Fourth Generation *Governance*
-Sheikh Tamimi defends the Islamic State of Iraq-

Technology was the primary driver of the second generation of warfare; ideas were the primary driver of the third. An idea-based fourth generation is also conceivable… the West no longer dominates the world. A fourth generation may emerge from non-Western cultural traditions, such as Islamic or Asiatic traditions. The fact that some non-Western areas, such as the Islamic world, are not strong in technology may lead them to develop a fourth generation through ideas rather than technology.

-William S. Lind, Colonel Keith Nightengale (USA),
Captain John F. Schmitt (USMC), Colonel Joseph W. Sutton (USA),
and Lieutenant Colonel Gary I. Wilson (USMCR) (Marine Corps Gazette, 10/1989)-

By Brian Fishman

On October 15, 2006 Al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) and its allies declared an independent Islamic State across a swath of Western Iraq. The Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) was widely scorned by Western counterterrorism experts, many of whom rightly concluded that the ISI would never be capable of developing the material and bureaucratic infrastructure widely expected of a modern state.

The ISI has not been embraced in the Mideast either. More secularist elements of the Iraqi insurgency condemn it.[1] Most importantly to al-Qa'ida, well-known jihadi scholars, who could provide the ISI critical legitimacy, have been slow to support the new organization. The scholars are apparently concerned about the strategic wisdom and theological correctness of establishing an Islamic State now.

The ISI's defenders—ranging from jihadi pundit Shaykh Atiyatallah to Al-Qa'ida commander Abu Yahya al-Libi—have developed a series of theological, philosophical, and practical arguments to justify the ISI's existence to the *ulema*—Islamic scholars.[2] The most comprehensive defense, entitled *Informing the People*

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[1] Roggio, Bill "Al-Zawraa vs. Al-Qaeda" Feb. 20, 2007
http://billroggio.com/archives/2007/02/alzawraa_vs_alqaeda.php
[2] Al- Libi, Abu Yahya. "Iraq: Between Victory and Conspiratorial Intrigue" Video released on March 21, 2007. *Albayanat website.* Atiyatallah has released numerous defenses of the ISI. The most comprehensive was released on the Ana al-Muslim forum on January 5, 2007

About the Birth of the Islamic State of Iraq, was authored by Uthman Bin Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi and released by Furqan Media, the ISI's official media development unit.[3] This book is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it delineates the ideological schism within the jihadi movement over the ISI's existence. Secondly, Tamimi defends the ISI by combining modern globalization theory with Koranic and hadith-based justifications to fundamentally redefine what a modern Islamic nation-state should be.

Tamimi argues that the ISI, unlike a modern Western state, is not defined by absolute geographic boundaries, a monopoly on the use of violence, or bureaucratically-administered services. According to Tamimi, measuring the ISI against that metric misunderstands both Islam and the globalization revolution. The ISI is structured around pseudo-feudal allegiances from subject to Emir, shared ideological goals, and the execution of judicial proceedings.

The term Fourth Generation Warfare was coined by William Lind in a seminal article that appeared in the October, 1989 edition of the Marine Corps Gazette.[4] The term describes innovative warfare fought by units that operate independently of clearly defined territory and battle lines. Fourth Generation Warriors fight like guerillas, terrorists, and computer hackers; they organize in networks, not hierarchies. They sacrifice space for time, rely on secrecy, and use technology to maximize the political impact of material activities. Tamimi argues that these technical and theoretical principles apply to governance as well as warfare: a conceptualization I call Fourth Generation Governance.

It is unclear whether many Muslims and Arabs will accept Tamimi's framework for governance, but it is clear that many reject the Western formulation, at least as it has been implemented in Iraq. Americans should not underestimate the ISI or Tamimi's arguments; nor should the U.S. concede their validity. Strategic victory over the ISI requires more than defeating its operatives on the ground in Anbar, it demands discrediting the intellectual frameworks al-Qa'ida constructs to shape the way Muslims around the world think about the ISI.

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[3] Uthman bin abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi. "Informing the People About the Birth of the Islamic State of Iraq." January 7, 2007. *World News Network*. Al-Tamimi is a relatively unknown figure. He is listed as the "Supervisor" overseeing production of *Informing the People* rather than the author. For stylistic reasons, he is listed as the author in the text of this analysis. The book's forward, attributed to "The Official Spokesman of the Islamic State of Iraq," dramatically says that Tamimi killed himself in a suicide bombing where, "he spilled his blood on his book like a spreading musk loudly announcing that we continue to take the path of the rightness and stick to the right way."

[4] Lind, William, Colonel Keith Nightengale (USA), Captain John F. Schmitt (USMC), Colonel Joseph W. Sutton (USA), and Lieutenant Colonel Gary I. Wilson (USMCR) "The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation" *Marine Corps Gazette* October, 1989

Worship, in reality, is the submission of man to God, and his (man's) liberation from the submission to anything other than God…the struggle between faith and infidelity is in fact a struggle for the right of God to be the one who orders and prohibits on earth.

-Uthman Bin Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi (Informing the People)- [5]

JUSTIFYING THE STATE

Echoing the structure of many jihadi texts, Tamimi first makes a series of positive arguments for the ISI, then anticipates potential critiques and systematically rebuts them. The resulting text is repetitive, but clear. Tamimi's list of critiques likely reflects the actual concerns of the ISI's detractors. It includes:

- The ISI does not control enough territory to be considered a state.
- The ISI cannot effectively provide security throughout the state.
- The ISI does not control territory with enough authority, especially because the land is also claimed by an invader.
- Not all Sunni groups are cooperating under the rubric of the state.
- Major Sunni political leaders are not involved in the state.
- The ISI does not have a bureaucratic capability for administering services.
- The ISI does not have appropriate economic resources.
- The ISI's leadership is not appropriately qualified.
- The ISI will lead to the disintegration of Iraq.

Tamimi answers critics who argue the ISI is not large enough and cannot dominate the territory it does claim by comparing the ISI with the Prophet Muhammad's establishment of an Islamic state in Medina. According to Tamimi, the ISI controls more territory with more authority than Muhammad did when his forces fled Mecca to Medina in the 7th Century. He also notes that numerous religious and tribal factions—including Jews—operated in Medina at the time. This is critical because Anbar province— the heart of the ISI—houses Iraqi government troops, U.S. forces, and a vast array of nationalist, tribal, and jihadi insurgents that all vie for control. By relating the ISI to the Prophet's Islamic governance in Medina, Tamimi forces those who question the ISI's legitimacy to also question the legitimacy of the Prophet's Islamic governance—a consequence Tamimi believes very few Muslims could accept.

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[5] Tamimi. P.7

Tamimi bluntly rejects the idea that the ISI is illegitimate because it does not have a bureaucratic capability. Again leaning on Islamic history, he argues that:

> *…there is no known evidence of the existence of government instruments and facilities following the model of modern states… This is not a denial of the role of those tools and the effectiveness of those facilities that organize the work of the state and contribute to the completion of its work, but our warning is about applying the description of modern states, in terms of structure and administration as a condition for the establishment of a desired Islamic state.*[6]

Tamimi argues that the trappings of bureaucracy are meaningless and often hypocritical; he points to the Iraqi government's bureaucratic failures as an example. Tamimi wants to lower expectations placed on the ISI because he does not want it to be seen as failing to meet them. Jihadi leaders have long positioned themselves as truth-tellers in contrast with Western and Arab "apostates" who over-promise to their people and under-deliver.

Despite Tamimi's insistence that the ISI does not need to provide governmental services to be legitimate, he understands the political importance of such programs to the Iraqi government. Tamimi seems to think of the ISI and the Iraqi government as material incarnations of ideological values. Whereas the Iraqi government is a proxy for the modern democratic ideals of the West, the ISI is a proxy for the jihadi ideals of al-Qa'ida and its allies.

This formula explains why many jihadi scholars are concerned about the ISI. Although the organization gives material teeth to their conceptions of righteousness, the ISI's failure would discredit the ideas that have sustained the jihadi movement since the 1980s. Of course, the inverse also holds. The U.S. positioned the Iraqi government as the embodiment of democracy in the Mideast in order to demonstrate the viability of democracy throughout the region. Instead of a standard bearer, the Iraqi government's failures now weigh heavily on the spread of the democratic ideas upon which it was founded.

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[6] Tamimi. P. 66

It is not required that every Muslim knows the leader by his name and in person, except those who legislate, but what concerns the majority (of scholars) is that the leadership is given to those who deserve it.

-Abd al Qadir bin Abd al-Aziz as quoted by Uthman Bin Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi (Informing the People)-[7]

THE EMIR

Tamimi strives to bolster the legitimacy of Abu Umar al-Baghdadi, who was a relative unknown in jihadi circles before being selected as the ISI's Emir. To do so, Tamimi describes in detail the points of agreement and disagreement among scholars on the methods for selecting an Emir. Ultimately, Tamimi describes three religiously acceptable methods[8]:

1. Receiving the consensus of "authoritative Muslims";
2. Being designated as the successor by the current Emir;
3. In the absence of consensus or an established Emir, attaining supremacy through force.

Tamimi implies that the first method was used to select al-Baghdadi as the ISI's Emir only after consultations with sixty percent of Sunni tribes in Western Iraq and the seven component groups of the ISI. Without providing any evidence, Tamimi also claims that many well-known Sunnis in the Iraqi government privately support the ISI and al-Baghdadi.

According to Tamimi, choosing an Emir is theologically required because Islam cannot be practiced fully without an Emir to enforce Shariah and organize society. Tamimi asserts that critical elements of the faith, paying Zakat, the Hajj, and the appropriate practice of jihad, "cannot be correctly performed unless within a group and in obedience to the opinion of an Imam in an organized way…There is no jihad without an Emir, a leader and Imam."[9]

This emphasis on the Emir diverges dramatically from the writings of earlier jihadist thinkers, notably Abdallah Azzam, who aimed to empower individuals to ignore the teaching of religious, political, and familial figures in order to do

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[7] Tamimi. P.76
[8] Tamimi. P.12
[9] Tamimi. P. 39

jihad on their own volition.[10] Tamimi not only advocates the importance of hierarchy, he wants to institutionalize it. The difference is a function of intent: Azzam was focused on breaking down the existing social and political structure, Tamimi is trying to build a new one.

Tamimi's focus on Emir selection provides useful clues about the ISI's internal functioning. For example, al-Baghdadi may have already selected a successor. If he has not, or that successor is killed or captured contemporaneously with al-Baghdadi, the ISI will likely do due diligence with tribal and jihadist groups before appointing a new Emir. If U.S. or Iraqi forces attempt a decapitation strike at al-Baghdadi, the operation should be coupled with operations to disrupt and confuse communications between remaining elements of the ISI. Forcing al-Baghdadi's successor to use the third method to come to power—supremacy through force—advances U.S. interests.

(Because of) new technical means to apply force and demonstrate it, the discussion of the traditional concept of control becomes a matter of differing reality. Modern wars have shown that the classic way of conducting battles, through open fronts and regular lines, does not reflect the reality of the ongoing battle…

When we look at these new developments, we find that there is a clear question concerning the concept of control of the land! Who determines that a given government controls its land or not?

Uthman bin Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi (Informing the People)[11]

GLOBALIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

Tamimi understands that the ISI will fall woefully short if it is measured against traditional Western standards of statehood. Thus, Tamimi argues that the classic standards no longer apply and are often ignored in reality. He asserts that modern technology effectively limits the sovereignty of numerous internationally recognized "states." The implication is that the ISI meets the minimum standard necessary to be considered legitimate.

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[10] Azzam, Abdallah. *Defence of Muslim Lands* Chapter 3. http://www.religioscope.com/info/doc/jihad/azzam_defence_1_table.htm   Abdallah Azzam is credited as the most important recruiter and organizer of mujahidin traveling to Afghanistan to fight the Soviet Union. He founded the famous Mujahidin Services Bureau, which ultimately became Al-Qa'ida.
[11] Tamimi. P. 58

As an example of "states" without real sovereignty, Tamimi points to Israel's neighbors that cannot protect their own airspace from Israeli planes, the Iraqi government that does not control all of its "territory", and all countries that depend on—and are exposed by—foreign satellite coverage.

According to Tamimi, these examples demonstrate that sovereignty is much more fungible than in the past. For him, a state's perimeter extends only so far as men stand with guns to defend it. Tamimi's vision of statehood suggests he conceives of the ISI as a governmental amoeba, constantly shifting its zone of control across Iraq's western expanses as ISI forces redeploy. It never controls all of the territory it has claimed, but demands that all residents of that territory swear allegiance to the ISI's Emir.

Tamimi's understanding of the ISI's fundamental governmental responsibilities reflects this dynamism. He argues the new "state" will improve citizens "conditions in both their religious and worldly affairs. Improving their conditions is less important than the condition of their religion."[12] Tamimi lists several discrete responsibilities of the ISI, most of which involve establishing judicial processes and resolving disputes among tribal groups; another is collecting Zakat (alms). The only material services the ISI owes to its citizens is to free prisoners and support the families of those considered martyrs.

The ISI has failed to achieve these goals as often as it has succeeded. The ISI has managed major prison breaks, and it has implemented a version of Shariah courts in areas it controls temporarily.[13] Presumably the ISI has been able to extract Zakat from some citizens in Anbar. But the ISI has not established itself as the legitimate judicial body in Anbar; even its ideological ally Ansar al-Sunnah challenges its ability to impartially adjudicate disputes.[14] Likewise, several Anbar tribes have coalesced with the sole goal of fighting the Al-Qa'ida backed ISI. Putting aside the question of sovereignty, this coalition demonstrates that the ISI is not in a position to adjudicate all tribal disputes as Tamimi envisioned. [15]

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[12] Tamimi. P41

[13] Fadel, Leila. "Prison Break Frees 140 in Iraq" *Sacramento Bee*. March 7, 2007

[14] Ansar al-Sunnah letter to Al-Qa'ida. http://www.ctc.usma.edu/AAS_AQI.asp

[15] Semple, Kirk. "Iraq Bombers Blow Up 2 Children Used as Decoys" *The New York Times*. March 21, 2007

The enemy is so hateful and arrogant that they stipulated in the infidel Iraqi constitution that it is illegal to establish an Islamic state in Iraq. Democracy allows everything except Islam.

-Uthman Bin Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi (Informing the People)[16]

IRAQ AND BEYOND

In a clear demonstration that the ISI is designed to serve al-Qa'ida's global goals rather than the parochial needs of Iraqis, Tamimi distinguishes between the political purpose of establishing an Islamic state and describing the obligations of the state to its citizens. Tamimi explains that the political purpose of establishing the ISI was to demonstrate the Iraqi government's weakness and begin to fill the political vacuum in Western Iraq. He believes that the ISI will unite jihadi factions in and outside of Iraq by giving them a firm institution to rally around.

Al-Qa'ida has long existed as both a formal organization and an informal social movement bound by ideology. Tamimi argues that the ISI has these dual elements as well. Inside Iraq, the ISI is a flexible amoeba-like state institution that implements shariah and fights the Iraqi government. Outside Iraq, the ISI provides al-Qa'ida sympathizers a firmer intellectual structure through which to imagine Islamic governance and the reestablishment of the Caliphate.

The ISI's ability to change the way Muslims think outside Iraq is linked to the ISI's practical success on the ground inside Iraq, but the relationship is not absolute. Even the ISI's abject defeat on the ground—if it is seen to be the result of overwhelming American power—might actually increase the ISI's popularity regionally. If ISI proponents like Tamimi effectively shape the intellectual lens Muslims use to understand the ISI's successes and failures, the ISI adventure will be a strategic success for al-Qa'ida regardless of the ISI's performance on the ground in Iraq.

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[16] Tamimi. P. 49

Bush confirmed three times that the presence of America in Iraq is for the purpose of preventing the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate that would build a strong state to threaten the interests of the West and America in its territories…He told the truth although he is a liar!

-Uthman Bin Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi (Informing the People)[17]

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to limit the ISI's long-term effectiveness, the United States should carefully attack its material and human infrastructure inside Iraq and the intellectual infrastructure that Tamimi is trying to erect in *Informing the People.* The U.S. should avoid publicly criticizing the ISI itself. Local actors—Iraqi, Afghani, Jordanian, etc—must take the lead publicly.

Tamimi's ideas for Fourth Generation Governance build on jihadi studies of Fourth Generation Warfare, especially Abu Bakr Naji's *The Management of Savagery.[18]* Although Tamimi's ideas are somewhat radical, the *ulema* he aims to reach is familiar with this kind of thinking.

American planners should not mistake the ISI's material weakness with strategic irrelevance. The primary purpose of creating the ISI was to change the way Iraqis and Muslims generally think about the Iraqi insurgency and jihad. The ISI has failed to garner mass support thus far, but that weakness may not last. Senior Al-Qa'ida commander Abu Yahya al-Libi's vocal support for the ISI indicates that it does have powerful allies.[19] To combat the ISI, the U.S. should:

Challenge Tamimi's intellectual framework for the ISI.

- Tamimi's vision of an ascetic state is unlikely to appeal to Iraqis hungry for running water and electricity, or to jihadi scholars' sense of a grand Islamic reawakening. The ISI needs support from the *ulema* to garner widespread legitimacy; the U.S. and its allies should publicize comments questioning the ISI's legitimacy. Rather than developing a position, the U.S. should quietly stoke the internal jihadi debate.

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[17] Tamimi. P. 49

[18] Naji, Abu Bakr. *The Management of Savagery.* http://www.ctc.usma.edu/naji.asp Jihadi commentaries on the ISI tend to draw heavily on Naji to analyze the ISI. See: Mukhaddab, Yaman. "*Al-Qa'ida Between a Past Stage and One Announced by Al-Muhajir"* November 14, 2006. *Promise Keeperse website.* 3/21/07

[19] Al- Libi, Abu Yahya. "Iraq: Between Victory and Conspiratorial Intrigue" Video released on March 21, 2007. *Albayanat website.*

- Tamimi's comparison of the ISI to the Prophet's politicking in Medina may be seen as self-righteous by some scholars. The ISI's al-Baghdadi has largely eschewed Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's controversial self-aggrandizement; demonstrating that al-Baghdadi and the ISI want to inflate their historical importance and role in Al-Qa'ida may generate unwelcome memories of Zarqawi for some jihadi scholars.

- Tamimi's understanding of globalization's impact on state sovereignty is creative and provocative, but it will mean little to struggling Iraqis in Anbar. Absolute control of territory may not determine state legitimacy as it used to, but the ability and willingness to provide basic services to citizens should. Portraying the ISI as a tool of al-Qa'ida's grand ambitions rather than a means to support Iraqis will weaken its appeal.

Confuse the ISI's leadership picture.

- Identify possible successors to al-Baghdadi. The ISI's Emir is likely grooming successors in case of his death or capture. Possible successors will likely try to bolster their profile outside of Iraq in order to avoid the questions that have plagued an unknown like al-Baghdadi.

- Publicize the debate over al-Baghdadi's suitability to lead the ISI. Compare his experience to that of other major jihadi leaders in Iraq. Asking good questions can be powerful. For example, is al-Baghdadi really in charge of the ISI or does he simply do the bidding of Al-Qa'ida in Iraq's Emir, Abu Hamzah al-Muhajir?

- Integrate decapitation strikes into larger strategic campaigns. Efforts to remove the ISI's leadership should initiate larger efforts to complicate subsequent communication within jihadi groups in Iraq.

Beat the ISI on the ground.

- Tamimi's frank acknowledgment that the ISI will not provide services to Iraqis is a political weakness. It virtually guarantees that a large cadre of secular and tribal Sunnis will remain opposed to the ISI. The Iraqi government should focus on bolstering these communities economically and militarily.

- American and Iraqi forces must not allow jihadis like Tamimi to position themselves as more honest than the Iraqi government. That means identifying jihadi lies, but it also means making honest and sober assessments of Iraqi and American progress, even if it is limited. Exaggerated claims of success and rosy prognoses empower jihadis who have little to offer Iraqis other than being a counterpoint to a central government seen as unreliable.