ISIL, Syria and the Explosive Middle East

Handouts

John Hickok
jhickok67@gmail.com
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Acronyms and Definitions

**Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**: present leader of ISIL

**Abu Musab al-Zarqawi**: Original leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and Islamic State (IS). Killed by military action in Iraq in 2006.

**AQ**: Al-Qaeda

**AQI**: Al-Qaeda in Iraq

**AQAP**: Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

**Aynan al-Zawahiri**: present leader of Al-Qaeda headquarters. Was deputy to Osama Bin Laden

**Bath Party/Baathists**: A socialist political party founded in Syria that became the ruling party of Iraq under Sadam Hussein in 1966

**Caliphate**: An area containing an Islamic steward known as a caliph – a person considered a religious successor to Muhammad

**Daesh**: A derogatory Arabic language acronym for ISIL

**Hadith**: various reports describing the words, actions, or habits of Muhammad. Different branches/sects of Islam refer to different collections of hadith.

**Haider al-Abadi**: Prime minister of Iraq from 2014 to present. Considered a moderate Shia following the controversial term of Nouri al-Maliki

**Imam Mahdi**: The ultimate Islamic savior of humankind who is to emerge with Jesus Christ in order to fulfill their mission of bringing peace to the world.

**IDF**: Iraq Defense Force

**IS**: Islamic State

**ISI**: Islamic State in Iraq

**ISIL**: Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant

**ISIS**: Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

**Levant**: Eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea

**Mahdi Army**: Originally an Iraq Shia armed group created by the Iraqi Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr in June 2003, disbanded in 2008, but rose again.

**Muqtada al-Sadr**: Leader of a Shia political party in Iraq, and one of the most influential religious and popular figures in Iraq. Leader of Mahdi Army.

**Nouri al-Maliki**: Prime minister of Iraq from 2006 to 2014. Shiite. Maliki’s actions led to Kurdish nationalism, Sunni insurgence and rise of ISIS

**Osama Bin Laden**: Leader of Al-Qaeda until his death in May 2011

**Paul Bremmer**: Led the occupational authority of Iraq after the invasion by the U.S., from May 11, 2003 until June 28, 2004

**Quran**: Central religious text of Islam, which Muslims believe to be a revelation from God through Muhammad

**Sadam Hussein**: Dictator and fifth President of Iraq, serving from 16 July 1979 until 9 April 2003

**Safavid dynasty**: 1501-1722 controlled all modern Iran and established center of Shia Islam

**Sayyed Qutb**: Egyptian leading member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s and 1960s; plotted assassination of Gamal Abdel Nasser

**Sunni**: Denomination of Islam which holds that the Islamic prophet Muhammad’s first Caliph was father-in-law Abu Bakr

**Shia**: Denomination of Islam which holds that Muhammad designated Ali ibn Abi Talib as his successor (Caliph)

**Yazidi**: An ethnically Kurdish religious community, indigenous to northern Iraq; a distinct and independent community with its own unique culture.
This is a Story About

- Empires torn apart
- Dictators
- Repression
- Brutality
- Economies in crisis
- Oil, oil, oil
- Starvation
- Frustration
- Best Intentions
- Religious Civil Wars
- Middle East Upheavals
- Religious perversion gone very bad
Flash Points Around the Middle East

- Iran – Supporting Shia interests in Gaza, Iraq, Syria, Yemen. Major threat to Saudi Arabia. U.S. backed out of Iran nuclear deal, and invoking major sanctions. Other signatories not aligned with U.S. back-out, could be sanctioned
- Iraq – Mosul freed. Who will pay to rebuild? Will it become the center of an insurgency? Sunni vs Shia continues plus Kurds? Iraq government in tatters with battle between Shia majority and Sunni minority
- Turkey – Politics a mess. What is Erdogan up to? Wants to remain in NATO but courts Putin. Will he live with Kurds in northern Syria?
- Lebanon – Multi ethnic hub of international activity, historical cross roads of the Middle East. Supporting over 675,000 Syrian refugees. Allows Hezbollah presence in the Shia dominated south.
- Jordan – Major harbinger of Syrian and Iraq refugees. Having their own economic problems.
- Israel – Increased risk of new attacks from Gaza, West Bank, Lebanon, Syria. U.S. move of embassy to Jerusalem further angered Palestinians. No one or two state peace solutions in hand. Iranians in Syria considered a major threat of long range rockets and rocket supply to Hezbollah forces in southern Lebanon. Israel air strikes increasing in Syria with recent attack blamed to accidental Syrian shoot down of Russian surveillance and EW aircraft.
- Palestine – Continued Israeli expansion/settlements in West Bank. Continued sporadic battles at Gaza border.
- Gaza – Extremely bad economy fueling attacks. Another war with possible Hezbollah support from Lebanon?
- Egypt – Living under military control. Supporting Israel to shut weapon traffic through Sinai peninsula to Gaza (Palestinians)
- Saudi Arabia – Major U.S. weapons buyer and ally. Saudi (Sunni) vs Iran (Shia). Saudi vs Yemen. Iran supporting Yemen. New DPM (Mohammed Bin Salman) modernizing country – women allowed to drive. But Post reporter, critical of MBS, may have been assassinated by Saudi hit squad
- Yemen – Saudi Arabia still at war with Houthi (Shia’s). Original U.S. presence was against AQAP, which still active. U.S. supplying weapons, tanking and intel to Saudi’s. Humanitarian disaster growing.
- Pakistan – Still stronghold for multiple terrorist organizations and bolt hole for Afghan terrorists on Eastern border.
- East Africa – AQ resurgence in areas of Sudan and Somalia.
- West Africa, Niger/Mali – Four U.S. Army special forces troops killed in Niger by terrorists. Widening expanse of war against terrorism without authorization?
Note Taking Area