

The Islamic State and Boko Haram: *Fifth Wave* Jihadist Terror Groups

By

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Introduction

The rise of Boko Haram (BH) in northern Nigeria and the Islamic State's (IS) dramatic conquest over a third of Iraq and Syria are remarkable. Directed by messianic leaders these groups have unleashed an ultra-violent campaign to construct transnational empires. IS's proclamation of a "caliphate" in Sunni areas of Iraq and northern Syria hopes to erase national borders. Similarly Boko Haram has created an ungovernable space in north-eastern Nigeria and the Cameroon border that aspires to resurrect regional Islamic rule.

Driven by hostility toward secular authority and impelled by ethno-religious hatred, they have inspired revulsion and fear. Governments seem incapable of stopping them. BH and IS's capacity to wage terror has grown rapidly. Thousands have perished in these organizations relentless dreams to create a pure Islamic state. IS and BH have made impressive territorial gains with Islamic State forces encircling Baghdad and Boko Haram's wave of violence sharply escalating across Nigeria.

Both networks are characterized by cultish practices and a millenarian ideology associated with smaller organizations. The proposition that terrorism is a rational is widely accepted.¹ Yet this explanation appears poorly suited to account for theologically driven terror organizations. Recently theories that all terror networks are rational have come under vigorous attack.² The Islamist takfiri terrorism and millenarian violence it inspires seems particularly resistant to rational explanation.³

Past millenarian terror cults like Aum Shinriko, the Shi'ite Assassins, and the Zealots are viewed as anomalies.⁴ Much of this analysis relies on psychological effects of intense social bonding. Such cults stretch across religions. Jessica Stein has nicely documented these small scale groups.⁵ The building of large millenarian terror organizations seems incongruous when examined within this context.

Yet large organizations have been driven by quasi-religious passions. French Revolutionaries, Bolsheviks and the Nazis are preeminent examples. Bruce Hoffman's work nicely illustrates the association between populist ideology and self-destructive violence.⁶ Membership in terror organizations driven by totalitarian impulses is often explained in terms of social climbing and monetary rewards.⁷ Some of this is quite true, but is doubtful that it accounts for all of the membership. Ideological affinity for the group's world view must also be driving if not preeminent force.

The traditional preference to analyze Islamist groups from a rational perspective may be misplaced. Numerous authors have critiqued rational analytical models and their applicability to Islamist terrorism. Paul Berman, for example, critiques the rational paradigm for failing to account for the theological imperatives that dominate Islamist groups.⁸ Based on the studies of secular terror groups, Robert Nalbandov argues that rational perspectives are poorly designed to analyze Islamic terrorism.⁹ While these groups are very capable of short-term operational rationality, their long-range objectives are utopian and unachievable. Jihadism may be a unique form of terrorism with distinct cycles of activity driven by belief in mystical "prophetic" forces.¹⁰

If rational models explaining “sacred” terror are inappropriate, how can we account for such groups? Fortunately theoretical frameworks exist that may explain large millenarian terror organizations. Jeffery Kaplan argues that such groups belong to a *fifth wave* of modern terror that has its historical precedent in Khmer Rouge.¹¹

The organization and sequencing of my argument is as follows. First, Jeffery Kaplan’s *fifth wave* of terror theory is presented and discussed. Second, the essay argues that takfiri jihadist groups have tendencies consistent with Kaplan’s theory. Third, BH and IS are discussed within Kaplan’s essential framework. Finally, Boko Haram and Islamic State are placed within the context of takfiri precursors like the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Contrary to Kaplan’s argument that Islamist groups are not part of the *fifth wave*, this essay concludes that his theory does pertain to takfiri jihadist groups.

Kaplan *Fifth Wave* Theory

Jeffery Kaplan’s *fifth wave* concept refines David Rappaport’s *four wave* theory of modern terrorism. According to Rappaport modernity has bred four distinct terror cycles lasting a generation.¹² Rappaport argues that revolutions in communication and travel have accelerated the global reach of terror groups, spreading their ideals among radicalized diaspora communities. The velocity by which ideas are communicated and the destructiveness of modern weaponry facilitate international terror activity with each cycle governed by a core set of ideas. The *four waves* (anarchist, colonial, left-revolutionary and Islamist) have a particular agenda and a core set of enemies. Rappaport argues terrorist waves are short lived as each cycle dissipates due to a combination of internal weakness, generational change and external pressures.

Kaplan clearly admires Rappaport’s analysis but critiques his *four wave* theory as static for it does not account for groups that separate from preexisting waves. This disengagement produces a unique millenarian dynamic that begins with Kaplan’s Khmer Rouge *fifth wave* prototype.¹³

The Khmer Rouge is a *fifth wave* progenitor because the group in the 1970’s broke from the left revolutionary phase. Kaplan argues that the Khmer’s combat experience and rural isolation in its brutal struggle were key determinants in its devolution. Such forces contributed to a cult like organization exacerbated by Maoist principles of localism and a millenarian desire to remake the world. Maoism conjoined with brutalization of war to create an organization committed to the destruction of the old order and the formation of a radical new society. The Khmer viewed themselves as the vanguard of this revolutionary transformation. Their proclamation of a new revolutionary calendar beginning in “year zero” and their forced migration of the urbanites to the countryside exemplified this millenarian dynamic. Multitudes were subject to “revolutionary conditioning” that killed millions.

Based on the Khmer experience and his study of the Ugandan Christian millenarian Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), Kaplan develops his *fifth wave* terrorism theory. Such groups have distinctive qualities. Among these general “hallmarks” are: (1) a devolution from a preexisting terror wave; (2) a “hopeful” extreme idealism; (3) a physical withdraw into the hinterland; (4) a desired aim to recreate a past “Golden Age” by beginning the calendar anew; (5) an intent to destroy the old world and create of a pure new society; (6) an inability to compromise and the use of force against internal dissidents; (7) a belief in perfectibility of humans and the creation of a new man; (8) a quest for new society leading to genocidal

violence; (9) violence as a way of group life; (10) an emphasis on the subjugation of women and children; (11) recruitment of child soldiers and child brides; (12) the use of rape as a terror tactic; (13) a continuous cycle of violence engaged by the group across generations; (13) a particularistic emphasis on racial purity and ethno-tribal centrism; (14) pragmatic reliance on foreign allies to enhance group survival; (15) charismatic and authoritarian leadership; and (16) an apocalyptic world view buttressed by intense religious commitment.¹⁴

While Kaplan sees similarities between *fifth wave* groups and jihadist groups he is reluctant to include them. His rejection of Islamist groups is based on their internationalization that he believes militates against the *fifth wave*'s autarkic tendencies. Kaplan argues that Islamists quest for a united *ummah* prevent their *fifth wave* devolution. He remains, however, open to the prospect of some *fifth wave* Islamist groups

Kaplan moreover does make exceptions. He argues that the Janjaweed and their violence against Darfur's black population exhibit *fifth wave* hallmarks.¹⁵ He attributes their *fifth wave* behavior to nonreligious forces like environmental factors (draught and civil war) and Arab racism against blacks. The Janjaweed's Islamic ideology he argues is peripheral in its *fifth wave* evolution.

Kaplan's *fifth wave* Janjaweed designation may be applicable to other Islamist groups. The Janjaweed's *fifth wave* brutality has been copied by other Islamist groups. Contrary to Kaplan, most jihadi groups have Muhammad's Medina community as their initial philosophical ideal and only later his successors' caliphate. For jihadists reconstructing the Prophet's Medina community provides for ample experimentation, localism and autarky.

Historically the quest for a unified *ummah* has been challenged by localism, power struggles and divisions. Efraim Karsh argues that ethnic-tribal divisions have militated against attaining a unified caliphate.¹⁶ The bloody history of caliphate succession has included civil wars and assassinations. Fragmentation and local variation, not unity, has been the norm governing Islamic history. This pattern, moreover, has plagued jihadist movements. Thomas Hegghammer maintains that divisions within radical Islamist groups are endemic as leaders vie for power and failed jihads inspire intra-organizational feuding and persistent reorganizations.¹⁷

The mix of Arab racialism and Islam, moreover, has been a catalyst for localized ethnic cleansing. Walid Phares argues that Arabic and Islamist animus toward Kurds, Berbers, Copts, Sudanese black Muslims reflects nostalgia for renewed rule over ethno-religious minorities.¹⁸ Despite their internationalism, jihadi groups are plagued by localism, brutality and divisions galvanized by an opportunity to replicate Muhammad's mythic Medina. These visions have been the basis for much barbarism.

Jihadists often develop rural insurgencies where government authority is weak. Borrowing from Che Guevara's "el foco" insurgency theory, Islamists hope their micro communities will catalyze a populist revolution.¹⁹ Jihadist rebels who seize towns establish Sharia councils frequently imposing drastic versions of Islamic law. Typically they organized religious police in these communities to harshly enforce moral codes.

Jihadist brutality is magnified by the movement's elitist character and the zealousness of its militants. Pronounced religious fanaticism and group dynamics reinforce extremism. Martha Crenshaw, for example, argues that group dynamics and isolation can act as a break on instrumental reasoning and rational terrorist behavior.²⁰ Millenarian groups seem vulnerable to this tendency.²¹ BH and IS religiously inspired violence fits Kaplan's *fifth wave* theory well. So do other Islamist groups like the millenarian cult Juhayan al-Otaybi that in November 1979 seized Mecca's Grand Mosque.

The cult's leaders Muhammad Abdullah al-Qahtani and Juhayman al-Otaybi hoped to use the mosque seizure to inspire a popular uprising against the Saudi monarchy.²² Proclaiming Muhammad as the *Mahdi*, the group clearly miscalculated. After a month long siege, Saudi security forces stormed the mosque killing hundreds of cult members and their hostages. Juhayan's remaining members were tried and its leaders were later executed.

Recreating Mohammad's Medina was a prime objective of the cult for it would lead to a caliphate. This vision sparked its millenarian fanaticism. Egomaniacal leaders like Qahtani believe they are divinely appointed to resurrect mythic communities. IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and BH's emir Abubakr Sekau, following this pattern, seek to purify an unclean society and build their micro communities into a caliphate. Significantly they have chosen Muhammad's successor name to sanctify their respective visions.

An Islamist *Fifth Wave* of Terror

Jihadists justify their war against Muslim *apostate* regimes by arguing that these societies are in a state of ignorance of divine truth or *jahiliyyah* for their accretion of foreign influences during the colonial era made them deviate from the Qur'an.²³ Revered by modern jihadists, Muslim Brotherhood theorist Sayyid Qutb argued that *jahiliyyah* could be transformed by elites knowledgeable of true Islamic principles. This jihadist vanguard could enlighten the masses purging them of *apostasy* leading to a popular rebellion against *impious* leaders.

The process of mass conversion and revolutionary agitation requires psychological isolation from modern society and this could account for the dynamics of an Islamist *fifth wave*. Islamist thought actively seeks a disengagement from the modern world and longs to recreate Muhammad's Medina community.²⁴ Operating clandestinely and brutally repressed these groups create an unreal interior world. With weak state authority in rural areas, jihadists capture territory hoping to create ideal micro-communities.

Faced with such a task, jihadist organizations are prone to extremism and millenarianism.²⁵ This is especially pronounced in organizations like Islamic State and Boko Haram whose use of *takfir* (e.g., excommunication of co-religionists) legitimates mass slaughter. Traditionally *takfir* had been confined to excommunicate impious rulers and immoral individuals. Jihadist clerics, however, have progressively legitimated the use of collective *tafkir* ex-communicating large numbers of Muslims.²⁶ *Takfir* had been applied to civilian supporters of impious states, regime soldiers and expanded to include Shi'ites and Alawites, considered poly-theists by Sunni militants because of their reverence for the Prophet Ali and his son Husayn.²⁷

Syrian medieval scholar Ibn Tamiyya ruling that Shi'ites' are *apostates* has a powerful legitimating force for Sunni jihadists.²⁸ Recalling past Shia revolts against Sunni authority, Taymiyya viewed them as anti-Islamic and he actively called for killing their leaders. In a maximalist interpretation of Taymiyya's ruling late Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) leader Abu Musab al- Zaraqawi applied it to the entire Shi'ite population.

Zaraqawi's 2004 letter to Al Qaeda argues that Shi'ites are "confirmed polytheists".²⁹ The Jordanian viewed Shi'ites and Kurds as enablers of a diabolical Jewish-Crusader conspiracy to persecute Sunnis and to establish an Iraqi Zionist state. Zaraqawi's hatred toward the Shi'ites meshed with his plans to construct a Sunni jihadist state. Hoping to invite sectarian civil war and state collapse, AQI brutally targeted Shi'ite civil and religious institutions killing thousands.

Declaring a state in 2006, AQI's successor organization continued Zaraqawi's sectarian strategy to systematically cleanse Shi'ites, Kurds and Christians. The 2011 American military disengagement power vacuum and the Maliki Administration Shi'ite sectarianism reignited Sunni Islamic extremism reviving AQI's successor's fortunes. Catalyzed by the confessional passions of the Syrian civil war, Al Qaeda's Iraqi branch was able to develop operations in Syria that brought it into conflict with other rebel forces fighting the Alawite dominated Assad regime.

The group's sectarian takfiri vision sowed discord in Syrian jihadist ranks resulting in Al Qaeda's 2014 expulsion of IS' predecessor the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). ISIL's violent predatory activities against other jihadist groups and its failure to abide by Al Qaeda's decree that it confine its armed struggle to Iraq, forced Ayman al-Zawahiri to expel the organization.³⁰ Since the rupture, thousands of jihadists have died as IS militants continue to attack against other rebel forces.³¹ Despite appeals by Al Qaeda Central and rival jihadist organizations for IS to submit to Shura council mediation, Islamic State units have continued their attacks gaining more territory. Takfiri groups like IS often separate from the larger Islamist movement to create their own unique *fifth wave* like vision.

Kaplan's *fifth wave* theory has many key components. Applying it to takfiri groups requires some modifications and explanations. Table A on the next page reconfigures parts of Kaplan's theory into an Islamist-takfiri caste. Like the Christian millenarian Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) *fifth wave* jihadist movements use extreme violence to destroy old orders and build new "model" societies.

Table A: Key Components of Jihadist 5th Wave Groups

Rejection of Existing Social-Political Order	Muslim society is in a state of jahliyyah or ignorance of divine truth that is promoted by apostate regimes. This requires separation from society and rebellion against it.
Idealization of a Mythic Past	Reconstituting Muhammad's Medina Community and the caliphate developed by his four righteous successors are the desired end-states.
The Quest for Millenarian Justice	The destruction of <i>apostasy</i> and the return to the purity of Muhammad's Medina experience will generate universal happiness as a caliphate develops.
Youth Culture	Males between 18 and 39 form the bulk of jihadi groups.
Brutalization of Women and Children	Islamist misogyny and forced veiling of women. Attacks on unveiled women, limitations on female education and employment. Forced marriages with jihadi fighters. Coerced recruitment of boys into jihadist organizations.
Kidnapping	Women and children frequently kidnapped and sold into slavery
Ethnic and Sectarian Cleansing	Campaign of targeted killing of religious minorities (Shi'ites, Alawites, Sufis) and Christians. Destruction of Mosques, Shrines, Burial Sites and Churches associated with religious minorities or deemed polytheistic. Broad use of takfir (e.g., excommunication) of Muslim opponents justifying their killing.
Unrestrained Violence	Relentless military campaign of suicide bombings, IED and car bombs aimed at soldiers, police and civilians. Takfir facilitates killing of opponents including fellow Sunnis.
Charismatic Leadership	Islamist fifth wave groups typically led by powerful dynamic emir who combines religious and military authority
Development of a New Society	Violent destruction of decadent <i>apostate</i> order and creation of modern version of Muhammad's Medina community and caliphate of his immediate successors

Boko Haram and Islamic State have *fifth wave* tendencies. These characteristics pit them against other Islamist groups. Since late 2013 IS has warred against fellow Islamist groups including Al Qaeda's Syrian affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra in a struggle to direct the jihadist war against Assad's regime. Similarly Boko Haram has conducted assassination campaign against Muslim *apostates*, clerics and leaders who reject their ideology. Repudiating Shekau's takfiri violent agenda, BH dissident leaders split from the organization in 2012 to form the trans-Islamic Ansaru that rejects intra-Muslim violence and targets only Western interests³² Both BH and IS have embarked upon a radical takfiri sectarian agenda that disengages them from the broader Islamist movement.

Injustice, Jihad and the Restoration of *Divine* Order

Boko Haram and the Islamic State reject existing colonial era territorial boundaries. British and French colonizers created modern Nigeria and the Levant from the defeated Sokoto and Ottoman caliphates. For BH and IS the restoration of the caliphate is necessary to avenge Muslim honor; both are eager to resurrect Islamic regional dominance.

Jihadist organizations like BH and IS see past caliphates as part of Allah's providence. The Sokoto caliphate stretched across Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Burkina Faso. Governing in the 19th century the caliphate's political authority was abolished in 1903 by Britain. BH literature rejects the territorial and political configuration of the Nigerian state and has terrorized Christian villages along the Cameroon border.³³

The Islamic State similarly repudiates colonial era borders. With its recent conquests, IS announced their creation of a caliphate stretching from Raqqa, Syria to Diyala, Iraq. IS's leader Baghdadi has renamed himself Caliph Ibrahim.³⁴ In one of the Islamic State's videos entitled "The End of Sykes-Picot" a Chilean jihadist at a Syrian-Iraq border post captured by IS forces brags about breaking the colonial era accord.³⁵ By linking northern Syria with western Iraq, IS has done something unprecedented. IS' predatory designs on Baghdad evoke the glory of the Abbasid caliphate that ruled for centuries from the Iraqi capital.

Boko Haram and Islamic State seek to destroy Western culture and political institutions in Nigeria and Iraq. Roughly translated, Boko Haram combines Hausa and Arabic words meaning "Western education is forbidden".³⁶ Central to the group's ideology is its rejection of Western civilization of which public schools are a potent symbol. Boko Haram militants chafe at traditional Muslim elites whose imposition of Sharia law in twelve northern states fails to meet their standard of Islamic purity.³⁷

Their ideologues rage against Western social and political institutions that are "sinful" and "corrupt".³⁸ BH sees the Nigerian Christian state as persecuting and exploiting Muslims, subjugating them to unnatural secular rule that insidiously aims to destroy Islamic values. The chronic poverty of the Northern states like Borno, Kaduna and Yobe is blamed on corrupt Westernized political and economic systems.

Rule dictated by democratic institutions, furthermore, subject Muslims to the imperfect rule of men and deny them the perfection of Sharia governance. Shekau in a July 2012 You Tube video calls Nigerian democracy "paganism" and urges Christians to recant their poly-theism and convert to Islam.³⁹ Within secular society, BH ideologues argue, Islamic belief and practice are perverted by Christian influences deepening the state of Muslim *jahiliyyah* or ignorance of divine truth.⁴⁰ Boko Haram's solution to the spiritual crisis and economic servitude of Muslims is jihad to cleanse this impurity and restore genuine Sharia rule. Its brutal jihadist war is waged against security services, *apostate* Muslims, and above all, the Christian minority. The destruction of Christian villages, bombing of Churches and kidnapping of *infidel* children is key component of its terror strategy to break the strictures of the corrupt post- colonial state.⁴¹

Islamic State publications speak of the prophetic inevitability of the caliphate. The fourth edition of the Islamic State e-magazine denounces the "corruption" of democracy and nationalism.⁴² The magazine confidently predicts a future conquest of Baghdad restoring the territorial cohesion of the caliphate and the perfection of Sharia rule. IS's first edition of its new Dabiq publication *The Return of the Khilafah* provides a coherent defense of Baghdadi's caliphate declaration.⁴³

Dabiq depicts a Muslim world plagued by shirk [polytheism] and Islamic peoples brutally repressed by secular tyrannical leaders [tawaghit] and their Zionist-Crusader masters. Based on Qur'anic verses and hadith *The Return of the Khilafah* see's IS as Allah's prophesied vanguard to rejuvenate Islam by restoring tawid [unity], purging it of apostasy [shirk] and fortifying the true ummah [community] by fusing political and religious authority under caliph Ibrahim. Named after the site of an apocalyptic battle prophesied by one of the Prophet's hadiths, Dabiq confidently predicts the destruction of *crusader* states and global Islamic conquest.

A Youthful Patriarchal Jihad against Women, Children and Ethnic-Religious Minorities

Most BH militants are male Islamic school students whose training fueled their militancy but left them with few marketable labor force skills. These *almejeri* form Boko Haram's cadres and they represent a generation committed to Islamist violence.⁴⁴ Their economic marginalization in Nigeria's north fuels their rage.

Historically this population proved to be vulnerable to Islamist recruitment and mobilization. Boko Haram's origins lie in the 1970's Maitatsine movement.⁴⁵ Started by charismatic preacher Muhammad Marwa, the group initially adopted an Islamist Kanuri tribal agenda that made moderate demands on the government. As the movement grew, its agenda became radically trans-Islamic. By December 1980 Marwa created a populist insurgency committed to attacks against police stations and the government. Ordered by the federal government to disband, Marwa and his followers revolted. The Nigerian army intervened and in eleven days of fighting some 4,000 people perished and hundreds of villages were destroyed.

The Maitatsine revolt was crushed by the army and its leader was killed. While the movement's followers disbanded they never gave up the call for Islamic rebellion. Continued Christian-Muslim violence throughout the 1990's and festering regional economic problems created an environment for another Islamic separatist movement.⁴⁶

Starting in rural Kanamma Muhammad Yusuf created a movement composed of unemployed Islamic schools graduates that inhabited many Northern states and cities. By 2008-2009 Maiduguri and Kano were major areas of Boko Haram support and traditional Muslim elites and Christian minorities began to feel the brunt of the movement's wrath. Frustrated by poverty, these young men bought into BH's narrative of Islamic victimization and exploitation by corrupt *apostate* elites. Beginning as a 2002 protest movement by Muhammad Yusef, BH militants regularly clashed with police and security services. This cycle of violence reached a peak in 2009 when security forces crushed a BH armed rebellion killing thousands with its leader Yusef executed while in police custody.

Similarly Islamic State membership is a male and young. The Soufan Center in a June 2014 study of foreign fighter migrations to Syria reports that most of these fighters are between 18 and 29 years old, making this age cohort younger than earlier jihadist wars.⁴⁷ The report's finds that most of the twelve thousand foreign fighters in Syria have joined Al Qaeda inspired groups. Many of these militants were recruited by IS' You Tube videos and extensive Twitter campaigns.⁴⁸

Jihadist social media on the Syrian conflict is dominated by sectarian insults and derogatory language.⁴⁹ Frequent references to *rafidha* and *Nusayri* by Sunni Syrian and foreign jihadists imply Shi'ites and Alawites are polytheistic infidels whose control of the Iraqi and Syrian governments and repression of Sunnis must be combated. With its recent battlefield success, Islamic State's sectarian media campaign is poised to attract even more foreign fighters.

The Islamic State's professional videos with their violent images and messages resonate profoundly with frustrated, bored and angry young men. Like their fellow BH jihadists many IS fighters have few economic opportunities and their religious piety impels them to avenge Muslim honor. BH and IS leadership is, furthermore, exclusively male and slightly older than the rank and file.

Shekau's reorganization of BH in 2010 led to the current insurgency that has attacked security services and eviscerated Christian villages. Its ambushes, vehicle born improvised explosive devices (VBIED), improvised explosive devices (IED) and martyrdom operations have killed thousands.⁵⁰ Recently violence in north Nigeria has escalated. Human Rights Watch reports that Boko Haram attacks in 2014 have resulted in the death of over two thousand people.⁵¹ BH intends to cleanse Borno and Yobe states of their Christian populations by burning villages and establish Islamic rule extending to Cameroon border villages. Church bombings have killed many worshipers. Boko Haram bombed churches in Jos on Christmas Eve 2010 killing thirty-eight people and on Christmas Day 2011 in Madala executing forty-six persons.⁵²

BH's terror campaign has targeted women and children. Their 2014 kidnapping of over 250 Chibok school girls is symbolic of a campaign to target Christian girls for slavery and conversion.⁵³ Like Kaplan's *fifth wave* exemplar The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), BH focuses on recruitment and kidnapping of children to be groomed as future fighters. Women and children are often killed by enraged BH militants.

Boko Haram's sectarian cleansing is repeated by the Islamic State that since its AQI years has targeted Shi'ites, Christians, and Kurds. AQI's attack against the revered Shi'ite Samara mosque in 2006 almost stoked civil war and state collapse. Since its reorganization under Baghdadi in 2010, IS has developed a formidable terror network responsible for thousands of IED and VBIED attacks. The *Institute for the Study of War* reports that al-Baghdadi's network in 2013 committed over 9,000 attacks against Iraqi security forces and civilians.⁵⁴

This terror campaign shattered the Iraqi army's morale which disintegrated during Islamic State's June 2014 offensive capturing much of northwestern Iraq.⁵⁵ The Islamic State's seizure of Iraq's second largest city Mosul resulted in the mass surrender of army prisoners. Shortly afterward IS websites posted hundreds of grisly mass execution photos of Shi'ite prisoners that evoke images of the *Rape of Nanking*. Like the Japanese soldiers in 1937, IS militants celebrated their activities. Islamic State publications jubilantly claim to have executed over 1,700 Shi'ite prisoners.⁵⁶

IS's jihad in Syria has been equally brutal and has taken on a sectarian and misogynistic caste. *Human Rights Watch* reports that IS militants in August 2013 cleansed Alawite villages in coastal Latakia.⁵⁷ Hundreds of civilians were killed with entire families summarily executed. Surviving women and children were kidnapped by jihadists. Fighting between IS and Kurdish brigades in Northeast Syria has been endemic since 2012.

Recently IS has made significant territorial gains around the Syrian oil town of Deir Izzour expelling rebel and regime forces.⁵⁸ Islamic State brigades are intent on securing their positions along the Euphrates River to the Turkish border, leading many to fear that massacres of Kurdish villages are impending.

Since 2013 IS has governed fanatically in Raqqa, Syria offering a presentment of their likely rule in Iraq.⁵⁹ Raqqa's sharia council and religious police repress unveiled women and enforce daily prayers. Women are often coerced to marry foreign fighters. The June 16, 2014 *United Nation Security Council* report condemns the Islamic States violence and ethnic cleansing in recently conquered areas in Iraq. Islamic State militants seize and plunder people's houses.⁶⁰ In mid- July 2014 IS inspired a mass exodus of Christians from Mosul when it demanded either their conversion or the payment of a special tax.

Amnesty International reports the IS' Syrian network runs torture facilities and detention centers where summary executions are common.⁶¹ Children are often forcibly recruited in the ranks of IS jihadists as fighters. Shi'ite shrines and mosques are destroyed. Churches are desecrated and burned. Crucifixions and beheadings are part of the group's systematic intimidation and terror campaign.

Charismatic Leadership and the Development of a New Society

Charismatic leadership dominates both organizations. Abubakr Shekau's leadership of the network began after the killing of BH's founder Muhammad Yusef during his detention by security services.⁶² Under Yusef's leadership, Shekau was known as an extremist who clashed with the mainstream leadership. During the army's brutal 2009 repression of BH, Shekau was rumored to have been wounded and he reorganized BH in exile into a takfiri insurgent organization. He has ruthlessly annihilated rivals.

Reportedly working with AQIM militants in Niger, Shekau consolidated his power within BH's Shura council paving the organization transition to ultra-violent terror group.⁶³ Since 2010 BH has ripped apart much of northern-eastern Nigeria with a succession of IED and VBIED attacks, ambushes and martyrdom operations. Relying on acquired AQIM bombing techniques and technology BH bombed a UN facility in Abuja in 2010 killing dozens.

Shekau's leadership appears dominant in the organization. Though rival leaders exist, he personifies BH ultra-violent takfiri approach to societal reorganization. He is rapidly building a cult like personality who appears regularly in videos extolling the virtues of jihad. Like the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Shekau media presence symbolizes terror spreading fear and intimidation. There is, however, some controversy over Shekau's video appearances with some analysts claiming that doubles are playing BH's emir. Analyst Jacob Zenn believes that BH's clan leaders are fabricating a mythic unifying leader to facilitate the organization's cohesion.⁶⁴

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi served as a deputy to Abu Umar al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamza al-Mujahir in Al Qaeda's Iraqi operations. He began to lead the organization in 2010 after U.S. forces killed the Islamic State of Iraq's (ISI) top leadership. Baghdadi's rule over the network resulted in its expansion into Syria during the Arab Spring when the Assad regime's repressive measures transformed a non-violent Sunni protest movement into an armed insurgency. Fueling Baghdadi's ambitions is his reputation as a religious scholar with a doctorate in Islamic studies. One cleric claims that his family descends from the Prophet's tribe reinforcing his religious authority.⁶⁵

Baghdadi is less of a media presence than Shekau, but he shares his fanatical vision. With his July 5, 2014 address at a Mosul mosque and his Caliph Ibrahim declaration, Baghdadi may see himself as a contemporary Mahdi intent upon unifying the ummah and destroying Shi'ite apostasy. The Levant centers heavily in religious prophecy that Sunni and Shi'ite radicals believe to be the site of a final battle to destroy evil.⁶⁶ Baghdadi's Mosul Ramadan sermon predicts the annihilation of kuffar [infidel] and the unification of the caliphate.

Baghdadi’s caliphate declaration has been attacked by Al Qaeda jihadist ideologues. Abu Qatada and Abu Mohammad al- Maqdisi have lambasted Baghdadi for having failed to consult with other groups prior to his proclamation.⁶⁷ IS is seen as a pariah in the broader Islamist movement. Despite such criticisms, Baghdadi has received some support from disaffected Al Qaeda members and his recent success is likely to enhance his appeals to foreign fighters.

Despite their contrasting leadership styles Baghdadi and Shekau share a millenarian vision to undo modern society and advance Islamic conquest. Significantly they have taken the name of the Prophet’s first successor who built an Islamic empire. Shekau and Baghdadi are intent upon reversing the ummah’s atrophy and restoring Islamic dominance over *infidels* and *apostates*. Table B summarizes BH and IS “hallmarks” as *fifth wave* Islamist groups.

Table B: Boko Haram and Islamic State as 5th Wave Islamist Terror Group

Islamist 5th Wave of Terror Hallmarks	Boko Haram-BH	Islamic State-IS
Rejection of Existing Social and Political Order	Unjust colonial boundaries and the 1903 British destruction of the political authority of the Sokoto caliphate and its territories. Western education and society iare evil and tantamount to a Christian secular conspiracy to destroy Islam. Democracy substitutes imperfect rule by men for the divine perfection of Sharia governance.	Historic injustice of nation-state boundaries created by colonial era Sykes-Picot accord that portioned the lands of the caliphate. The Assad and Maliki minority <i>apostate</i> regimes exploit and oppress pious Sunni majorities substituting secular rule for the Sharia’s divine rule.
Idealization of Mythic Past	Create a modern version of the 19 th century Sokoto caliphate reestablishing Islamic rule over North Nigeria and neighboring border areas of Cameroun.	Create a modern version of Medieval Abbasid caliphate with al-Andalus and Ottoman Empire territorial extensions
Quest for Millenarian Justice	Avenge past legacy of Colonial and Christian persecution of Muslims in Nigeria and Cameroun. Construction a Sharia regional caliphate leads to universal justice	Destroy Alawi and Shi’ite apostasy, avenge past transgressions and restore rightful Sunni rule. Resurrected caliphate and Sharia basis for social equity and justice.
Youth Culture	BH foundations and rank and file are economically marginalized Islamic students and young men	IS’ foreign fighter and Iraqi-Syrian rank and file between 19-35 years old. Attract young fighters though social media outreach.
Brutalization of Women and Children	Subjugation of women and children though kidnapping and slavery. Recruitment of child soldiers.	Subjugation of women and children through kidnapping and slavery. Recruitment of child soldiers.
Kidnapping	Used as an mechanism for terror and financial profit	Used as a mechanism for terror and financial profit
Sectarian and Ethnic Cleansing	Targeting of Christian population and animist tribes. Church bombings and desecration. Systematic expulsion of Christian populations from villages. Kidnapping of women and children	Targeting of Kurds, Sufis, Shi’ites, Alawites, Yazidi and Christians. Bombings of churches and Muslim minority mosques, shrines and burial sites. Attacks on clergy who reject IS ideology. Forced expulsions of rival group’s civil populations. Kidnapping of women and children.
Unrestrained Violence	Takfir applied to all opponents including fellow Sunnis	Takfir applied to all opponents including fellow Sunnis and opposing jihadist groups
Charismatic leadership	Group’s emir aspires to mythic status and has loyal following based on religious and coercive authority-Abubakr Shekau.	Group’s emir aspires to mythic status and has loyal following based on religious and coercive authority-Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi-Caliph Ibrahim.
Development of New Society	Cleansing of old decadent order and construction of pious just society based on Qur’anic principles	Cleansing of the old decadent order an construction of pious just society based on Qur’anic principles

Islamic State and Boko Haram *Fifth Wave* Precursors: AQI, GIA and AQIM's Malian Experience

While IS and BH are extreme jihadist groups, there are precedents. Historically Al Qaeda Central has rejected its affiliate's violence against Muslim civilians. Bin Laden's Abbottabad correspondence expresses anxiety over AQI's sectarian brutality and the fanatical *near enemy* visions of Al Shabaab, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).⁶⁸ Al Qaeda's efforts to restrain the takfiri behavior of its regional branches have largely failed. American AQ media expert Adam Gadahn in his Abbottabad letters urges bin Laden to expel affiliates from the parent organization.⁶⁹

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's brutal sectarian vision in Iraq famously produced conflicts with AQ's central leadership. Ayman al-Zawahiri in a 2005 letter to AQI criticized Zarqawi's approach urging him to change direction and target American forces.⁷⁰ Zawahiri presciently warned Zarqawi that AQI's violence against Muslims endangered public support for the Iraq insurgency. Undaunted Zarqawi pursued his attacks against Shi'ite neighborhoods, mosques, religious festivals hoping to invite sectarian retaliation, civil war and the U.S. military withdraw. Zawahiri's letter effectively foreshadowed AQI's defeat four years later as American forces aligned with anti Al Qaeda tribes in Anbar Province to degrade its Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) successor.

Almost twenty years earlier, the Algerian Armed Islamic Group's (GIA) savage takfiri insurgency against Algiers military government was also repudiated by Al Qaeda. Formed by Algerian veterans of the 1980's Afghan jihad, the GIA rebelled against Algiers' suspension of the 1991 parliamentary election victory by an Islamist party.⁷¹ Between 1993 and 1998 hundreds of thousands died in brutal fighting between government forces and Islamist rebels. Hoping to induce state implosion, GIA's tactics included church discretion, bombings, assassinations, massacres, and ritualistic violence. GIA militants in 1996 beheaded hundreds of villagers in two towns south of Algiers.⁷² Such barbarism, however, evaporated public support for the insurgency.

Like the Syrian civil war GIA takfiri violence produced fissures in the rebel movement. GIA attacked other Islamist rebel groups who accepted participation in Algiers amnesty program. The GIA's London media representatives Abu Musab al-Suri and Abu Qatadah recanted past support for the group and bin Laden in 1998 switched his assistance from the GIA to its more moderate splinter faction.⁷³ The Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) formed in 2007 by ex-GIA leaders was incorporated into Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

Despite the calamitous GIA experience, AQIM's Sahel brigades failed to comprehend the lessons of past jihadist failure. Their 2012-2013 experience in Mali repeats its predecessor's errors. Aligning with Tuareg rebels and Malian jihadists in 2012, AQIM brigades seized northern Mali. Described by Spanish terror expert Fernando Reinares as a "jihadist condominium" AQIM and its Islamist allies consolidated power driving moderate Tuareg allies from Timbuktu, Gao and Kindal.⁷⁴ Their rule was characterized by sectarian and takfiri violence. Sufi mosques and shrines were desecrated, library books were burned, limbs of suspected thieves were amputated, and adulterers were stoned. Alarmed by the extremist behavior of his local militants, AQIM emir Abdulmalek Drukdal urged them to decelerate their imposition of Sharia and win more public support.⁷⁵ Rejecting his advice, his brigades and their allies hoped to recreate a mythical version of Muhammad's Medina community. Such measures invited popular resistance and the international community condemnation. Assisted by Malian and Chadian forces, France

militarily intervened in 2013 driving AQIM and Islamist allies from key cities. Since the French invasion, jihadist forces have mounted a low grade, ineffective insurgency.

Past *fifth wave* Islamist insurgencies failed to achieve an enduring Islamic state. Their extremism sowed internal rebel dissension, evaporated public support and engendered external resistance. Today Boko Haram and the Islamic State stand poised to succeed where their predecessors failed. So far they have realized many of their objectives. Baghdadi's conquest of Sunni dominated areas in Iraq and his consolidation of his northern Syrian enclave is unprecedented. With its raid on Mosul's banking system and its acquisition of advanced American weapons from a retreating Iraqi army, the IS is the globe's only jihadist terror state. Boko Haram's insurgency has sharply accelerated since 2010 killing thousands in a brutal ethno-sectarian cleansing.

Despite these impressive gains the odds are against Boko Haram and Islamic State. While Islamist insurgent groups can capture towns, villages and regions and produce chaos, effective governance has eluded them. AQI and GIA were also initially successful, Iraq in 2006 and Algeria ten years earlier seemed headed for state collapse and a jihadist victory. Yet inexorably these groups resort to religious brutality created countervailing forces (popular revulsion, internal rebel dissension and external resistance) that led to their later implosion. As modern day *fifth wave* Islamist groups, Boko Haram and Islamic State are likely to repeat this pattern.

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