ISIS

Race to Armageddon

Dr. Adil Rasheed

لا إله إلا الله
دولة العراق الإسلامية
باقية
ISIS

ISIS

Race to Armageddon

Dr. Adil Rasheed

ISIS: Race to Armageddon

ISIS: Race to Armageddon

By
Dr. Adil Rasheed

United Service Institution of India
New Delhi

Vij Books India Pvt Ltd
New Delhi (India)

Published by

Vij Books India Pvt Ltd
(Publishers, Distributors & Importers)
2/19 Ansari Road
Delhi - 110 002
Phones: 91-11-43596460, 91-11-47340674
Fax: 91-11-47340674
e-mail : vijbooks@rediffmail.com

Copyright © 2015, United Service Institution of India, New Delhi

ISBN: : 978-93-84464-77-6

All rights reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval systems, transmitted or utilised in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner. Application for such permission should be addressed to the publisher.

The views expressed in the book are of the author and not necessarily those of the USI or the publishers.

English Translation of the Arabic text on the Cover is "*The Islamic State of Iraq*", followed by the ISIS motto "*Enduring*"

To God and Mom

Contents

Acknowledgements

Preface. Black Flags of Apocalypse!

Chapter One. Introduction: The Genesis of ISIS

1. Rise to Global Infamy
2. Vision and Motto
3. Significance of the ISIS Threat
4. Morphing Identities, Changing Names
5. The Genesis

Chapter Two. Ideology: Quest for the Caliphate

6. Islam and 'Islamism' in the Modern Age
7. The Failure of Secular Pan-Arabism
8. Ascendance of Wahhabi-Salafi Movements
9. Al-Qaeda and the Justification of Terror
10. Ideological Dissonance Within Al-Qaeda After 9/11
11. ISIS' Ideology
    - Establishment of Caliphate by Obliteration of Nation States
    - Rise of 'Takfeer' and Sectarianism in Salafi Jihadism
    - Apocalyptic Salafi Jihadism

Chapter Three. Organization: Method in Madness

12. Forces and Weaponry

13. Provincial Sub-Divisions (Wilayahs)
14. Leadership Structure
15. Bureaucracy
16. Funding
    - Production of petroleum through seized energy assets
    - Private regional and international donors
    - Extortion and taxes levied on captive population
    - Seizure of bank accounts and private assets
    - Ransom money from kidnappings
    - Plundering of antiquities dug from archaeological sites
17. Administration and Governance

Chapter IV. Warfare: Terror for Territory

18. Strategic Divergences with Al-Qaeda
    - Non-territorial Al-Qaeda Versus Statist ISIS
    - Spat Over On-Field Versus Remote Leadership
    - State Caliphate of ISIS versus Pan-Jihadism of Al-Qaeda
    - Priority of ‘Near Enemy’ Over ‘Far Enemy’ for ISIS
    - Al-Qaeda Targets Regimes, ISIS Attacks Communities
    - Fundamentalist Al-Qaeda Versus Apocalyptic ISIS
19. Formative Influences on Warfare
    - Abu Musab Al-Suri’s ‘Call to Global Islamic Resistance’
    - Terror Template: Abu Bakr Naji’s ‘Management of Savagery’
    - Fouad Hussein’s ‘Al-Zarqawi: Second Generation of Al-Qaeda’

- The Ba'athist Support to ISIS

20. The Five-Step Action Plan
    - The 'Hijrah' Stage (Call for Migration to ISIS Territory)
    - Stage of Jamaah (Gathering and Recruiting of Migrants)
    - Stage of 'Nikayah' (Inflicting Injury) on Adversary
    - Stage of 'Tamkin' (Seizure of Territory, Consolidation)
    - Stage of Khilafah (Formation of Islamic State)
21. Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW)
22. Maneuver Warfare of the Mongols
23. Terrorism As Military Tactics
24. Human Rights Violations
    - Large-Scale Religious, Sectarian, Ethnic Cleansing
    - Atrocities Against Women and Children
    - Beheadings and Burnings
25. ISIS and the WMDs
26. Weaknesses in Warfare and Recent Reversals

Chapter V. Metastasizing Monstrosity and Global Response

27. ISIS Global: Blood Across the Seas
28. Growing Influence in Arabian Peninsula
29. 'First Drops of Rain' in Africa
30. US and Europe: ISIS Claims 'Countdown to Terror'
31. Rising Threat in Eurasia and Central Asia
32. The Spectre in Southeast Asia
33. ISIS in the Indian Subcontinent
34. Operation Inherent Resolve: The US-led Multinational Coalition

35. Assessment of the US-led Campaign of Air strikes
36. Islamic Scholars Speak Out Against the ISIS
37. Conspiracy Theories and the ‘Yonin Plan’
38. How Should India Respond to the ISIS Threat

Endnotes

Index

Acknowledgments

There are many to whom I owe profound thanks and gratitude for their guidance, help and assistance in the writing of this book. First, I would like to earnestly thank Almighty God for having showered His blessings upon me every moment of my life. I am also deeply grateful to my mother, Ms Zubaida Khan, for her love, care and support through all the trials and travails and to my father, the Late Major Abid Rasheed (May his soul rest in peace).

I am immensely grateful to the United Service Institution of India (USI) for the wealth of intellectual profundity and strategic insight I gained as Senior Research Fellow in this most esteemed and illustrious research centre of India.

It would not have been possible for me to conduct a study of such critical importance to global security without the keen guidance and support I received from the Director of the USI, Lieutenant General PK Singh, PVSM, AVSM (Retd). His intellectual calibre, profound insights and gracious encouragement proved vital in the successful completion of this research.

I cannot thank enough my true mentor in this project, Major General BK Sharma, AVSM, SM** (Retd), who guided me at every step on the way with his astute knowledge and insights, wise counsel and unflinching support. I would also

like to particularly thank Maj or General PK Goswami, VSM (Retd) for lending his support and valuable insights to me during the course of this project.

A very special mention here is for Dr Roshan Khanijo, who stood by me as a friend, philosopher and guide on a daily basis throughout the course of this study. I would also like to thank the sincere friendship and guidance I received from all the researchers and colleagues at the USI, with whom I discussed and gained insights on several aspects of the subject. I would like to especially thank Commodore Lalit Kapur (Retd), Group Captain Sharad Tewari, VM (Retd), Colonel Rohit Mehrotra, Colonel SK Shahi, Colonel Sanjeev Relia and indeed Commander MH Rajesh for their invaluable contributions that are too many to be fully acknowledged and thanked. I would also like to thank my other friends at the USI — Naib Subedar Sube Singh, Havaldar Dharambir Singh, Lance Naik Inderjeet Singh, Ms Aparna Roy, Surendra Kumar Tiwari and Rajesh Kumar.

I would also like to mention here the help and support I received from some of my friends and associates outside my place of work. I would like to particularly thank Shweta Desai, Associate Fellow at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, New Delhi, for her valuable insights and suggestions. I am deeply grateful to Mr P. Ramesh Kumar at Bennett, Coleman and Co. Ltd. (Times Group) for his friendship and genuine support, as well as to my steadfast friends Mr. Ehtesham Shahid, Mr. Mohammed Shiraz and Abdul Naseeb Khan. I have also been very fortunate in receiving support from various research scholars and strategic experts living in West Asia, particularly Dr Ahmed

Menassi and Dr Farid Azzi from the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, based in the UAE.

Finally, I would especially like to thank my dear wife Afiya Khan for her love, patience and encouragement and for taking full care of my lovely children, Yousuf and Mariam, even as I was busy writing the book. I dedicate this humble work to my countrymen and to the cause of peace and harmony in the world.

– **Dr. Adil Rasheed**
May 2015

Preface : Black Flags of Apocalypse!

When experts on terrorism first declared the ISIS as more dangerous than Al-Qaeda, it seemed an outrageous claim. Many wondered how the very superlative of extremism and terror could be placed below an upstart group in the comparative degree. But the claim did not take long to validate itself. It was explained that the ISIS is not only richer than Al- Qaeda, but is arguably the richest terrorist organization in human history. The rapidity with which the ISIS forces won territories in Iraq and Syria increased its strength by the hundreds of thousands, thus underscoring the disturbing fact that the group had far more militants than the few thousands that Al-Qaeda could muster even at its peak. But then came the barbarity, the like of which the world had never seen, in that it was even more gruesome than that of Al-Qaeda. Videos of the beheadings and burnings of innocent hostages became part of the ISIS' perverse public relations campaign to attract global sociopaths to its grotesque cause. In addition, the group openly claimed to be fomenting sectarian violence and ethnic cleansing in Iraq and Syria as part of its 'nikaya' program — a strategy of brutally hurting the enemy in order to undermine stability in both countries. In its online magazine *Dabiq,* ISIS brazenly justified indulging in sex trade and the destruction of the ancient cities of Nimrud and

Patra. But these atrocities were nothing compared to its larger design and objective of obliterating nation states (in principle and in practice) in order to establish its dystopian version of a global Caliphate.

But perhaps the greatest threat that has made the ISIS more problematic for global security than Al-Qaeda is its bloodlust and program to instigate a global apocalyptic war between Islam and the West in order to justify its claim of being the Caliphate. The US President Obama came close to properly identifying the ISIS by calling it as a death cult. In fact, the ISIS is more than that. It is a doomsday cult, which is bent on bringing about the the Biblical Armageddon (what it calls in Arabic as 'Al-Malhama Al-Kubra') in our age. This level of ideological perversity and madness has been characterised as the third generation of global jihad, or Terror 3.0 by former CIA Director General Michael Hayden.

This book highlights the ISIS' plans to initiate 'Total Confrontation' with the world from 2016-2020 as part of its 'Masterplan' detailed in the book by Fouad Huseein titled: *'Second Generation of Al-Qaeda* by attacking the city of Rome and the Vatican, in order to begin a global inter-religious war. Unlike Al-Qaeda, Iraq is central to its global jihadist aspirations for the ISIS. It follows Al-Zarqawi's thinking of waging and winning a jihad in Iraq as central because "if jihad fails in Iraq, the [Muslim] nation will never rise again."[1]

Chapter One of this book focuses on the phoenix-like rise of the ISIS on the global stage in 2014 after its virtual elimination following the death of the dreaded Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi in Iraq in 2006. Chapter Two tracks the growth of political Islam or Islamism in the 19th and 20th centuries,

and how its concepts grew distinct from the teachings of mainstream Islam, leading to the Jihadist ideology of Al-Qaeda and the ISIS.

Chapter Three is dedicated to the organization of the ISIS and Chapter Four to the warfare of the terror group and the way it has incorporated and implemented novel strategies of barbarity expounded by post-9/11 jihadi ideologues of Al-Qaeda.

Chapter Five describes how the ISIS has effectively spread its message and built its bases around the world in less than a year and has proven to be ahead of the proverbial curve when it comes to spreading its propaganda on the Internet and in conducting cyber warfare.

It also looks into the strong renunciation of the global Muslim community of the ISIS ideology and its violent atrocities and makes a few recommendations on the measures countries like India should take in order to fight the growing global menace of ISIS' extremism and terrorism. This book has used the appellation ISIS simply because it is the most popular name of the group in the world and because it finds the moniker 'Islamic State' as unacceptable to describe the group, as it is neither Islamic or a state in any which way.

Chapter One Introduction: The Genesis of ISIS

Picture of an ISIS militant on horseback featuring on ISIS online magazine *Dabiq*

“The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify … until it burns the Crusader armies.”

Abu Mus’ab Al-Zarqawi
(Putative Father of the ISIS)

1. Rise to Global Infamy

In June 2014, a breakaway faction of Al-Qaeda with a newly minted moniker — the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) — grabbed global media spotlight for capturing vast swathes of the Iraqi Sunni heartland. The world was shocked by the lightning advance of this extremist group, which with less than a thousand marauders[2] seized roughly a third of

Iraqi and Syrian territories by the middle of August[3]. The 'four to five divisions'[4] (with 30,000 to 50,000 soldiers)[5] of the US-trained Iraqi Army put up little to no resistance, with many of its soldiers deserting their posts, stripping their uniforms and leaving much of the weaponry and sophisticated military hardware behind.

The explosive expansion and extreme brutality of this summer offensive, catapulted the ISIS to global infamy. Clearly, the implications of this largely unforeseen development resonated beyond the territories ISIS seized in Iraq and Syria and the consequences of the establishment of its so-called Caliphate might outlast the eventual decimation of this terrorist organization and its fledgling proto-state.

For one, the ISIS' sudden emergence on the geopolitical stage and its threat to upset the whole post-Ottoman regional shebang by obliterating the boundaries of nation states (as exemplified by it in Iraq and Syria) in order to reinstate a medieval theocratic empire has shocked the global political system. Various international organizations, government agencies and media outlets remain baffled to this day over the modus operandi and warfare that has led to the ISIS' spectacular success.

Several causes have been attributed to the rise of the ISIS. The most important of them was the US-led Iraq War of 2003, which destroyed the state of Iraq and led to its virtual trifurcation along sectarian lines.

As a result of the war, Baghdad came under the dominance of the Shiite marsh Arabs for the first time in Islamic history, as the Sunnis of Iraq were completely

sidelined from the power equation. The perceived sectarian policies of the Maliki regime and its inability to check the violence perpetrated by Shiite militias against the Sunni community forced the marginalized Sunni tribes to support extremist jihadist groups of Al- Qaeda and ISIS in Iraq.

The unease of Sunni Gulf monarchs, in the wake of rising Shiite influence in Iraq, the Levant, Yemen and even in Gulf countries, led them to support Salafi jihadist militias in Syria and Iraq.

The large-scale civil war and violence perpetrated by the Syrian regime of Bashar Al-Assad to quell the country's democratic forces of the Syrian National Coalition (particularly the Free Syrian Army) proved helpful for Islamist groups to gain ground in Syria and Iraq, mainly Al-Qaeda and the ISIS.[6]

The US decision to withdraw from Iraq before completing its promised nation-building and its inability to take a tough stance against the Syrian regime were instrumental in the rise of the ISIS and Jabhat Al Nusrah.

The disbanding of the Iraq army and the widespread resentment among former Baathist soldiers, along with the large-scale unemployment of youth and the failure of the Arab Spring facilitated the rise of the radical Sunni jihadism in Iraq and Syria.

2. Vision and Motto

The ISIS follows an eschatological variant of Salafi-jihadist school of Sunni Islam and employs terrorism in the name of jihad (condemned by most Islamic scholars as religiously

proscribed) by targeting all non-Muslim and most Muslim communities under the doctrine of ‘takfeer’ (which legitimizes killing of people after declaring them infidels), as part of its global campaign to “purge” Muslim-dominated countries and then the world for restoring its version of a theocratic Caliphate.

The group’s motto is ‘Baqiyya wa Tamaddad’ which means ‘Enduring and Expanding’[7] It controls vast swathes of territory in Sunni-dominated regions of Syria and Iraq, a stretch larger in area than the United Kingdom[8].

The city of Raqqa (in Syria) is considered to be the administrative center of the ISIS and Mosul in Iraq is the largest city in its grip.

The group also claims to be holding territories in Egypt, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen Afghanistan and Pakistan. However since January 2015, ISIS has reportedly lost about 5,000 to 6,000 square miles of territory, according to Pentagon sources.[9]

The Logo of the ISIS is purportedly borrowed from the Seal of the Prophet. The message on the ISIS’ black standard is Islam’s first article of faith (the ‘Shahadah’ or Testimony). It reads: “There is no God Except The God and Muhammad is His Messenger”

There has been about 25 percent reduction in the areas under its control in Iraq. In early April 2015, ISIS was expelled from the city of Saddam Hussein's birth, Tikrit, by Iraqi government forces and the US-led coalition's airstrikes.

However, the ISIS managed to seize control of the strategically important city of Ramadi in Al-Anbar province and was reportedly advancing toward Iraq's biggest oil refinery in Baiji.

3. Significance of the ISIS Threat

The threat posed by the ISIS to global peace and security can hardly be overstated. ISIS poses a threat to the entire global community, including the Muslims of the world.

While announcing US-led global campaign against the ISIS on September 10, 2014, US President Barack Obama rightly observed: "ISIL (ISIS) poses a threat to the people of Iraq and Syria, and the broader Middle East … If left unchecked, these terrorists could pose a growing threat beyond that region."

He added "ISIL is not 'Islamic'. No religion condones the killing of innocents, and the vast majority of ISIL's victims have been Muslim."[10] For his part, the Saudi Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz Al Sheikh has called the ISIS, "the number one enemy of Islam."[11]

Several factors have contributed to the emergence of the ISIS as a major threat to global political order and for being deemed as more dangerous than Al-Qaeda. First, by running over the Iraq-Syria border, the ISIS has sought to erase not only the boundaries of the two countries (as first

established by the West under the Sykes-Picot agreement), but in doing so it categorically declared its repudiation of the Westphalian concept of the nation-state.

The ISIS then called itself the seed Caliphate, instituted on its own ultra-extremist, non-orthodox interpretation of Islam that does not conform to any of the four orthodox juristic schools of Sunni Islam, let alone of other Muslim sects. It also announced a five-year plan of expanding its boundaries to all Muslim-majority countries and beyond by building a legion to conduct a mythical end-time war between the West and Islam.[12]

Second, the so-called Islamic State has amassed enormous wealth and resources, greater than any terrorist or insurgent group in human history and has used it to expand its operations around the world. Third, the ISIS has developed its own jihadist mythology by concocting vague eschatological claims (as if to gain legitimacy on the basis of religious prophecy) through dubious and ambiguous reinterpretations of end-time predictions found in Hadeeth literature. In the words of US Army General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the joint-chiefs-of-staff, “This is an organisation that has an apocalyptic, end-of-days strategic vision which will eventually have to be defeated.[13]

Fourth, the organization has been able to win over followers and converts from across the world and from various national, ethnic and religious affiliations with the help of a powerful social media campaign.

“ISIS is the Number One Enemy of Islam”

Saudi Grand Mufti
Sheikh Abdulaziz Al Sheikh

Thus, it has attracted over 20,000 fighters from over 90 countries, according to the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence (February 2015).[14] Its total force strength is said to be in excess of 200,000. This is a much larger number than any jihadist or terrorist organization till date.

The organization is also said to rule over an area of the size of Britain. Thus, the threat posed by the ISIS to global security has in a short time emerged as far greater than that of Al- Qaeda.[15]

The fighters of the ISIS include foreign migrants, former soldiers of the Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein and the poor and disposed Sunni youth in Iraq and Syria, who have suffered a steep decline in their standard of living over the tumultuous years of the last decade.

The foreign fighters are generally well-educated and come from middle-class, even upper middle-class families of Europe and Asia, many of whom are engineers, doctors, lawyers and PhDs.

Former members of the Baathist regime are generally soldiers and former high-ranking officials, who suffered the