The Islamic State as the Epitome of the Terrorist Parastate

Jaume Castan Pinos*

Department of Political Science and Public Management, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark; Danish Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen, Denmark
*Corresponding author. Email: jaume@sam.sdu.dk

Abstract

This article examines a category of parastatates that has been largely neglected; the terrorist parastate. The main aim of the article is to fill this gap by scrutinizing the case of the Islamic State (IS), an organization that could be considered as the epitome of a terrorist parastate. Before the collapse of its territorial strategy in 2019, the group had targeted a significant number of states through terrorist attacks, while simultaneously controlling large swathes of territory and developing state-like institutions. During its buoyant period, IS called itself a state (Dawla), it viewed itself as a state (accomplishing a religious obligation), and perhaps more significantly, it was often perceived as a state by its enemies. The article will discuss the future prospects for the Islamic State after the collapse of its territorial/statehood strategy. After conceptualizing the nature of the terrorist parastate, the article will venture into comparative uncharted territory through an examination of the terrorist parastate vis-à-vis its ordinary secessionist counterparts. One of the chief dissimilarities is the fact that IS, and terrorist parastates in general, tend to be less durable projects than secessionist parastates because they lack international sponsorship and they are more susceptible to foreign military interventions.

Keywords: terrorist parastate; Islamic State; sovereignty; terrorism; territorial conflict

Introduction

Parastates are territorial oddities in the sense that they operate outside formal international diplomatic channels and perhaps most importantly outside legal internationally-recognized boundaries. The general understanding is that parastates tend to emerge out of secessionist regions and are successful enough to achieve *de facto* control of the territory they seize, but fail to legally formalize such moves; lacking, in most cases, legal international recognition. Within these studies, whatever the designation given, there are always "exceptions" and "borderline cases" that do not always fit with the larger sample. However, there is even a sub-group within parastates that may be considered as the exception to the exception: the terrorist parastate.[1] This peculiar variant bears some resemblance with its secessionist counterparts, but possesses its own particularities.

The Islamic State (IS) represents the paradigmatic example of the terrorist parastate.[2] This Wahhabi-inspired organization pursued a territorially bounded strategy which was particularly successful between 2014 and 2017, when the group controlled a significant part of Iraq and Syria. As will be explained below, the territory controlled by this group dramatically decreased in late 2017, and in early 2019 the territorial strategy collapsed as a result of military defeats to multiple actors. While the terrorist label is very often contested and problematized for being, among other reasons, politically motivated, in the case of the Islamic State there was little controversy as most relevant actors view it as such. Indeed, states with very divergent national interests such as Turkey, Syria, Iran, Iraq, China, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and the United States all concurred that the Islamic State

constitutes a terrorist organization.[3] The Islamic State has been primarily understood as an authoritative body constructed around a strict and puritanical interpretation of Islam in order to sustain and vindicate its legitimacy. The problem with scrutinizing IS solely on religious grounds, however, is that we risk losing sight of larger and more strategic objectives it pursues. Behind the religious façade lies a far more pervasive territorial project. In other words, beyond all the religious rhetoric that attracted the attention of media and policymakers alike, the territorial aims of the Islamic State intimately resembled a concept associated with parastates: unlawful seizure and control of land for its own use away from an existing sovereign state.

The aim of this article is to understand how the terrorist attributes of the Islamic State coalesced and cohabitated with its territorial ambitions epitomized by its determination to build a state. The core argument is that the organization, particularly between 2014–2017, was able to not only seize large areas of territory for its control, but to develop that territory across more than one international border into a terrorist parastate. Due to its relatively recent appearance, rapid expansion, and even faster dissolution, there is very little literature scrutinizing the notion of a "terrorist parastate." This makes the task of this article particularly challenging since it intends to delve into practically uncharted territory. Arguably, the notion bears some resemblances to the "territorially based anti-state" or insurgent state developed by Robert McColl in the 1960s and focused mostly on Communist guerrillas that exerted control over large areas of territory in a particular region (1969, 614).

Perhaps the closest conceptualization of the terrorist parastate has been conducted by Brynjar Lia (2015) and Or Honig and Ido Yahel (2019). The former developed the term "Jihadi Proto State" and the latter have coined the concept of "Terrorist Semi-States" or TSS. The commonalities between both concepts are so significant that they can arguably be considered synonyms. Both the Jihadi Proto State and TSS emphasize the idea of an organization which manages to control and govern territory while at the same time engaging in terrorist activities beyond its borders (Lia 2015; Honig and Yahel 2019). In addition, they both focus on religious-inspired groups, namely Salafist organizations that manage to develop governance in territories they effectively control. The fact that both authors focus on Islamist groups is in no way indicative that this particular religion is the only source of inspiration for terrorist groups that aim to establish territorially-bounded governance projects. As David Rapoport claims, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism, as well as secular ideologies have historically inspired terrorist groups (2008, 51). Terrorism is therefore not circumscribed to any religion (or interpretation of it) or ideology. However, at present, the only groups that are capable of mobilizing enough fighters and resources to develop state-like projects, declaring some form of statehood while at the same time carrying out attacks against third parties are groups inspired by extreme interpretations of Islam.

The concept terrorist parastate, used in this article, borrows from Lia and Honig and Yahel the idea that these entities have a two-fold essence: to build a territorially-bounded project, and to inflict terror on third party states. With parastates they have in common the former and with ordinary terrorist organizations the latter. An interesting question is how do both dimensions interact: are they compatible and synergic or, on the contrary, do they have the potential to undermine one another? The main aim of the article is to fill the literature gap by developing the notion of the terrorist parastate. To do so, the case of the Islamic State will be examined. The article will begin by briefly analyzing the origins of the Islamic State and will subsequently scrutinize the characteristics, both territorial and nonterritorial, of the terrorist parastate. One of the chief aims of the article is to examine the commonalities and differences of the terrorist parastate vis-à-vis its *ordinary* secessionist counterparts.

Origins

The existence of the Islamic State predates its spectacular appearance onto the global stage through a series of spectacular military conquests in Iraq and Syria in 2014. As Daniel Byman (2016, 127)

reminds us, the precursors of IS appeared in 2003 in the aftermath of the controversial US invasion of Iraq. The power vacuum originated by the war and the ousting of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein created ideal ground for extremist groups to spread (Byman 2003; Unterhill 2014). In 2006, al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) merged with several Sunni radical groups opposed to the US presence, hence establishing the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). That group, initially led by Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, had an uneasy relationship with al Qaeda's central leadership, which often had to resort to coercive mechanisms to control its "successful yet problematic" Iraqi franchise (Mendelsohn 2011, 37). A dispute regarding the al Nusra Front, a Salafist insurgent group in Syria, which Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi the leader of ISI, aimed to absorb back in 2013 into his organization, stirred tensions with al Qaeda. Eventually, under al Nusra's leadership, the group pledged allegiance with the latter, inevitably contributing to fuel the feud between the Islamic State and al Qaeda's central command (Al-Tamimi 2017).

This fragile alliance between the two extremist groups did not last long. A rift involving the central command and its Iraqi branch led to a bitter and definitive split in February 2014 which was aggravated when al-Baghdadi, the newly self-proclaimed Caliph of IS, announced the (re)estab-lishment of the Islamic Caliphate in June of that same year. After such events, the Islamic State entered on several occasions into direct military confrontation against al Qaeda affiliates in Syria such as the al Nusra Front and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). The feud has also translated into a communications war, where IS, through its former mouthpiece *Dabiq*, has attempted to discredit al Qaeda franchises in Syria accusing them of apostasy for embracing "pagan values" such as nationalism and democracy (Islamic State 2015d, 11–16).

There are significant continuities between al Qaeda and its successor. David Kilcullen defined al Qaeda's *jihad* as an insurgency whose main goal was to "re-establish a Caliphate through the Muslim world" which would ultimately serve as a springboard to consolidate Islam's global hegemony (2005, 604). The ideas of recreating the golden age of Islam, developing a territorially-based polity (a Caliphate) and expanding Islam are all fundamental features in the Islamic State narrative and praxis. It is therefore not too farfetched to speak of an umbilical cord between both groups. Simply put, they both share the aim of building an Islamic-inspired state. Additionally, similarly to al Qaeda, which was unable to directly control jihad in each of the regions where there were Islamist insurgencies (Kilcullen 2005, 598), IS while becoming inspirational and establishing alliances with several like-minded groups, was not able to become fully hegemonic (not even in its most buoyant period) amongst Islamist insurgents. Last but not least, both organizations have also been particularly successful at exploiting what Kilcullen refers to as the "virtual sanctuary" (2006, 113), that is the Internet, to propagate their message through for instance videos and magazines and gather support for their cause.

There are also many essential differences between al Qaeda and its now-rival the Islamic State, but perhaps the most relevant for this article is the dissimilar conception that the two groups had in relation to exerting dominance and control over territory. Celine Novenario (2016, 955) highlights this differentiated approach in relation to territory by pointing out that while IS focuses on state building while deferring combat against the "far enemy," al Qaeda, in contrast, prioritizes attacking this "far enemy" postponing the development of the Islamic Caliphate. In practice, however, al Qaeda affiliates in Syria, such as al Nusra and HTS, have also resorted to the strategy of exerting control over territory though without formalizing such dominance in a formal "sovereign emirate" declaration.

Interestingly, the emphasis of IS with regard to territory challenges the thesis of "new terrorism" and more specifically the argument that "new terrorist groups" structuring themselves as diffuse networks and ignoring territoriality as they have have "no single, permanent point of geographical reference" (Neumann 2009, 20). The idea and the execution of the Caliphate directly contradicts such de-territorialized depictions as the Islamic State has aimed, and to a large extent managed, to establish an extremely intimate relationship with territory.

IS's Intimate Relation with Territory and Statehood

The Islamic State constituted a unique case amongst terrorist parastates for various reasons. For one, its size and scale of authority were unprecedented: at the height of its power in late 2014, the Caliphate was inhabited by over 11 million people and controlled a territory of over 100,000 square kilometers in Iraq and Syria (Jones et al. 2017), including major cities and provincial capitals such as Mosul (Iraq's second largest city), Raqqa, and most of Deir Ezzor. To put this into perspective, this is equivalent to the land area of South Korea and larger than states such as Hungary or Portugal. During the height of its power between 2014 and 2015, the Islamic State established a successful strategy of extracting oil from the areas it controlled, running its oil industry in a similar fashion to national oil corporations (Solomon et al. 2015). This allowed the group to fund its belligerent endeavors but also to develop what could be regarded as a welfare state. Indeed, one of the most remarkable aspects of IS governance was the provision of social services which created a relationship of dependence and reliance between the local populations and the group. Needless to say, this was used by IS to increase its support and legitimacy. The group also emphasized that its effective control of territory was not simply a military operation but it also had beneficial consequences for civilians since IS was concerned about them: "[T]he soldiers of Allah do not liberate a village, town or city, only to abandon its residents and ignore their needs" (Islamic State, 2014d, 27). This created a fascinating triangle involving the control of territory, governance, and narrative construction, which provided legitimacy not only to the group itself but also for its territory-seeking and state-building strategy.

A useful question, at this stage, is how did the Islamic State manage to develop into a parastate? The group was unique among terrorist states in its active claim to territory and frequent use of state symbols. Alongside a flag, a rudimentary government, and an emerging body of jurisprudence, the Islamic State also utilized technologically sophisticated marketing strategies, including its flagship online publication: *Dabiq*, a significant propaganda tool issued between 2014 and 2016.[4]

The fact that the term "state" is explicitly used in its name is not coincidental and may be seen as a declaration of intent.[5] Indeed, IS calls itself a state, it views itself as a state (accomplishing a religious obligation), and on top of it, it is frequently seen by its enemies as a state (Castan Pinos, 2018).[6] The entire first issue of the *Dabiq* magazine is devoted to justify and effusively celebrate the establishment of a state, a state for Muslims from around the world, in view of the Islamic State. Amidst a concatenation of military victories, including the conquest of Iraq's second largest city, Mosul, the magazine enthusiastically proclaimed: "Raise your head high, for today—by Allah's grace—you have a state and Khilafah [leader]. Therefore, rush O Muslims to your state. Yes, it is your state. Rush, because Syria is not for the Syrians, and Iraq is not for the Iraqis" (Islamic State 2014a, 7–11). It must be noted that in *Dabiq*, the justification of the existence of the state is often accompanied by an exercise of hyperbolical self-praise: "this state […] is a marvel of history" (Islamic State 2014c, 5).

In order to successfully build that new state, the first step was to abolish the *old* states. The crux is that the Islamic State's aims were until 2017 far more ambitious than simply building a state, as claimed by Stacey Pollard et al. (2017, 1046) it "seeks to supplant the region's state system." In practice, this meant that IS was able to deconstruct the territorial architecture which had been prevalent in the region since the end of World War I. It can therefore be argued that the sudden success of IS had a direct impact on the status quo that emerged after the Sykes-Picot Agreement.[7] The Islamic State was very much aware of this and, particularly in the first editions of *Dabiq*, tended to boast about its achievements in that regard: "after demolishing the Syrian/Iraqi border set up by the crusaders to divide and disunite the Muslims, and carve up their lands in order to consolidate their control of the region, the mujahidin [fighters] of the Khilāfah delivered yet another blow to nationalism and the Sykes-Picot inspired borders that define it" (Islamic State 2014c, 18). In other words, their ideology in terms of territory essentially required the eradication of Arab states created under colonial rule and thereby the reformulation of the territorial status quo in the Middle East. We may be tempted to find similar patterns, in terms of aims, to post-colonial pan-Arabism.

However, the crucial difference is that, unlike pan-Arabism which underplayed religion focusing on a constructed Arab ethnic identity, the Islamic State puts religion at the core of its collective political identity relegating ethnicity to a tangential status. Their declaration of statehood was done on the basis of legitimacy and purpose, in this case, a religious-based legitimacy.

In contrast to other extremist publications such as al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)'s *Inspire* or *Dabiq*'s successor *Rumiyah*, the magazine displayed a more "positive" focus on state-building and governance rather than inflicting terror on its enemies (Droogan and Peattie 2017). The latter was also featured albeit in a less prominent fashion. This arguably shows that the priority was state-building over the second attribute of terrorist parastates: terror. In that regard, the emphasis on encouraging supporters to migrate to the Islamic State illustrates such a hypothesis. On average, *Dabiq* used the term *hijrah*, a term which can be roughly translated as exodus or migration, 19.2 times in its 15 issues making it one of its most recurrent themes (Castan Pinos 2018).[8] The encouragement to perform the *hijrah* and move to the Islamic State was done by both cooptation and downright coercion. With regard to the former, the Islamic State attempted to attract supporters to its domains by portraying a very positive and idyllic picture of itself with, for instance, arguments related to its welfare state infrastructure: "[T]he Islamic State provides the Muslims with extensive healthcare by running a host of medical facilities including hospitals and clinics in all major cities" (Islamic State 2015b, 25). Cooptation was also accompanied by more coercive strategies, reminding its supporters that migration to the Islamic State constituted a religious compulsion, not simply a choice: "[H]ijrah is an obligation from dārul-kufr [the land of the infidels] to Dārul-Islām [the land of Islam]. Moving to dārul-kufr from Dārul-Islām is apostasy" (Islamic State 2015c, 23). Evidently, the ultimate aim of such migration was to bring in population, that is, to provide the Islamic State with one of the crucial elements of statehood.

Needless to say, another fundamental pillar of statehood, territory, was also at the very center of the group's priorities. The territorial narrative contained two ideas which are ever-present and are repeated persistently: permanency and expansion. In its first issue, the group pompously announced "a new legacy of victories, further construction of the Islamic State and expansion of its territory" (Islamic State 2014a, 13). Interestingly, there seemed to be no limit for the territorial ambitions of the organization: "[T]he Islamic State is here to stay […] and it will continue to spread to all corners of the Earth" (Islamic State 2014e, 33). This territorial flexibility is in stark contrast with secessionist groups, which tend to have a demarcated area which is perceived to be the homeland, or indeed with secessionist parastates. As Lia pints out, the Islamic State's "commitment to a particular territory is relatively low and vastly different from that of separatist and nationalist rebel groups" (Lia 2015, 35–36).

Last but not least, the Islamic State did not seek any form of international recognition. There were some speculations regarding a potential recognition-seeking strategy by the Islamic State, similar to the Taliban (Atwan 2015, 12). This hypothetical policy, however, was never pursued by the organization and no steps were followed in that direction. In fact, the Islamic State literally bragged about not caring about such international recognition (Islamic State 2015a, 66). This of course distinguishes the group from most secessionist parastates, which aim for *de jure* recognition. As mentioned earlier, IS intended to expand its borders to "all corners of the Earth," inevitably threatening the territorial integrity of every single state in the international system. Ostensibly, this *imperial* ambition did not help its case.

Dabiq did not focus excessively on foreign policy, and when it did the emphasis was on scolding and warning its multiple enemies: from Western *kufr* (infidel) states, to Kurdish Communists *murtaddīn* (renegades), to Arab *tawāghīt* (apostate) governments (Islamic State 2014b; Islamic State 2015c). This was a common theme in the section "In the Words of the Enemy," which was also devoted to analyzing the perception of the Islamic State by (mostly) Western analysts and policy-makers. The closest instant of admitting relations, albeit in a very implicit manner, with other states comes from a text presumably written by kidnapped British war correspondent, John Cantlie, where (allegedly) he stated "as uncomfortable as it may be for many in the West, there's little reason why

the State shouldn't be considered a country […] At some stage, you're going to have to face the Islamic State as a country, and even consider a truce" (Islamic State 2015a, 65). At first glance, this statement seems to indicate that IS was willing to sign a ceasefire with its enemies thereby establishing some sort of diplomatic relations with "other" states.

This rather positive note, however, was challenged by *Dabiq's* editor who in a much more uncompromising (and seemingly influenced by neorealist postulates) avowal asserted that "A halt of war between the Muslims and the kuffār can never be permanent, as war against the kuffār is the default obligation upon the Muslims only to be temporarily halted by truce for a greater shar'ī interest" (Islamic State 2015a, 67). This resonates well with Honig and Yahel's (2019, 1213) argument that terrorist parastates or, as they put it TSS, face a crucial dilemma, a clash of mutually contradictory aims: statehood and terror. The problem with the latter, Honig and Yahel (2019, 1213) argue, is that it has the potential of destabilizing its relations with states thus undermining its "chances of gaining international legitimacy." These negatives prospects did not deter the Islamic State from resorting to terror.

The Islamic State Vis-à-Vis Secessionist Parastates

The scrutiny of the intimate relationship between the Islamic State and territory and statehood, paves the way for comparing the nature of the group with its secessionist counterparts. Such comparison, which is essential to understand how the Islamic State fits in the *parastate league*, will show essential commonalities but also significant disparities.

The most important similarity is that IS did *de facto* control territory and, as a result, it did enjoy exclusive internal authority. In turn, such exclusivity allowed the group to develop governance and to build state-like institutions, a feature which is of vital importance for secessionist parastates. The effective control of territory, the ability to enact governance, and indeed the very survival of parastates was only possible due to the reliance on brute force, or as Pål Kolstø puts it, parastates are "created by military means and must be maintained by the same means" (2006, 731). By the same token, terrorist parastates, like secessionist parastates, can also be eradicated *manu militari* if the host state retakes the parastate territory. There are numerous examples of parastates, such as the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, and Azawad, that have been abolished through a military invasion of the self-proclaimed territory.

In the case of the Islamic State, the process of nullifying IS sovereignty has involved an intricate process of military interventions. The actors involved included the host states (Iraq and Syria), great powers with strong geopolitical interests in the region (Russia and the USA), regional powers with a myriad of national interests (Iran and Turkey), as well as nonstate armed groups such as the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Turkish-led Free Syrian Army and other Islamist insurgents. Interestingly, the "noble" fight against the Islamic State coalesced, in all cases, with a desire to increase the power grip and influence of the intervening actors in Syria, Iraq, and more generally in the entire Middle East. This multiple uncoordinated intervention to eradicate the Islamic State was completed in early 2019 and, as a result, it is possible to argue that the territorial strategy of the organization has crumbled, at least in its core: Iraq and Syria.

Another fundamental commonality with secessionist parastates is the fact that IS lacked legal international recognitions. This typical attribute of parastates comes with a price; namely the fact that these polities cannot conduct "normal diplomatic and economic relations" with other states and are unable to "sign international treaties and agreements" (Fabry 2012, 662). In that regard, however, there is a crucial dissimilarity. Whereas secessionist parastates expect, or at least aim, to overcome such unrecognized status (Dugard and Raič 2006; Ker-Lindsay 2012) this was never considered by the Islamic State, which did not seek any form of international recognition and has even bragged about its international pariah status. One of the effects of this policy of multilateral hostility has been that, unlike most secessionist states, which enjoy the support of at least one international backer (Kolstø 2006), the Islamic State lacked an international sponsor which

sustained its cause. There were, nevertheless, claims that the group received financial and military assistance from Gulf Arab monarchies (BBC 2014). Former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki alleged that Saudi Arabia was "responsible" for providing financial and moral assistance to the group (Kutsch 2014).

This speculation has been contested with the argument that the group benefited from "shadowy private support networks" rather than direct state support (Lia 2016, 86). At any rate, no country offered any diplomatic or direct military support to the group in the same fashion as secessionist parastate backers and therefore that can be regarded as a key difference. Additionally, whereas many parastates have been recognized by several states and, in the most advanced cases such as Kosovo, they even enjoy membership in relevant intergovernmental organizations, the Islamic State did not have a single state recognition and did not belong to any international organization. It could be argued that this was primarily due to the fact that the group had deliberately refused to seek international legitimacy, strategically using its pariah status to construct a counterhegemonic narrative.

In terms of territory, secessionist parastates tend to have a fixed and conservative conception of it, prioritizing consolidation rather than territorial expansion. For example, Kosovo's unilateral independence declaration clearly states that "Kosovo […] shall fully respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all our neighbours" (BBC 2008). The aim of secessionist parastates is not to eliminate or destroy the host state but to build a sovereign polity in an area formerly controlled by the host state. That means that the parastate recognizes, even implicitly, the legitimacy of the host state. In contrast, the Islamic State constantly emphasized its ambition to expand its territory beyond its borders, not only in Iraq and Syria, but also elsewhere: "[W]e ask Allah to support the mujāhidīn of the Islamic State […] until the banner of the Khilāfah is raised high above Istanbul and Vatican City (Islamic State 2015c, 9). This boundless and insatiable appetite for controlling and expanding its territory suggests that their ambitions were more in line with imperial projects than with classic secessionist claims, which are generally circumscribed to a specific and delimited area (Castan Pinos and Radil, 2018). In practical terms, this meant that, unlike with secessionist parastates, there was no room to negotiate. The only options for host states threatened by the Islamic State were total submission, total annihilation of the institutions of the host state, or indeed eradicating the Islamic State altogether.

A Multitasking Multifaceted Parastate: The Spread of Terror Beyond its Borders

The last section examined the continuities and discontinuities between secessionist and terrorist parastates. The chief difference between both types, that is, the discontinuity that allows us to distinguish between two clearly divergent categories is the fact that terrorist parastates, such as the Islamic State, conduct terror attacks against third states. In effect, the territorial strategy, which collapsed in 2019, was just one of the two branches of the Islamic State. The other branch, which can be labeled as external terrorism, constitutes one of the most outstanding differences between the Islamic State and secessionist parastates. The two-fold approach also distinguished the Islamic State from nonterritorial terrorist groups, which focus on targeting their enemies and disregard the option of controlling territory. It is important to highlight that far from being incompatible, in the case of the Islamic State both strategies cohabited harmoniously and were promoted and encouraged by the group. As Stathis Kalyvas (2018, 37) puts it "territorial and nonterritorial strategies can coexist within a group's diverse and variable repertoire of violence." The relative importance of one dimension vis-à-vis the other, however, is susceptible to change due to context and capabilities.

According to the data from the Global Terrorism Index 2017, the number of attacks carried out by the group increased by 18.5% in 2016, perpetrating acts of terror in 15 different countries, whereas the number of deaths rose to almost 50%, compared to the previous year, with a total number of 9132 people killed by the Islamic State (Institute for Economics & Peace 2017). It is important to highlight that despite the fact that the group conducted attacks in various different

countries around the globe, 93% of the operations were conducted in Iraq and Syria (Institute for Economics & Peace 2017). This suggests that despite the fact that external attacks, particularly those in the West, attracted most of the Western media attention, the overwhelming majority of the operations were internal; aimed at protecting, consolidating or trying to expand the territorial grasp of the group.

In 2016 the group's territory was gradually shrinking as a result of military defeats inflicted by various actors, including the US-led coalition and the Russian campaign against the group. One of the critical questions is how did the crisis in the territorial/statehood dimension affect the external terror branch of the group? Mohammed Siyech (2016) has suggested the possibility that once its territorial strategy collapses, the group could follow al Qaeda's steps post-2001 and go underground, continuing its terror activity in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere in a deterritorialized manner. Some authors, however, have argued otherwise pointing out that the collapse of IS as a parastate may compromise its ability to play the nonterritorial or external terrorist card: "The Islamic State's appeal to Muslim populations beyond its immediate control likely rests in large measure on its success in establishing a functioning protostate and emergent caliphate. Its capacity to inspire, support, and direct attacks outside its areas of control may thus ultimately diminish as that control declines" (Jones et al. 2017, 36). It remains to be seen whether the group will be able to survive in a context where its main raison d'être—establishing a territorially bounded Caliphate— is out of the equation.

Dabiq dedicated some articles and sections to encouraging and celebrating acts of terror against its enemies. For instance, the group typically described operations aimed at "terrorizing, massacring, and humiliating the enemies of Allah" (Islamic State 2016b, 40) such as the downing of a Russian civilian jet in the Sinai, the shootings and suicide bombings in Paris, the attacks at the Brussels metro and airport, and the shooting in a gay nightclub in Florida (Islamic State 2015d; Islamic State 2016a; Islamic State 2016b). Despite the publicity given to these actions, the priority for the group was state building. As this passage demonstrates, committing terror beyond its borders was only to be conducted if migration to the Caliphate was not a possibility: "[e]ither one performs hijrah to […] the Khilāfah or, if he is unable to do so, he must attack the crusaders" (Islamic State 2015b, 54). Committing terror attacks against "crusaders" was a way to "purify" only for those who had been "barred from *hijrah*" (Islamic State 2015d). In other words, the priority to build a (para)state clearly outweighed the policy of attacking the enemies through nonterritorial terrorism.

Interestingly, this scale of priorities seemed to shift, or at least became more balanced, as the group's territory began to gradually shrink, and its Caliphate project was in shambles. This was reflected in the magazine which replaced *Dabiq* in September 2016, *Rumiyah.* The name change may have been due to the fact that the Northern Syrian town of *Dabiq*, which according to the Islamic State narrative was of paramount importance because it was the place where a final battle between "Muslims" and crusaders would take place due to an apocalyptic prophesy, was about to be lost to Turkish-backed militias.[9,10] The combined semiotic and quantitative analysis of both magazines conducted by Peter Wignell et al. (2017) shows that there were changes and continuities in the narrative of the Islamic State, with the most crucial similarity being that both publications used Islamic sacred texts to justify their actions.[11] Their antagonistic world view is also a recurrent pattern but what fundamentally changed were the strategies proposed to develop their project. Wignell et al. (2017, 18) contended that whereas during the territorially expansive era "the focus was on migration, recruitment and state-building" the regressive period was characterized by "instructional articles for potential lone-wolf terrorists." Indeed, the references to *hijrah* experienced a dramatic decrease from 19.2 times being used in *Dabiq* on average to 9.2 in *Rumiyah.*

The constant calls in the latter to commit attacks in the "lands of unbelievers" seemed to illustrate a strategic shift, in which the organization prioritized nonterritorial forms of terrorism. It also distinguished the group from other extremist organizations controlling territory, such as Ansar al Dine in Azawad (Northern Mali), which even when they were attacked by foreign parties (France),

refrained from conducting external terrorist attacks, keeping their focus instead on internal terror. *Rumiyah* used straightforward language to instruct its supporters: "the blood of the disbelievers is halal, and killing them is a form of worship to Allah […] striking terror into the hearts of all disbelievers is a Muslim's duty" (Islamic State 2016c, 36). In a special section of *Rumiyah* titled "Just Terror Tactics," the magazine provided very detailed and functional advice for lone wolves to commit massacres with knives (Islamic State 2016d; Islamic State 2016f), with trucks ramming crowds (Islamic State 2016e), with Molotov cocktails (Islamic State 2017a), or with firearms to take hostages (Islamic State 2017c). More generically, *Rumiyah* also encouraged acts of theft and blood spilling from the "unbelievers" in several issues (Islamic State 2017b; Islamic State 2017d). It seems therefore evident that the territorial crisis IS was experiencing and the consequent gradual collapse of the parastate project shifted the balance in favor of the nonterritorial terror strategy. A strategy which requires less manpower, less infrastructure, and less exposure from hostile military attacks but which, if pursued alone, could compromise the very *raison d'être* of the Islamic State: the establishment of a Caliphate, that is, of a state.

To Be or Not to Be a (Terrorist) Parastate

It is imperative to point out that the project to create a state inspired by strict Islamic values and principles though insurgency was by no means a plan pioneered by the Islamic State leadership (Jabareen 2015; Lia 2015; Castan Pinos 2018). This idea was developed by intellectuals as well as insurgent groups for decades and has become particularly popular since the end of the Cold War. As Lia (2015) argues, various Islamic states or emirates have been declared in a wide range of areas including the Caucasus, North Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East. The degree of success of terrorist parastates has widely varied from group to group but in some cases, such as Al-Shabaab in Somalia, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen, or Boko Haram in West Africa, they have been able to exert control for several years over relatively large areas of territory, and thus can be considered terrorist parastates even though they have seldom been classified as such. The AQAP case is interesting not only because it bears strong resemblances to the Islamic State but also because it represents another uncontroversial example of a terrorist parastate. This organization, which has become al-Qaeda's most successful branch, declared a separate emirate in several of the provinces it controlled in Yemen in 2011 (Ng 2011, 2). AQAP therefore meets the essential criteria to be considered a terrorist parastate; it has been able to control territory, particularly after the power vacuum generated by the Yemeni uprising of 2011, it has declared statehood, and it has conducted attacks against third parties, or as Honig and Yavel put it "third party victim states" (2019, 1213).[12] Unlike IS, however, this al Qaeda affiliate has been able to pursue its territorial strategy for a longer period and at the time of this writing, December 2019, it still does control a significant part of central and southern Yemen. This permanence has been prompted by the favorable context of the Yemeni civil war and has continued despite US counterterrorist efforts (Morrell, 2015, 2), which have proven to be ineffective to say the least.

The situation from the civil war in Syria since 2011 with regard to parastates is more complex than it seems. At first glance, when one looks at Syrian war maps, it would appear that the war-torn country, divided and occupied by numerous insurgent groups is indeed a fertile ground for parastates, both terrorist and secessionist. These maps seem to suggest that groups with a wide range of ideologies from Kurdish nationalism/Democratic Confederalism, to political Islamism inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafism, and Wahhabism, have been able to establish their own apparent parastates by taking advantage of the feebleness of the Syrian state and its security apparatus.[13] Most of these groups hold *de facto* control of territory, which is one of the ontological attributes of parastates. The problem is, however, that none of them, with the exception of the Islamic State, have formally declared independence from the Syrian state.

What distinguished the Islamic State from other armed actors in Syria was that they were the only ones that formally declared statehood. Other groups have been successful in controlling

territory but have, thus far, refrained from declaring themselves as an independent polity. In mid-2012 the pro-Kurdish Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat (PYD) and its affiliated armed group the Yekitiyên Parastina Gel (YPG) exerted control over three disconnected Kurdish populated areas in Northern Syria. Some months later, in January 2014, this Kurdish-controlled region declared autonomy in Syria, forming the so-called Democratic Federation of Northern Syria, or Rojava as it is more commonly known.[14] Despite the fact that the declaration, issued through a Constitution, can be considered as a unilateral action, it was in no way secessionist but autonomist and federalist as it explicitly "recognizes Syria's territorial integrity" (Charter of the Social Contract 2014). This territory can therefore not be considered a parastate but at most a "para-autonomy" because it fails to meet an essential criteria; namely the formal declaration of being a sovereign state.

Al Nusra Front and its successor Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), both affiliated with al Qaeda, have also played a prominent role in the Syrian war by occupying large areas of territory, particularly in Idlib province. This has allowed al Nusra, and later HTS, to engage in some form of governance as well as to impose their policies in the territories it occupied. According to Charles Lister (2016), the former sought the establishment of an Islamic Emirate in Syria as a strategic objective, which prompted conjectures in the media about whether another Islamic-oriented state had been established. Abu Muhammed al-Julani (2014), the leader of the group, was subsequently compelled to clarify that such declaration had not yet occurred due to a lack of consensus among Islamic scholars and supporters: "We [al Nusra Front] have not announced the establishment of an Emirate, yet. When the time comes and the sincere Mujahidoon [sic] and the pious scholars agree with our stance, we will announce this Emirate." As a result, despite having some characteristics of parastates, the territory controlled by Al Nusra or HTS can neither be considered a parastate in this case nor a terrorist parastate.

The Islamic State, on the other hand, declared statehood in June 2014, when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi openly and officially proclaimed the Caliphate in Mosul's Great Mosque. This proclamation was accompanied by the development of sophisticated governance and coercive mechanisms. In effect, once territorial dominance was realized, the Islamic State implemented an institutionalization of rule of law and governance which was made up of several pillars such as intelligence, *dawa*, which is related to missionary activities, and *hisba*, which involves moral policing and consumer protection (Zelin, 2016). Whereas the *dawa* is concerned with propagating the IS message through media outlets and billboards, intelligence and *hisba* represent coercive elements aimed at guaranteeing that the group/state rules and laws will not be violated. The construction of such a utopian parastate required the use of "internal terror" instruments. IS rule was enforced with the use of extreme coercive methods which resembled classic methods of secular authoritarian/totalitarian regimes, such as purges of the undesirables, constant surveillance including encouraging citizens to denounce themselves, gruesome public executions to install fear amongst the governed, and generalized brutality (Abdul-Ahad, 2018).

With its territorial defeat, some questions of paramount importance arise. Does the group have the capacity to manifest itself territorially elsewhere? Will it reinvent itself as a guerrilla-type organization carrying out hit-and-run operations in the areas it used to control? Can it survive by existing in a de-territorial manner as a source of inspiration so to speak? The caveat is that even if the group has been territorially defeated, the idea of controlling territory to establish a terrorist parastate based on puritanical principles has not been routed. On the contrary, the precedent of the Islamic State may possibly become an inspirational frame for future narrative constructions and analogous projects.

This brings us to a more general discussion concerning the survival and longevity of terrorist parastates. Their durability is indeed impinged by several factors that have been scrutinized in this article. As explained above, unlike secessionist parastates, terrorist parastates lack a patron state that provides economic, diplomatic, and military support. In practice, this means that terrorist parastates have to rely on their own resources to guarantee their survival. It should be noted that these patrons play a fundamental role ensuring the continuity of secessionist parastates by providing an

economic lifeline, a political platform, and military protection (Florea 2017). The lack of patronage, therefore, critically contributes to the vulnerability of terrorist parastates, which are considerably less durable than their secessionist counterparts.

Additionally, given the fact that terrorist parastates seek to attack third parties, they antagonize multiple actors, potentially encouraging international military interventions aimed at completely dismantling the terrorist parastate project. The combination of the two factors—lack of an international backer and the high probability of a military intervention—significantly affects the longevity of the project, and consequently, terrorist parastates tend to be short-term enterprises. It could be argued that the fact that (unlike their secessionist counterparts) they ignore classic proxy strategies such as bandwagoning or balancing contributes to sealing their fate.

Two end results can be tentatively identified for terrorist parastates. The first is the collapse of the territorial strategy *manu militari.* For example, the relatively short life of the Islamic State as a terrorist parastate (2014–2019) can be explained by these two factors. The group, perhaps as a result of blind ideological considerations, simultaneously antagonized a multiplicity of actors, including regional and global powers, deliberately refusing to establish alliances with state actors. The final demise of the organization, or at least of its territorial project, occurred as a result of a military defeat by various actors including Iraq, Syria, Russia, Turkey, and the USA. Likewise, the terrorist parastate led by Ansar al Dine, in Northern Mali, in a region commonly known as Azawad, suffered a similar fate. Shortly after this terrorist group took over the territory previously controlled by Tuareg secessionists from the Movement for the National Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), in mid-2012, a military intervention by the French army was launched and eventually the terrorist parastate, which was considered a threat not only by France and Mali but also by other states in the region, was dismantled in a matter of months.

The case of AQAP, explained above, shows that there is another possible end result. Terrorist parastates can potentially survive by altering their strategy, for instance by reducing their attacks on other countries and prioritizing their territorial strategy. In recent years, keeping a low profile (internationally) has allowed AQAP to survive as one of the warring parties of the war in Yemen, outliving most of its terrorist parastate counterparts. The paradox is that by reducing or fully stopping their attacks on third parties, terrorist parastates compromise one of their core defining attributes and therefore it becomes unclear whether they could still be considered "terrorists" in the strict sense of the term.

Final Remarks

This article has investigated the hybrid policy of the Islamic State, which combined typical elements associated with parastates with a more nonterritorial strategy focused on spreading terror. The conceptualization of the Islamic State as a terrorist parastate becomes evident in light of this two-fold strategy. From mid-2014 until late 2017, the organization was able to implement its double project, which was sustained not only by military means but also by a sophisticated media network, where the magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* played a fundamental role, allowing the group to spread its message to larger audiences. During that period, terror appeared to be a means to an end, a territorially-bounded end, that is.

The crisis and eventual collapse of the Islamic State as a parastate in 2019, prompted by military defeats, opens up a debate concerning the very survival of the group. A set of scenarios emerge in that regard from the disappearance of the group, to IS going underground, that is, focusing solely on the terror dimension, to a reenactment of the parastate project in a different geographical area. One of the legacies of the Islamic State is that it has demonstrated that it is possible for a nonstate actor, inspired by apocalyptic and extremist religious values, to establish a state-like entity with a fairly functional system of governance. This is particularly remarkable considering the large extent of territory it controlled and the fact that this statehood project was implemented without a direct international sponsor. The lack of an international backer as well

as the likelihood of military interventions by foreign states necessarily threaten the durability and permanence not only of the Islamic State but also of terrorist states in general. This article has claimed that these elements fundamentally differentiate terrorist parastates from their secessionist counterparts.

Finally, the article has also argued that the territorial entity developed by the Islamic State was indeed a parastate, albeit with very peculiar characteristics. This suggests that perhaps a new conceptualization of parastates is needed in order to incorporate a newcomer, the terrorist parastate, which deserves to be examined in a more comprehensive manner. This article has shed light on the paradigmatic case of the Islamic State. There are, however, less notorious terrorist parastates which challenge the territorial integrity of fragile states that merit more consistent academic scrutiny.

Disclosure. Author has nothing to disclose.

Notes

1 I use the terrorist label in its simplest form: a nonstate actor engaged in violence to pursue political goals.
2 From 2013 to 2014, the group called itself "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant," abbreviated as ISIS or ISIL. After June 2014, it changed its name to simply "Islamic State."
3 Some states have formalized this by listing IS as a terrorist organization. This is the case, for instance, of the USA, which has included the group in their Foreign Terrorist Organizations list (US Department of State 2017).
4 *Dabiq* was an online multilingual magazine, used by the Islamic State to propagate its message and narrative. It was published from July 2014 to July 2016, containing in total 15 issues. In September 2016, it was replaced by a new magazine: *Rumiyah*.
5 The original name of the group is "Dawla al-Islamiyya." The term *Dawla* translates literally as state in Arabic.
6 See for instance Ollivant and Fishman (2014) "State of Jihad: The Reality of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria."
7 This agreement was signed in 1916 between the United Kingdom, France. and the Russian Empire. It was decisively important in terms of shaping the borders of what would later become the future states of Syria and Iraq.
8 The term has a religious connotation since this is the concept used in the exodus of Prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD. *Hijrah*, according to the Salafist interpretation, is one of the fundamental steps to overcome the "state of ignorance," the other two being faith and *jihad* (Atwan 2015).
9 This prophesy was prompted by the former leader of ISI, al Zarqawi, a figure highly respected by IS militants. Al Zarqawi had claimed in 2004 that "[T]he spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify—by Allah's permission—until it burns the crusader armies in Dābiq" (Islamic State 2014d, 2).
10 As part of the Turkish operation Euphrates Shield, launched in August 2016.
11 The authors only analyze the first six editions of *Rumiyah*.
12 The *Charlie Hebdo* attackers, for instance, who killed 12 people in Paris in 2015, claimed allegiance to AQAP.
13 For more details on Democratic Confederalism see Ocalan (2011).
14 A similar, updated, declaration was issued in 2016. Despite claims of separatism by the Syrian government and the Syrian opposition, the content of declaration was not secessionist but autonomist/federalist.

References

Abdul-Ahad, Ghaith. 2018. "The Bureaucracy of Evil: How Islamic State Ran a City." *The Guardian*. January 29. https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/jan/29/bureaucracy-evil-isis-run-city-mosul. (Accessed May 17, 2019.)

Al-Julani, Abu M. 2014. *A Clarification Regarding the Alleged Announcement of an Emirate by Jabhat Al-Nusrah*. Retrieved from: https://justpaste.it/g7hh

Al-Tamimi, Aymenn. 2017. "Success for al-Qaida in Syria?" *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11 (6): 131–139.

Atwan, Abdel. 2015. *Islamic State: The Digital Caliphate*. Oakland: University of California Press.

BBC. 2008. "Full Text: Kosovo Declaration." February 17. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7249677.stm. (Accessed January 12, 2019.)

BBC. 2014. "Islamic State: Where Does Jihadist Group Get Its Support?" September 1. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29004253. (Accessed March 19, 2019.)

Byman, Daniel. 2003. "Building the New Iraq: The Role of Intervening Forces." *Survival* 45 (2): 57–71.

Byman, Daniel. 2016. "Understanding the Islamic State—A Review Essay." *International Security* 40 (4): 127–165.

Castan Pinos, Jaume. 2018. "Terror, Territory and Statehood from al Qaeda to the Islamic State." In *African Border Disorders. Addressing Transnational Extremist Organizations*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Castan Pinos, Jaume, and Steven M. Radil. 2018 "The Territorial Contours of Terrorism: A Conceptual Model of Territory for Non-state Violence." *Terrorism and Political Violence*. Published online ahead of print April 9, 2018. doi: 10.1080/09546553.2018.1442328.

Charter of the Social Contract. 2014. *Charter of the Social Contract*. https://peaceinkurdistancampaign.com/charter-of-the-social-contract/. (Accessed March 18, 2019.)

Droogan, Julian, and Shane Peattie. 2017. "Mapping the Thematic Landscape of Dabiq Magazine." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 71 (6): 591–620.

Dugard, John, and David Raič. 2006. "The Role of Recognition in the Law and Practice of Secession." In *Secession: Internal Law Perspectives*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Fabry, Mikulas. 2012. "The Contemporary Practice of State Recognition: Kosovo, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Their Aftermath." *Nationalities Papers* 40 (5): 661–676.

Florea, Adrian. 2017. "De Facto States: Survival and Disappearance (1945–2011)." *International Studies Quarterly* 61 (2): 337–351.

Honig, Or and Ido Yahel. 2019. "A Fifth Wave of Terrorism? The Emergence of Terrorist Semi-States." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 31 (6): 1210–1228.

Institute for Economics & Peace. 2017. *Global Terrorism Index 2017*. http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2017.pdf. (Accessed December 18, 2018.)

Islamic State. 2014a. "The Return of the Khalifah." *Dabiq* 1. July 5. http://media.clarionproject.org/files/09-2014/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-Issue-1-the-return-of-khilafah.pdf. (Accessed March 19, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2014b. "The Flood." *Dabiq* 2. July 27. http://media.clarionproject.org/files/09-2014/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-Issue-2-the-flood.pdf. (Accessed March 19, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2014c. "A call to Hijrah." *Dabiq* 3. September 10. http://media.clarionproject.org/files/09-2014/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-Issue-3-the-call-to-hijrah.pdf. (Accessed March 19, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2014d. "The Failed Crusade." *Dabiq* 4. October 11. http://media.clarionproject.org/files/islamic-state/islamic-state-isis-magazine-Issue-4-the-failed-crusade.pdf. (Accessed March 19, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2014e. "Remaining and expanding." *Dabiq* 5. November 21. http://media.clarionproject.org/files/islamic-state/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-issue-5-remaining-and-expanding.pdf. (Accessed March 19, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2015a. "Shari'ah Alone Will Rule Africa." *Dabiq* 8. March 30. http://media.clarionproject.org/files/islamic-state/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-issue+8-sharia-alone-will-rule-africa.pdf. (Accessed March 19, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2015b. "They Plot and Allah Plots." *Dabiq* 9. May 21. http://media.clarionproject.org/files/islamic-state/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-issue%2B9-they-plot-and-allah-plots-sex-slavery.pdf. (Accessed March 19, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2015c. "From the Battles of Al-Ahzāb to the War of Coalitions." *Dabiq* 11. August 9. http://www.clarionproject.org/docs/Issue%2011%20-%20From%20the%20battle%20of%20Al-Ahzab%20to%20the%20war%20of%20coalitions.pdf. (Accessed March 19, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2015d. "Just Terror." *Dabiq* 12. November 18. http://www.clarionproject.org/docs/islamic-state-isis-isil-dabiq-magazine-issue-12-just-terror.pdf. (Accessed March 19, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2016a. "The Murtadd Brotherhood." *Dabiq* 14. April 13. https://www.clarionproject.org/docs/Dabiq-Issue-14.pdf. (Accessed March 19, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2016b. "Break the Cross." *Dabiq* 15. July 31. http://www.clarionproject.org/factsheets-files/islamic-state-magazine-dabiq-fifteen-breaking-the-cross.pdf. (Accessed March 19, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2016c. *Rumiyah* 1. September 5. http://clarionproject.org/wp-content/uploads/Rumiyah-ISIS-Magazine-1st-issue.pdf. (Accessed March 21, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2016d. *Rumiyah* 2. October 4. http://clarionproject.org/factsheets-files/Rumiyh-ISIS-Magazine-2nd-issue.pdf. (Accessed March 21, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2016e. *Rumiyah* 3. November 11. https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2016/11/rome-magazine-3.pdf. (Accessed March 21, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2016f. *Rumiyah* 4. December 7. https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2016/12/rome-magazine-4.pdf. (Accessed March 21, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2017a. *Rumiyah* 5. January 6. http://qb5cc3pam3y2ad0tm1zxuhho-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Rumiyah-ISIS-Magazine-5th-issue.pdf. (Accessed March 21, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2017b. *Rumiyah* 8, April 4. https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2017/04/rome-magazine-8.pdf. (Accessed March 21, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2017c. *Rumiyah* 9. May 4. https://qb5cc3pam3y2ad0tm1zxuhho-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Rumiyah-9.pdf. (Accessed March 21, 2019.)

Islamic State. 2017d. *Rumiyah* 10. June 17. https://qb5cc3pam3y2ad0tm1zxuhho-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Rumiyah-ISIS-magazine-10-issue.pdf. (Accessed March 21, 2019.)

Jabareen, Yosef. 2015. "The Emerging Islamic State: Terror, Territoriality, and the Agenda of Social Transformation." *Geoforum*, 58: 51–55.

Jones, Seth, James Dobbins, Daniel Byman, Christopher S. Chivvis, Ben Connable, Jeffrey Martini, Eric Robinson & Nathan Chandler. 2017. *Rolling Back the Islamic State*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

Kalyvas, Stathis. 2018. "Jihadi Rebels in Civil War." *Daedalus* 147 (1): 36–47.

Ker-Lindsay, James. 2012. *The Foreign Policy of Counter Secession: Preventing the Recognition of Contested States*. London: Oxford University Press.

Kilcullen, David. 2005. "Countering Global Insurgency." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28 (4): 597–617.

Kilcullen, David. 2006. "Counter-insurgency." *Redux. Survival* 48 (4): 111–130.

Kolstø, Pål. 2006. "The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognized Quasi-States." *Journal of Peace Research* 43 (6): 723–740.

Kutsch, Tom. 2014. "ISIL's advance puts Saudi Arabia between Iraq and a hard place." *Al Jazeera America*, June 17. http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/6/17/saudi-iraq-isil.html. (Accessed May 3, 2019.)

Lia, Brynjar. 2015. "Understanding Jihadi Proto-States." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9 (4): 31–41.

Lia, Brynjar. 2016. "Jihadism in the Arab World after 2011: Explaining Its Expansion." *Middle East Policy* 23 (4): 74–91.

Lister, Charles. 2016. "The Nusra Front Is Dead and Stronger Than Ever Before." *Foreign Policy*, July 28.

Mendelsohn, Barak. 2011. "Al-Qaeda's Franchising Strategy." *Survival* 53 (3): 29–50.

McColl, Robert. 1969. "The Insurgent State: Territorial Bases of Revolution." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 59 (4): 613–631.

Morrell, Michael. 2015. "Fourteen Years and Counting: The Evolving Terrorist Threat." *CTC Sentinel* 8 (9): 1–4.

Neumann, Peter. 2009. *Old and New Terrorism*. Cambridge: Polity.

Ng, Aaron. 2011. "Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Yemen Uprisings." *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 3 (6): 1–4.

Novenario, Celine. M. 2016. "Differentiating Al Qaeda and the Islamic State Through Strategies Publicized in Jihadist Magazines." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 39 (11): 953–967.

Ocalan, Abdullah. 2011. *Democratic Confederalism*. London: Transmedia Publishing.

Ollivant, Douglas and Brian Fishman. 2014. "State of Jihad: The Reality of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria." *War on the Rocks*. http://warontherocks.com/2014/05/state-of-jihad-the-reality-of-the-islamic-state-in-iraq-and-syria/. (Accessed March 21, 2019.)

Pollard, Stacey, David Poplack, and Kevin Casey. 2017. "Understanding the Islamic State's Competitive Advantages: Remaking State and Nationhood in the Middle East and North Africa." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 29 (6): 1045–1065.

Rapoport, David C. 2008. "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism." In *Terrorism Studies. A Reader*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Siyech, Mohammed. 2016. "Islamic State: Sowing the Seeds of Its Own Destruction." *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis* 8 (11): 24–27.

Solomon, Erika, Guy Chazan, and Sam Jones. 2015. "Isis Inc: How Oil fuels the Jihadi Terrorists." *Financial Times*, October 14. https://www.ft.com/content/b8234932-719b-11e5-ad6d-f4ed76f0900a. (Accessed March 21, 2019.)

Stansfield, Gareth. 2014. "The Islamic State, the Kurdistan Region and the Future of Iraq: Assessing UK Policy Options." *International Affairs* 90 (6): 1329–1350.

Underhill, Natasha. 2014. *Countering Global Terrorism and Insurgency. Calculating the Risk of State Failure in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

U.S. Department of State. 2017. Foreign Terrorist Organizations. https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm. (Accessed January 21, 2019.)

Wignell, Peter, Sabine Tan, Kay L. O'Halloran & Rebecca Lange 2017. "A Mixed Methods Empirical Examination of Changes in Emphasis and Style in the Extremist Magazines Dabiq and Rumiyah." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11 (2): 2–20.

Zelin, Aaron. 2016. "The Islamic State's Territorial Methodology." *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* 29: 1–23.