values’ and what being British ought to mean. Sir Gerald Howarth, Tory MP for Aldershot stated “We are a tolerant nation because we are rooted in the Christian faith, which is a tolerant religion. As our religious observance declines, a vacuum is being created into which the hard-line Islamist community is stepping. We have a very complacent society”. A columnist for the Daily Telegraph, Allison Pearson,

Islamic Revival

- Many against modernization (western influence)
- Blame the west for poverty and everything else wrong in the world
- Islamists want to go back to strict traditions and base governments on Islam
- Women's role is big question
- Only current country run by Islamists is Iran



wrote: “This is serious. Unless we succeed, the live-and-let-live attitude which makes Britain such a great place could end up being its death warrant.”

So when Muslim clerics proclaim “Islam is peace-loving. Islam is peace” and denounce terrorism and Islamic State, what is actually happening is that they are saying what they know British citizens want to hear – and we accept it... and believe it. We need to recognise that in Islam ‘lying’ is not considered a sin, but a means to an end. A major academic study published in August 2017ⁱⁱ at the University of Vienna refutes the claim made by many Muslim voices and politicians that Radical Islamists do not understand Islam properly. Islamic Theologian Ednan Aslan claims that Islamic doctrine is a greater incentive in the actions of jihadists than either economic or political factors – or even frustration with society. He claims, “Regardless of their religious knowledge, a radicalised person sees in Muslim theology an offer that gives meaning and structure to their lives.” This important study warns that radical Salafi groups provide support and logistics for jihadists. It claims “Persons with a higher theological knowledge function as authorities and play a central role in the spread of ideology”. It adds, “The radical groups and individuals see themselves as the only true Muslims”.ⁱⁱⁱ

Who Are The Salafis?

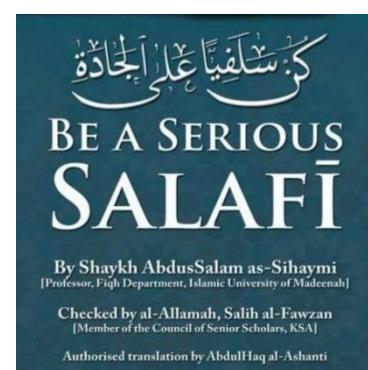
Salafis are a small section of Sunni Muslims. They are ultra-conservative, reformists – and they reach back from Arabia since the 18th century. Their main aim is to return to the traditions of the forefathers. To put it in terms that we might understand, the Salafi are traditionalist Muslims who wish to see true Islam implemented among all Muslims. It is a reaction to the spread of European ideas and seeks to “expose the roots of modernity within Muslim civilisation.” Their proposition is to follow “literal, traditional... injunctions of the sacred texts”; bypassing what they describe as the “freewheeling interpretation” of those texts that had started to become acceptable by certain Muslim scholars in the 19th century. By sacred texts is meant the Qur’an (the words of Allah that Mohammed was said to receive) and the Hadith (the traditions of the life of Mohammed that record his views on life and all its various aspects). Therefore Salafists maintain only a strict adherence to the tenets of Islam is acceptable.

There are three groups of Salafis: (1) Purists, who focus on a non-violent preaching of Islam, (2) Activists, who believe in the use of violence to achieve their ends within the modern political scene, and (3) Salafi Jihadists, who have arisen since the mid-1990’s, who believe that jihad is the only way to advance the cause of Allah on the earth.

One Muslim scholar defines Salafi Jihadism as an “extreme form of Sunni Islamism that rejects democracy and Shia rule.” That is precisely what we see in the incarnation of the Islamic State. ISIS fight on all fronts: against ‘moderate’ Muslims, resisting Shia Muslims, and all claims to democracy, whatever form they take. Time Magazine in 2012 quoted this statement of their position: “It’s very simple. We want sharia. Sharia in economy, in politics, in judiciary, in our borders and our foreign relations.”^{iv} The Salafi situation is very complex – we are reducing it to a simplicity we can cope with!

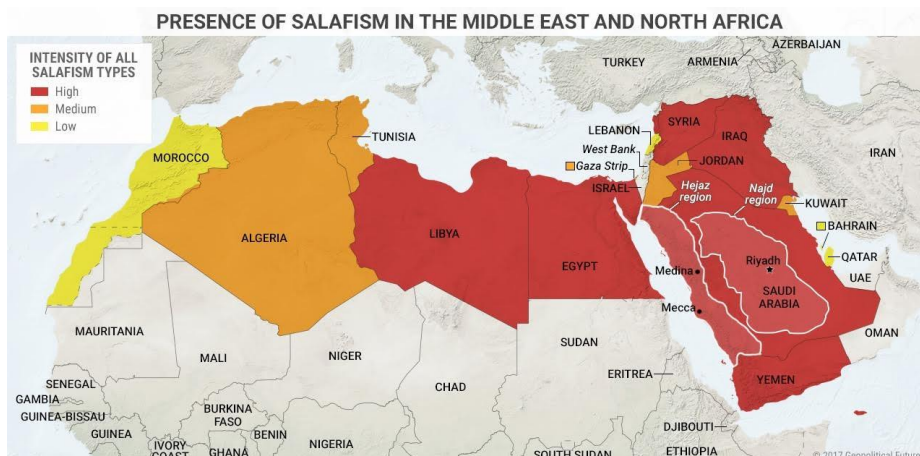
Where are Salafis to be found?

Salafism originated in Saudi Arabia. Saudi leaders “are active and diligent” using their considerable resources “in funding and promoting Salafism around the world.” Salafis were responsible for the New York attacks on September 11, 2001, and every terrorist attack since. They have included various groups, including the now defunct Algerian Armed Islamic Group that was behind the Algerian Civil War (1992-98), Al-Gama’a al Islamiyya operating in Egypt from 1992-98 when many Egyptian policemen, jihadists and civilians were killed, and were behind the attack at the Temple in Luxor in



November 1997 when 58 tourists were shot to death. Al-Qaeda is probably the most famous group, formed by Osama bin Laden in 1988, based in Pakistan to war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, successfully, and declaring in 1996 a jihad against the “far enemy” (USA). Actually, there are so many Salafi Jihadist groups we cannot list them – there are at least 44 known groups based in every country where Muslim are to be found.

Salafi Jihadists gained global prominence under a different name in 2014 driving Iraqi forces out of its key cities, after first capturing Mosul. It originated in Jordan in 1999, and is now a decentralised network with foreign fighters. It had begun to be called Islamic State of Iraq in 2006. Worldwide there are roughly 50 million Salafists, representing around 1% of all Muslims. We can identify roughly 20 to 30 million Salafis in India, 5 to 6 million Salafis in Egypt, 27.5 million Salafis in Bangladesh and 1.6 million Salafis in Sudan. Salafi communities are smaller elsewhere, including 17,000 in France, 17,000 in Morocco, roughly 10,000 in Tunisia, 7,000 in Jordan, and 5,000 in Germany. The definitive figure for UK was difficult to find, but 1% puts them in the region of 280,000, but I have seen a figure claiming more than 10% of mosques in UK are Salafi, funded by Saudi Arabia – and growing. It is often reported from various sources, including the German domestic intelligence service, that Salafism is the fastest-growing Islamic movement in the world.



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The Theological Roots of ISIS

The origin of their beliefs is very simple. They believe that for the majority of Muslims, their Islamic theology is corrupted by philosophy and mysticism. For them Islamic law should be based only on a literal interpretation of just two sources: the Qur’an and the Sunnah the verbally transmitted record of the teachings, actions and sayings, even silent permissions or disapprovals of the prophet Mohammed – summed up in the books of Hadith. But isn’t that what all Muslims believe? Yes. But many Muslims do not really know what the Qur’an and the Hadith actually teach – they either do not read it for themselves, or they cannot do so because they do not understand Qur’anic Arabic. Most Islamic teaching is done by the Mosque leaders, the Moulvis, who interpret the writings to the followers. It is this universal interpretation that Islamic State objects to. Islamic State is seeking to establish Islam in the world as they believe Mohammed intended it should be done.

Islamic State is involved in all sorts of atrocities against other Sunni Muslims, Shia Muslims, Sufi Muslims, and all unbelievers, who include Christians, Jews and pagans. We witness atrocities done in their name in European countries and the US, but we have to remember they are also seeking to purify Islam. However, Christians and Jews are singled out for particular consideration. A look into what the Qur’an says is important for it is the source of all Muslim claims. Consider these passages in the Qur’an that are relevant for our consideration of Islamic State and its theology. Interestingly, some parts of the Qur’an appear to show respect to both Christians and Jews.



Surah 2:62, 5:69, and many other verses: “Those who believe (in the Qur’an), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians ... any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work

righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve” (Yusuf Ali Translation).

Surah 5:82: “Strongest among men in enmity to the believers will you find the Jews and Pagans; and nearest among them in love to the believers will you find those who say, ‘We are Christians’: because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant.”

Surah 61:14: “O you who believe! Be you helpers of Allah. As Jesus the son of Mary said to the Disciples, ‘Who will be my helpers to (the work of) Allah.’ Said the disciples, ‘We are Allah’s helpers!’ then a portion of the Children of Israel believed, and a portion disbelieved: But We gave power to those who believed, against their enemies, and they became the ones that prevailed.”

These quotations sound quite encouraging, indicating that Muslims should respect us and consider us friends. However, consider these verses:

Surah 5:66: “If only they had stood fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that was sent to them from their Lord, they would have enjoyed happiness from every side. There is from among them a party on the right course: but many of them follow a course that is evil.”

Surah: 4:171: “Oh People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion, nor say of Allah anything but the truth. Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, was (no more than) a messenger (apostle) of Allah, and His Word which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers. Say not, ‘Trinity.’ Desist! It will be better for you, for Allah is One Allah, Glory be to Him! (For exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs.”

Surah 9:30: “The Jews call ‘Uzair a son of Allah, and the Christians call Christ the son of Allah. That is a saying from their mouth; (in this) they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. Allah’s curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth!”

Surah 9:31: “They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords in derogation of Allah, and (they take as their Lord) Christ the son of Mary; yet they were commanded to worship but One Allah. There is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him: (Far is He) from having the partners they associate (with Him).”

Here, there is a ‘but...’. Christians are being accused of not understanding the truth that had been sent down to them as they should. For since no-one can be associated with Allah, Jesus cannot be the Son of God, so logically, there cannot be a Trinity. Therefore, for Muslims, Christians are in serious error – an error that they must account for, and an error that must be put right.

Then there is a further set of verses in the Qur’an that are even more disturbing. These are verses that show how Christians (and Jews) who reject the ‘truth’ should be treated. We need to recognise how Muslims believe that everyone who is not a Muslim is a *kafir* – an ‘unbeliever’ (passive), even ‘disbeliever’ (active). It alludes to a person who rejects or disbelieves in Allah and the teachings of the prophet Mohammed, who denies the dominion and authority of Allah. It is a person who does not heed the beliefs and prescriptions held by the religion of Islam. It is a derogatory term. The distinction between those who believe in Islam and those who do not is an essential one in Islam. The term is used in the Qur’an 134 times as a noun, 37 times as [a] verbal noun, and at least 250 times as a verb – some 421 times.

There are yet other distinctions that must be made. Our Christian way of thinking does not easily recognise that it is important to realise that there are two distinct phases within the Qur’an. The earlier writings of the Qur’an, were recorded while Mohammed was in Mecca. We find then that the emphasis is on being patient and waiting for those who are *kafir* to see the error of their ways, which they surely must do – that is the only logic. It was a time of tolerance, tranquillity, spirituality,

acceptance, and inner cleansing through submission to the word of Allah. It was a time when there was more openness to Christian thinking.

But later passages of the Qur'an were composed when Mohammed was in Medina after he was banished from Mecca. Settling into Medina, Mohammed was frustrated by both Jews and Christians failing to follow him. Consequently, His attitude changed to the Jews, and he became more vocal, insisting that he be heard and obeyed. Things escalated; he took forces to attack Jewish tribes who had failed to heed his calls to follow him and become Muslims. It was a time when there was a shortage of food, so He actively went out and raided passing Jewish trade caravans seemingly to make a point! Also at this time he changed the direction that prayer should be made: from Jerusalem to Mecca. His attitude to Christians also changed, for he felt that they should have readily followed him as the final prophet after Christ.

Here we have to note a very important point. Because of all these changes after being forced to take up his new residence in Medina, Mohammed no longer had the clan and tribal support from Mecca – he was on his own! This harder reality affected the way he wrote. Therefore Qur'anic passages composed at Medina changed character and tone. The writings became more assertive, more forceful, more violent: this becoming his primary focus. The important thing to note here is that Mohammed declared that if a later Surah contradicted a previously written Surah, then the most recent statement was the truer word of Allah.

This is the Islamic doctrine of abrogation. Note this statement made in the Qur'an:

Surah 2:106: “None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar: Knowest thou not that Allah Hath power over all things?” {Hath??}

The law of abrogation

- The Qur'an uses Surah 2:106. = nasikh
- **Contrast with Christian graduated revelation. It never contradicts the former one.**
- **Problems – Muslims may deny**
 - The accuracy of a translation
 - The relevance of an earlier statement
- **Don't focus on Qur'an but the truth of the Bible**

Types of Naskh

Abrogation of...by...

- According to the majority (jumphur) view, the Quran and the Sunnah may be abrogated by themselves or by one another. Abrogation may be once again classified into the following varieties:
 - 1) Abrogation of the **Quran by the Quran**
 - 2) Abrogation of the **Sunnah by the Sunnah**
 - 3) Abrogation of the **Quran by the Sunnah.**
 - 4) Abrogation of the **Sunnah by the Quran;**

This is why figuring out the chronological order of the Surah is so essential to understanding Islam. That is not an easy exercise as the order of Surah, as a rule, is according to their length – so they are all mixed up! This gives us the key to understanding why there are differing views among the claims made by Muslims. This is why we must read the whole Qur'an and not listen and decide matters only on quotations of individual Surah. The fact that some Surah have opposite intent and meanings should be noted in order to discern the validity of each Surah. If a Surah of the Mecca Qur'an is quoted and there is a contradicting Surah in the later Medina Qur'an then the earlier quote is no longer valid. Many of the calls and rituals that come from the earlier Mecca Qur'an are conciliatory, peaceful and call for tolerance; but when Surah from Medina Qur'an become more exclusive, exclusionary, and violent, full of prejudice and intolerance, then that totally negates the earlier Mecca Surah.

This goes a long way to explain why some Muslims may say one thing and other Muslims can claim something else just as valid, even quoting the Qur'an. We can note that even some Surah are mixtures of the earlier Mecca teaching and later Medina teaching. For example this appears the case in Surah 2:62:

**YOU CAN'T
COEXIST
WITH PEOPLE WHO WANT TO KILL YOU**

Sura 9:5 Then, when the sacred months have passed, slay the idolaters wherever ye find them, and take them (captive), and besiege them, and prepare for them each ambush.

COEXIST

“Those who believe (in the Qur'an), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians,- any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.”

But note [Surah 2:191-193](#): “And slay them wherever you catch them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith. But if they cease, Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. And fight them on until there is no more Tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah. but if they cease, Let there be no hostility except to those who practise oppression.”

The Qur'an contains at least 109 verses that speak of war with nonbelievers, usually on the basis of their status as non-Muslims. Some are quite graphic, with commands to chop off their heads and fingers and kill infidels wherever they may be hiding. Even Muslims who do not join the fight are called 'hypocrites' and warned that Allah will send them to hell if they do not join the slaughter.

[Surah 8:12](#): “I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them” .^v

There are two verses called “sword verses” in the Qur'an, though neither of them mentions the word sword – however, they are clear in their intent:

[Surah 9:5](#): “But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever you find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practise regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful..”

[Surah 9:29](#): “Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.”

Goals of Islamic State^{vi}

In the light of all we have considered, the ISIS strategy makes sense. The one significant goal of the group has been the foundation of a Sunni Islamic State. This they have been attempting to make a reality in Syria and Iraq, two significant states in the Levant area. They believe in the strict enforcement of Shari'ah Law – their first determination is the purification of Islamic Society – hence their violent attack on Shia Islam in Iraq and Sunni majority Syria, with Assad being Alawi a syncretistic sect of Shia Islam.

The Middle East has never forgiven the West for the Sykes-Picot agreement of the First World War, when Britain and France divided up the area into Provinces they controlled – France got SE Turkey, Syria, Northern Iraq and Lebanon – Britain controlled The coastal strip between Mediterranean and the River Jordan, Jordan and Southern Iraq. Therefore the next goal is to re-establish what was lost in 1922, the caliphate. That is an Islamic State led by a group of religious authorities under a supreme leader – and a *caliph* is believed to be the successor to Mohammed. ISIL published a document in 2014 that claimed to have traced the lineage of its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi back to Mohammed – and they proclaimed a new caliphate on June 29th that year.



A *caliph* is a powerful focus for Islam – who demands the allegiance of all devout Muslims worldwide, according to Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh* – Islamic law). The major goal of ISIS is to seize land and take over the entire Earth until its “Blessed flag...covers all eastern and western extents of the Earth, filling the world with the truth and justice of Islam and putting an end to the falsehood and tyranny of jahiliyyah (state of ignorance), even if American and its coalition despise such”.^{vii}

What was this to mean for the rest of the world? When all the Muslim lands had been dealt with, then their attention would be to focus on all non-Muslim countries. They wish to fulfil the failed Muslim conquests of the 8th century (halted by General Charles Martel) and the attempts by the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. Islamic State's aim is important to note: to conquer the world – considering any means to that end as being legitimate. All who do not believe in the group's interpretation of the Qur'an will be killed: "All religions who agree with democracy have to die".^{viii}

An important principle linked to this view is that "The legality of all emirates, groups, states and organisations becomes null by the expansion of the khilafah's [caliphate's] authority and arrival of its troops to their areas."^{ix} That effectively condemns all other Muslim countries that stand against ISIS and refuse to recognise the caliphate. When all Muslims are put right, then they will target on all non-Muslim lands for conquest.

The principle of enforcement of the ISIS agenda is *jihad* – i.e., war upon those who are *kafir* with all opposition. But isn't this simply a minority view of a vocal terrorist group in the Middle East? Surely, the majority of Muslims don't agree with Islamic State, do they? We keep hearing that UK Muslim leaders condemn Islamic State and convince us that Islam means peace not war! We hear claims from many directions that the majority of Muslims do not agree with the principles of ISIS. There is a considerable opinion that wants us to think of Islam as being a religion promoting peace. Then let us carefully consider ...

Relationship between ISIS and Islam worldwide

The question remains as to how Muslims in the rest of the world view ISIS. The question is not addressed by applying the reported media statements of Muslim leaders in western countries, as if that were the definitive answer to the issue.

We have on one hand Islamic State who are jihadist Islamists with a Salafi agenda, and on the other those we may call the 'Muslim Rationalists'. Adherents to Islamic State are obviously violent antagonists. Other Muslims are peace-loving moderates. Islamic State and its adherents are a small minority among the majority of Muslim countries of the Middle East. Other Muslims are a minority within European countries and the USA. However the fundamental decree of Islam is that Islam is one *umma* – one cohesive community.

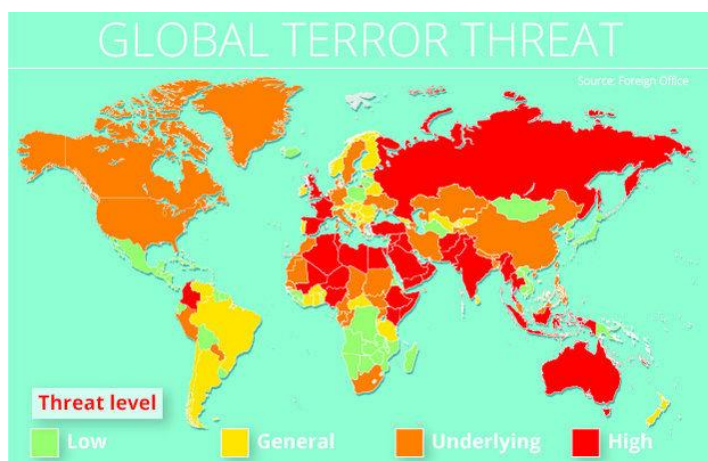


They all have one aim. That is, to make the world acknowledge Islam. Therefore ultimately Islam is one, in spite of its various degrees of apparent diversity. Therefore, the final call is that all Muslims belong to each other, will stand together with each other – and recognise the one aim of Islam.

Therefore the objective of all Muslims is that the world will recognise its destiny acknowledge that it is Islam. All that ISIS is seeking to do is to accelerate this and to establish Shari'ah Law and purify Islam – so that it will be all that Islam was intended to be.

Will ISIS Continue?

By 2016, we hear in the news that ISIS in Iraq and in Syria is becoming smaller –the Iraqi forces with the US advising, and the Syrian coalition armies, are making considerable progress in eliminating the forces of Islamic State. We hear of victory over Islamic State. Does that mean that ISIS is being defeated and will be less of a problem worldwide? This, of course, remains to be seen.



And yet ISIS is influencing many other Muslim countries. By 2018, we have heard of their influence and activity in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

However, with all the horrific attacks within Europe and the USA in recent months we should take care about coming to a definitive conclusion. The problem is that Salafi jihadists are everywhere. They have been an agitation group in Islam since the 1780's, growing in influence and power. Western Governments do not understand Saudi Arabia – they become whatever they want to be to mollify Western governments.

There is considerable Wahabi/Salafi influence there. The principles outlined here are set within Islam and are not likely to be given up easily. It would not be surprising if we see the continuing influence of Salafi teaching and jihadi type terrorism, if not increasing, still making its presence felt.

But as always, as Christians, we do not have to fear the future. The future, we are assured by the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour, is wholly in His hands. We determine from the Book of Revelation for example, that forms of evil within secular governments, and even within religious fervour, are all ~~in~~ [under] the Lord's Sovereign control. One day He is finally going to implement the victory of Calvary in the world that sin damaged and has [caused] havoc within it. All supposed powers that the world claims are no match for the Sovereign victorious power of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have the confidence that Paul expressed in His letter to the Romans 8:28, 31-36,

“...we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. ... If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Finally, let us remember that the Book of Revelation is written for the encouragement of harassed and persecuted Christians – and shows us that no matter who opposes us, the risen, glorified Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate victor – our confidence is in Him. On the one hand we face a formidable enemy to the gospel. Bearing that in mind we return once again to Revelation 13:7-8:

“And it was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue and nation. And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

We have the concrete assurance that Satan does not have the upper hand – he is already a defeated foe.

Revelation 17:14: “These will make war [on] the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen and faithful.”

Revelation 21:7: “He who overcomes shall inherit all things and I will be His God, and he shall My son.”

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i Islamic tradition claims that Mohammed had a cloth called a ‘*raya*’ that was a black square piece of cloth made from his favourite wife Aisha’s head-cloth. More specifically, black was considered the colour of modesty in some Muslim cultures. It also represents passion, sorrow, and strength. And many Muslims wear white when they attend Friday Prayers and white also represents purity, stability and peace. Hadith (Sahih al-Bukhari no: 846): “*Put on your white clothes, for they are the best, and shroud your dead people with white clothes, and the best eye cosmetic is the powder of antimony for it purifies sight and grows the hair.*”

ii At: <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/08/04/study-radical-islamists-actually-extensive-knowledge-islam/>

iii Quoted by <https://barnabasfund.org/en/news/Austria-Major-study-shows-Jihadism-based-on-Islamic-theology>

iv Mohammed Abdel-Rahman, the son of [Omar Abdel-Rahman](#), *Time* magazine. October 8, 2012

v <http://www.thereligionofpeace.com/pages/quran/violence.aspx>

vi https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_State_of_Iraq_and_the_Levant

vii Dabiq edition 5, ISIS English language magazine.

viii Quoted in https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_State_of_Iraq_and_the_Levant, under section: Goals

ix Ibid, under section: Goals