An Islamic State (IS) propaganda video (ca. March 2015) on YouTube reputedly shows fighters studying the Quran at an undisclosed location in Iraq. The fighters are said to be on holiday from a prolonged period of territorial conquest, which included attacks on Yazidis, Kurds, and diverse denominations of Iraqi Christians. The video was subsequently removed. (Screenshot from IS YouTube video)

# The Mission Command of Islamic State

## Deconstructing the Myth of Lone Wolves in the Deep Fight

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*And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the [unbe-lievers] wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush.*

—At-Tawbah 5

Some in the Western world apparently have conclud-ed that individual attackers who claim allegiance to the Islamic State (IS)—but lack formal orders from its leaders—are lone wolves or entirely self-radical-ized terrorists. However, using Army doctrinal principles to conduct a careful analysis reveals that the theocratic ideology of IS influences individual attackers to consider themselves directed by IS despite their not being formally enrolled members of that militant organization. This is because IS uses a simplified but highly effective form of ideological mission command that guides such followers around the world to plan attacks that have strategic impli-cations. Individual attackers who target civilians they like-ly regard as uncommitted enemy forces represent a *deep* fight that has become, in effect, IS's decisive operation.[1]

Downplaying the significance of such attacks for lack of the attacker's direct physical or command links to the organization is counterproductive to the effort to limit its recruiting power. By examining IS literature in the context of its apocalyptic grand strategy, we may ob-serve how IS, sometimes called Daesh, links operational art to strategic objectives through an inherent mission command philosophy.[2] More important, these findings contribute to seeking a potential solution to the most pressing inquiry: How does one defeat an idea?

## Mission Command and Islamic State

Mission command is a longstanding philosophy that Army doctrine began to emphasize with the publica-tion of Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command,* in 2012. This ADP was partially a response to the increased uncertainty of operating environments and the growth of transnational terror groups that benefit from a highly adaptive and decentralized com-position.[3] In the Army, mission command empowers subordinate leaders by providing a framework for the disciplined conduct of operations. More specifically, ADP 6-0 describes how commanders, supported by their staffs, "combine the art of command and science of control to understand situations, make decisions, direct action, and accomplish missions."[4]

Conversely, IS's application of a mission command philosophy relies on a shared understanding of his-tory, theocratic jurisprudence, and fatwas issued by historical leaders such as Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855), Ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328), Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), and Abdullah Yusuf Azzam (1941–1989), many of which justify the targeting of civilians, includ-ing Muslims, in war.[5] While living under the rule of Islamized Mongols, Ibn Taymiyyah diverged from pop-ular Islamist thought and issued several fatwas legitimiz-ing the killing of Muslim tyrants. Certain Salafists used these fatwas to validate the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981, and they continue to cite them today.[6] As IS's leaders are empowering such ideas, individual terrorists, sometimes erroneously labeled in the West as "lone wolves" or "self-radicalized," have taken initiative to operationalize their ideology.

These terms have gained such traction that politi-cians have been known to structure their policy pro-posals around tackling the "issue of self-radicalization" and "lone-wolf attacks."[7] Such proposals operate under the false assumption that these problems are separate from, and should therefore be treated differently than, attacks on U.S. soil that are formally directed by a distant commander, even though they originate from the same source: ideology. While military operations and domestic security are certainly separate affairs both politically and legally, the ideological nature of the terrorist threat to the homeland and our forces abroad is not unique to either environment. A jihadist who takes initiative based on his understanding of the commander's intent is no less dangerous and his actions are no less signifi-cant than one who receives a verbal or written order. The philosophy of mission command is driven by such initiative and carried out within the framework of a

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shared understanding. This paper addresses these misnomers further while examining the principles.

Although IS's approach to mission command demonstrates how its followers understand situations and accomplish missions, this philosophy would be of little value were IS not able to synchronize random attacks in its deep fight with the group's strategic objectives. Before we explore the principles, we must first examine the connection between the operational art of ideologically motivated terrorist attacks and the strategic ideology of IS.

## Operational Art and the Strategic Goals of Islamic State

The Army describes operational art as "the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose."[8] Attacks conducted as guided by IS's ideology are examples of such tactical actions. A fundamental strategic objective identified in Salafi-jihadi ideology (the ideology of IS and al-Qaida) is the initiation of the prophesied Muslim Armageddon. This end-time event is supposedly triggered through a prolonged war of attrition against the West, its ideas, and its systems of governance, culminating in its destruction. All goals are supplementary to realizing the foretold defeat of a large "crusader" army in Dabiq (in northern Syria), which supposedly leads to the fall of Rome and Constantinople.[9]

This prophecy is so central to IS's ideology that its first English language periodical is named after the city of Dabiq. The name of its other online magazine, *Rumiyah*, refers to the inevitable fall of Rome and the Vatican. Every issue of *Dabiq* magazine begins with a quote from its modern intellectual pioneer, former leader of al-Qaida in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi: "The spark has been



*Rumiyah* is the current formal online magazine of the Islamic State (IS). It first appeared as a replacement for *Dabiq*, the former official online magazine of IS, in September 2016, probably due to the imminent loss of the town of Dabiq to Turkish-led forces. The town of Dabiq is the supposed site of the final battle between Islamic and non-Islamic forces at the end of the world according to Islamic prophecy and tradition. Similarly, *Rumiyah* is an allusion to the prophesied destruction of Christianity symbolized by the conquest and destruction of Rome. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia)

lit here in Iraq, and it will continue to intensify—by Allah's permission—until it burns the crusader army in Dabiq."[10] Through the onset of widespread disorder, IS hopes to make populations more sympathetic to the absolute control of sharia (Islamic religious law), and ultimately susceptible to the imposition of a global caliphate once the West is drawn to its demise in Dabiq.[11]

Palestinian jihadist Abdullah Yusuf Azzam's seventy-five page fatwa, *In Defense of Muslim Lands*, declared offensive jihad the individual responsibility of every Muslim in the absence of a caliphate.[12] Now, with the existence of IS, that fatwa enjoys greater legitimacy in its followers' thinking as the leaders endorse global jihad in the form of attacks carried out in the deep fight.

Pakistani Brig. S. K. Malik draws similar conclusions in his popular 1979 book, *The Quranic Concept of War*. In it, he argues it is incumbent upon all Muslims to fight for God's sovereignty on earth as long as the heretical nation-state system remains in place and sharia is not universal law.[13]

In the twenty-first century, radicals focus increasingly on a loose interpretation of Islamic laws related to killing. Specifically, they highlight those laws that hold individual citizens of democratic states responsible for the "supposed crimes of their government" because they have given the consent to govern through the democratic process.[14] This outlook reinforces the Salafi belief that there can be only one state and one governing system (a global IS under sharia), thereby branding the authority of any other state illegitimate. It is such ideas that lead some Islamists to regard carrying out ideologically influenced attacks as an obligation in the deep fight against secular governments and their citizens, thus functioning as the link between tactical actions and strategic objectives. Their goal is to lure the West into a close fight by way of harassing

A screenshot from a surveillance camera shows Zale Thompson, labeled a self-radicalized Muslim, raising a hatchet 23 October 2014 moments before striking a group of four uniformed New York Police Department (NYPD) officers in Jamaica, Queens, New York. Thompson was shot dead by two of the officers. (Photo courtesy of NYPD)

attacks in the deep fight, thereby enabling their apocalyptic prophecy to become manifest.

While ideologically motivated attacks may not pose an existential threat to the degree of, say, North Korea, they still influence Western policy and should therefore not be treated with misguided euphemisms such as "lone wolf" in an attempt to downplay the ideology's reach.[15] As early as 2014, Marine Corps Gen. James Mattis, now serving as U.S. secretary of defense, testified that IS had "grown into a strategic threat" that would use its territory as a "launching pad for transnational attacks." He went on to caution against patronizing or dismissing IS's threats, even if its followers "[could] not yet carry out their grandiose pronouncements."[16] Nevertheless, how they apply an organic form of mission command is critical to how they might propagate their operational art in pursuit of their strategic goals.

## The Principles of Islamic State's Mission Command

The mission command philosophy offers six principles, outlined in Army doctrine. Each of these is inherent within IS's ideology. We will focus on the first five principles and explain why the sixth, *mission orders*, does not appear to be demonstrated.

**Build cohesive teams through mutual trust.** While trust must be nurtured consistently in a traditional Army, IS establishes this connection through allegiance to its religious ideology. Army doctrine explains there are "few shortcuts to gaining the trust of others," and this trust is "gained or lost through everyday actions."[17] Discussing the key attributes of mission command in his 2012 white paper, Gen. Martin Dempsey describes trust as "the moral sinew" that binds our joint force together, "enabling the many to act as one" in the application of combat power.[18] He goes on to reiterate the importance of a commander's role in developing this trust by integrating mission command into "operational art, planning, and

execution," a complex process that requires a breadth and depth of knowledge to be effective.

In the case of IS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's alleged lineage from the *Quraysh* tribe, of which the prophet Muhammad was a member, is aimed at obligating religious allegiance among the faithful. Claiming a blood connection to Muhammad is intended to promote mutual trust and common identity among IS's members, regardless of cultural, ethnic, economic, or geographic diversity factors, by exploiting the narrative of a shared legacy consisting of centuries of support for Islamic legal declarations.[19] As a result, there is no need for the command to spend time building teams outside the central leadership organization because terrorists build teams regardless of their directed or undirected status.

Terrorist attacks are global communication devices that function as vehicles for the attackers' ideology. Communicated through modern media systems, the message reaches millions of people instantaneously and draws sympathetic individuals into radicalization.[20] The more shocking the attack, the larger the audience and the further the reach of the message. Inevitably, more recruits become entangled in IS's ideological dragnet.

IS projects to its audience the impression that social inclusion, loyalty, and brotherhood personify its movement. By connecting its followers to an ancient order of allegedly pious warriors defending a golden age of religious purity, members of IS become fused in allegiance to a mutual code of conduct that supersedes all worldly relationships. Once the ideology takes hold of followers' thinking, small cohesive teams are self-actuating, operating autonomously based on a shared understanding of their duty.

**Create shared understanding.** One of the greatest challenges for commanders and staffs "is creating a shared understanding of their operational environment, their operation's purpose, its problems, and approaches to solving them."[21] While standing armies rely on adaptable mission orders and evolving policies to establish a shared understanding of priorities, under Salafi doctrine these factors do not change.

It is easy to imagine why Islamists pursue jihad with such vigor. Narratives of the battles in which Muhammad participated—some of the most sacred references in Salafism—read like action films. Oxford historian Martin Lings' depiction of the Battles of Hunayn and Uhud and the Siege of Ta'if are examples. Envisioning Muhammad's washing the enemy's blood off his face with water that had pooled in his companion's shield presents powerful imagery to young jihadists.[22] It is no wonder the followers of an ideology that demands emulation of the Prophet would be so eager to confront pagans in glorious battle.

Looking beyond historical battles, IS's shared understanding is further supported by centuries of theocratic jurisprudence and political violence.[23] In the tenth and eleventh centuries, Ibn Hanbal's disciples advocated killing those who blasphemed Islam. Caliph al-Qadir supported this stance and enforced it as law.[24] More than a century later, the Hanbali scholar Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (deceased in 1166) argued that heretics should be offered three chances to repent and convert before they would be condemned to death.[25] It is also worth noting that, in the turbulent centuries of early Islam, many caliphs were killed by sectarian insurgencies claiming the then current body of authority was impure.[26]

Today, the argument is sometimes made that in the absence of a Muslim empire capable of imposing such laws on mankind, modern day Islamist extremists who subscribe to such medieval interpretations of Islamic law view attacks against civilian targets as the most swift form of "justice."[27]

Conventional armies require constant framing and reframing of the environment to focus efforts, dictate training priorities, and work toward a common goal. In contrast, the ideology of Salafism produces a transnational and cross-cultural unity of effort guided by the commander's intent because it provides a shared understanding of three elements:

- The ideology defines the enemy (*kafir* [unbelievers], *taghut* [tyrants], and classic liberalism).[28]
- The ideology defines the operating environment (*dar-al-harb* [house of war or unbelief] and *dar-al-islam* [house of Islam]).[29]
- The ideology defines the desired end state (a global caliphate brought on by Armageddon).

**Provide a clear commander's intent.** The commander's intent—also known as "the purpose of the operation"—is usually specific to a particular mission for standing armies.[30] The intent of IS's commander is unchanging and pounded into the head of interested jihadists by other IS leaders.[31] It is unmistakably clear to the followers of Salafi-jihadism: fight the unbelievers wherever you find them—show no mercy and strike "terror into their hearts."[32]

Because, for the IS member, there is no higher authority than God and his Prophet, IS pronouncements often reference the numerous battles Muhammad waged against heretics and pagans to justify offensive jihad. Islamist scholars, such as Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, have contorted the concept of defensive jihad to depict any act of terrorism as a defense of Muslim lands. More specific were arguments made by the late Anwar al-Awlaki, who insisted an earthly caliph was not needed to declare offensive jihad if a Muslim was oppressed by unbelievers.[33] Malik expressed similar convictions regarding the spiritual center of gravity in war, suggesting terror is the most effective weapon against Western opponents because it erodes their will to fight.[34]

In the age of globalization, when Western influence is nearly inescapable, what could be considered the first jihad verse in the Quran stands out as particularly relevant: "Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they have been wronged."[35] Drawing the West into a global conflagration through ideologically motivated attacks serves the strategic objectives of IS, and the ideology imparts a divine authority to its pronouncements.

One of a commander's roles outlined in ADP 6-0 is to influence audiences by developing teams "inside and outside their organizations."[36] To IS, there is no outside element. There are only those forces engaged in the deep fight (the fight against what it considers uncommitted enemy forces). Carrying out an attack after declaring loyalty to IS makes the follower as much a member of IS as any guerrilla fighting in Iraq or Syria. Ideologically motivated terrorists prosecute the deep fight while considering themselves embedded behind enemy lines, and they do not require mission-specific intent to carry out operations that promote strategic objectives.[37] This element is as vital to IS's vision as any insurgent fighting in the Middle East—if not more so.

To clarify, we need to think of individual attacks as the vanguard of IS's deep fight, not impulsive actions of wayward rogues, while Middle East guerrillas in conflict with military forces represent the *close* fight.[38] Influencing this deep element to disrupt *uncommitted enemy forces* (in the case of IS, this means all unbelievers)—a function clearly conveyed by IS's ideology—is similar to the commander's responsibilities outlined in Army doctrine.[39]

The clarity of intent is simple so there need not be any contact (physical or even chain of command)

between the organization and its followers for them to pursue operational goals and fulfill strategic intent. This renders the terms lone wolf and self-radicalized inaccurate because such labels imply a detachment or even a disassociation with the group to which jihadists claim allegiance. Profession of the *shahada* (Islamic declaration of faith) and loyalty to al-Baghdadi enter radicals into an ethereal realm where they operate under a shared understanding with clear intent. This is the organization's preferred approach because attacks on civilians in the deep fight attract greater attention and more recruits than military engagements.[40]

**Exercise disciplined initiative.** The U.S. Army defines initiative as taking appropriate action in the absence of orders. In this context, the entirety of IS's deep fight relies on initiative within the commander's intent. Because ideologically guided terrorists receive no formal orders, they operate based on a shared understanding that failing to take initiative once jihad has become an individual obligation may condemn their souls to hell.[41] Islamists in the deep fight are impelled to act by this hallmark of their ideology, and it is reinforced by regular calls to action.

To the jihadist, discipline when taking initiative is only relevant inasmuch as it allows an attack to come to fruition. Modern armies have myriad considerations when navigating their planning methodologies, but these factors are not inputs into the metrics that gauge degrees of success or failure in operations by terrorists. Increased simplicity and a higher threshold for operational risk present greater opportunity for the application of initiative.

**Accept prudent risk.** Prudence may be a factor in the planning phase of terrorist attacks but survivability during execution is not. Historically speaking, an Islamic martyr did not often take his own life. Rather, he opted to "place himself in a situation in which he would most likely be killed and thereby did not violate the Quranic prohibition on suicide."[42]

Most jihadists operate under the assumption they will die during their attack, and for good reason. Quranic verses glorifying death and advising against clinging "heavily to earth" give license to the belief that falling in battle affords greater comfort in the "hereafter."[43] Individual radicals do not need IS commanders to give them orders to assume risk because their ideology demands it. Risk becomes somewhat of a marginal planning factor when the acceptable loss

An Islamic State (IS) instructional video titled "Explanation of How to Slaughter Disbelievers" features a balaclava-wearing terrorist in a kitchen explaining how to make bombs. The video was subsequently removed. (Screenshot from IS YouTube video)

rate is one hundred percent. This expands opportunity and operational payoff exponentially, considering the "willingness to accept prudent risk is often the key to exposing enemy weaknesses."[44]

The ideology of Salafi-jihadism (a combination of religious verses, historical references, and fatwas) is, in effect, a doctrine of mission command that encourages and enables decisive operations in the deep fight. Attacks are carried out not by anomalous lone wolves but, for the most part, by a centralized wolf pack with a collective mind. The only principle lacking is mission orders, because IS doctrine *is* the mission order.

## The Mission Command Systems

The economy of IS's mission command systems plays a significant role in achieving its objectives without the need for conventional mission orders. Militaries must negotiate a delicate process of budgeting and long-term planning to secure and maintain the resources necessary for proper maintenance of the mission command systems.[45] These systems are provided through the initiative of the individual jihadist or cell at no cost—monetary or otherwise—to IS's command group.

IS recruits personnel through autonomous and ideologically homogenous networks that exploit the benefits of multipurpose public information systems, such as social media. In this sense, multipurpose means IS can operationalize ideology through freely accessible public information systems that not only supply it with personnel but also help it maintain networks and distribute processes and procedures. Individual cells become responsible for resourcing facilities and equipment at their level, removing the burden of command from IS. Moreover, this allows it to highlight selectively the most effective operations, for which the leaders take credit. By making the deep fight essentially the decisive operation, the return on investment is profound, as IS may pursue its strategic objectives while assuming little risk and expending minimal resources.

As demonstrated in recent terrorist attacks in the United States, deep Islamists operate independently,

without material support from IS's leaders. They have no mission orders, yet their operations reflect IS's mission command. They only need a shared understanding that allows them to take disciplined initiative within the commander's intent based on their own assessment of risks; all these mission command elements are provided by their religious ideology.[46]

## Changing the Paradigm

We need to refine the public discussion on IS. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, the establishment of a caliphate makes bolder the distinction between the realms of Islam and unbelievers, thus further obligating individual jihad in defense of God's lands—particularly those lands occupied by unbelievers. In this context, the term "occupied" is more inclusive than conventional wisdom assumes. IS's followers believe the world belongs to Allah; therefore, it is not only Muslim nations with foreign troops on their soil that are considered occupied and in need of liberation but also the entire world.[47] Ibn Taymiyyah wrote that all humans were commanded by God to abandon disbelief, while Sayyid Qutb reinforced the obligation to emancipate all of humanity from godlessness through preaching or jihad.[48]

No matter how much their numbers dwindle, Salafi-jihadists will continue operations, at least until they believe their prophecies are disproven. Their ideology insists that the fiercer the battle becomes, the nearer they are to "the threshold of the promised victory, aided by the Mahdi and Jesus."[49] These beliefs have precedent. During the Battle of Badr, though vastly outnumbered by his Quraysh enemies, Muhammad was ultimately victorious.[50] One could argue that IS's true believers feel confident when surrounded by "crusader" armies.

The battle against IS is one of powerful ideas. Hoover Institution fellow and Israeli intelligence veteran Shmuel Bar articulates this succinctly:

> This war of ideas is a religious war. Whether or not the West sees it as such, it has been so defined by the adversary. … Islamist terrorism derives legitimacy and justification from Islamic mores and legal thought, and any attempt to deal with it divorced from its intellectual, cultural, religious, and legal fountainhead will be in vain.[51]

The tendency to try to validate terrorists' credentials by linking them to human figures in the Middle East through phone calls or e-mails after an incident reflects a poor understanding of their ideological inspiration. Even more puzzling is the relief presumably associated with failing to discover such connections, as if the implications of the attack are somehow lessened since no direct contacts exist.

Take, for instance, the Orlando and San Bernardino attacks. Press briefings and newspapers flooded quickly with assurances that there was no indication IS "trained or instructed" the shooters, despite their having pledged allegiance to the group and taken action in accordance with its ideology.[52] These attacks show that persons with no formal ties to foreign terror groups are taking initiative to realize the objectives of foreign terror groups. What, then, would be the benefit of IS leaders' assuming the risk of establishing formal, traceable connections if they can achieve their objectives without doing so? We are not fighting an incoherent and disjointed enemy; seemingly independent attackers are indeed carrying out the mission of IS despite their not having specific orders.

Nonetheless, the desire to connect attacks to physical persons is understandable, as it narrows the ways and means through which the state may pursue solutions. If a singular physical target assumes responsibility for the attack, the elimination of said target creates the temporary illusion of a remedy, but the problem will persist.[53]

Instead of promoting education regarding the differences between jihadists and the vast majority of practicing Muslims, some deny there is any connection between Islamic terrorism and Islam.[54] This is erroneous and counterproductive. Denying Islamic terrorism's clear connections to feudal Islamism breeds the very complacency such denial hopes to discourage by ensuring the ideology of our enemies remains esoteric. Restricting this ideology to the dark corners of public discourse makes it much easier for the public to unproductively channel its anger in the wake of terrorist attacks toward what many perceive as the larger and more visible target: the Muslim religion as a whole. Consequently, failing to expose the intricacies of the Salafi ideology and debate its legitimacies or lack thereof in the public sphere could lead to further dilemmas stemming from misinformation; it will not reduce them.

Followers of IS enjoy a shared conviction that, like their heroes who came before them, modern apostate Muslim leaders will brand them "un-Islamic" and persecute them for their piety. For example, the father of Hanbalism, Imam Ibn Hanbal, was imprisoned for his extremism, as was Ibn Taymiyyah and Sayyid Qutb

many generations later.[55] Consequently, the greater the resistance jihadists face from populist Islam, the more cohesive they may become in their sense of righteousness. This would only reinforce the binary lens through which jihadists view the world, and, in their eyes, further legitimize the indiscriminate targeting of impure nation-states and the citizens who inhabit them.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

A significant conclusion drawn from this study is the need for a disinvestment in the belief that terrorist attacks with unity of effort must be defined as the product of command-directed mission orders. The term lone wolf is a misnomer that should be discarded because it downplays the significance of such attacks. IS is capable of, and intent upon, linking operational art to strategic objectives through an ideological mission command approach that underscores the deep fight. Let us instead simply call them jihadists or Islamist terrorists.

Conversations surrounding the ideological center of gravity of IS sometimes end in a question: How does one defeat an idea? The answer is found in a process of observable repudiation of their prophecies by way of public action.

Ideologically motivated attacks are examples of operational art on a path to achieve IS's strategic goal of drawing the West into a final confrontation where the caliphate supposedly triumphs over a "crusader army" in Dabiq. The destruction of IS in Dabiq may offer a window of opportunity because it will not only nullify IS's close forces but also will discredit the ideology empowering its deep element tasked with disrupting supposed uncommitted enemy forces in the West. Discrediting this ideology will isolate it and draw clear lines of delineation between the global Muslim population and the extremists among them. This will also fix the targeted ideology, making it more vulnerable to attack from information operations and reform initiatives.

Before we can reduce the benefits of IS's shared understanding, we must first develop shared understanding of its deep operations. Testifying before a House Intelligence Committee on the threat of IS in 2014, Mattis prioritized clearly: "The robust and coherent strategy to shatter the enemy's designs must start with our comprehending their irreconcilable world view."[56] Understanding how IS's mission command mobilizes the deep fight by connecting operational art to strategic objectives is a step in the right direction. ∎

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## Notes

**Epigraph.** Quran 9:5. At-Tawba is the ninth chapter of the Quran.

1. Throughout this study, the Islamic State's (IS) ideologically motivated attacks are portrayed as the spearhead of a *deep* fight targeting uncommitted enemy forces, as described in Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], May 2012 [now obsolete; superseded November 2016 by ADRP 3-0, *Operations*]), p. 1-11.

2. IS and Daesh can be used interchangeably.

3. Numerous studies suggest that inculcating a mission command philosophy will help meet the increased demand for "decentralized initiative" from our leaders. The largely unconventional environment in which our forces have operated for the last fifteen years has underscored the need for, and at times deficit of, creative ingenuity within our ranks, per Curtis D. Taylor, *Breaking the Bathsheba Syndrome: Building a Performance Evaluation System that Promotes Mission Command* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, 2015), 3. Additionally, Gen. Martin E. Dempsey reinforces the heightened need for leaders who possess superior "creativity, adaptability, critical thinking, and independent, rapid decision-making," in Dempsey, "Mission Command" (white paper, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 3 April 2012), 6, accessed 18 July 2017, http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/missioncommandwhitepaper2012.pdf.

4. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, May 2012), ii.

5. Shmuel Bar, *Warrant for Terror: Fatwas of Radical Islam and the Duty to Jihad* (Oxford, UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 49–55. Numerous fatwas throughout Islam's history justify the targeting of civilians and other Muslims in war under certain conditions.

6. Mona Hassan, "Modern Interpretations and Misinterpretations of a Medieval Scholar: Apprehending the Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyya," in *Studies in Islamic Philosophy: Ibn Taymiyya and his Times*, eds. S. Nomanul Haq, Yossef Rapoport, and Shahab Ahmed (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 355–56.

7. "Hillary Clinton on Tackling Self-Radicalization: 'We Need to Get to Work,'" National Public Radio transcript, 13 June 2016, accessed 18 July 2017, http://www.npr.org/2016/06/13/481860102/hillary-clinton-on-tackling-self-radicalization-we-need-to-get-to-work. This National Public Radio interview occurred shortly after the Orlando nightclub attack that took forty-nine lives.

8. ADP 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, November 2016), 4.

9. Patrick Sookhdeo, *Unmasking Islamic State: Revealing their Motivation, Theology and End Time Predictions* (McLean, VA: Isaac Publishing, 2015), 46–48.

10. "The Return of the Khilafah," Dabiq 1, Ramadan 1435 (July 2014), 1, accessed 27 July 2017, http://media.clarionproject.org/files/09-14/

isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-issue-1-the-return-of-khilafah.pdf. This quote appears on the first page of every issue.

11. Sookhdeo, *Unmasking Islamic State*, 18–20. IS leaders believes there is no separation between religion and state because shari'ah is the path to a utopian human existence.

12. Sheikh Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, "Defence of the Muslim Lands: The First Obligation after Iman," accessed 28 July 2017, http://johnclamoreaux.org/smu/islam-west/s/azzam-def.pdf.

13. Sebastian Gorka, "The Enemy Threat Doctrine of Al Qaeda: Taking the War to the Heart of our Foe," in *Fighting the Ideological War: Winning Strategies from Communism to Islamism,* eds. Katharine Cornell Gorka and Patrick Sookhdeo (McLean, VA: Isaac Publishing, 2012), 199–200.

14. Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), 41–42.

15. John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 69–80. The argument could be made that all terrorism is strategic to this end. The worst attacks are usually those deemed unimaginable before they occur.

16. Testimony by James Mattis (U.S. Marine Corps, retired, former commander of U.S. Central Command), *Hearings on the Threat Posed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), al-Qa'ida, and other Islamic Extremists*, Before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, 113th Cong. (18 September 2014), accessed 19 July 2017, http://intelligence.house.gov/sites/intelligence.house.gov/files/documents/mattistestimony09182014.pdf.

17. ADP 6-0, *Mission Command*, pp. 2–3.

18. Dempsey, "Mission Command" white paper, 6. Perhaps there is no more apt depiction of how IS's mutual trust drives the commander's intent: by allowing the many to act as one.

19. For more on this, see Jonathan P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Roel Meijer, ed., *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

20. Scott Helfstein, *Edges of Radicalization: Ideas, Individuals and Networks in Violent Extremism* (West Point, NY: The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2012), 21. The four phases of radicalization: awareness, interest, acceptance, and implementation.

21. ADP 6-0, *Mission Command*, 3.

22. Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2006), 193, 317–20.

23. Sookhdeo, *Unmasking Islamic State*, 18–27, 37–60.

24. Patricia Crone, *God's Rule: Six Centuries of Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 302. Caliph al-Qadir (991–1031) often beheaded those blaspheming the Prophet or the early caliphs (*Rashidun*).

25. Ibid., 391.

26. Berkey, *Formation of Islam*, 71–102.

27. The *shahada* states this explicitly, as do many *ahadith* and numerous diatribes in every issue of *Dabiq*. Furthermore, this is expressed liberally in IS propaganda; see "The Kafir's Blood," Rumiyah 1 (2016), 34, accessed 19 July 2017, https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2016/09/rome-magazine-1.pdf.

28. Meijer, *Global Salafism*, xi, xiv. *Kafir*: unbelievers. *Taghut*: tyrants (usually in reference to moderate Muslim leaders).

29. Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (New Delhi: Islamic Publications Ltd., 2002). *Dar-al-harb,* House of War (The U.S. and Western territories), and *dar-al-islam*, the House of Islam. Sayyid Qutb uses these terms frequently in his work.

30. ADP 6-0, *Mission Command*, 3.

31. Judaism is portrayed as an embodiment of the anti-Christ in certain Islamic folklore, such as Ibn Hanbal's "Long Hadith." David J.

Halperin, "The Ibn Sayyad Traditions and the Legend of Al-Dajjal," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 96, no. 2, (April-June 1976): 213–25, accessed 19 July 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/599824; see also Lizzie Dearden, "ISIS Calls on Supporters to Wage 'All-out war' on West during Ramadan with New Terror Attacks," The Independent, 26 May 2017, accessed 28 July 2017, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-ramadan-2017-all-out-war-west-new-terror-attacks-manchester-suicide-bombing-islamic-state-a7758121.html.

32. "The Kafir's Blood," 36.

33. Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism*, 31–39.

34. Gorka, "Enemy Threat Doctrine," 199–200.

35. Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism*, 39–40.

36. ADP 6-0, *Mission Command*, 10.

37. "The Murtadd Brotherhood," *Dabiq* 14 (2016), 17.

38. ADP 3-0, *Operations*, 10. The deep fight involves "efforts to prevent uncommitted enemy forces from being committed in a coherent manner." To IS, every man, woman, and child living outside sharia are uncommitted enemy forces. *Close* operations involve "operations that are within a subordinate commander's area of operations."

39. "The Kafir's Blood," 35; IS, "The Murtadd Brotherhood," 17.

40. "The Murtadd Brotherhood," 17. IS tells its followers abroad to stay in their country of residence and attack civilians "behind enemy lines" if they cannot make the *hijra* to Syria. The attacks are no longer shaping operations.

41. Bar, *Warrant for Terror*, 36–37.

42. Ibid., 60.

43. Ibid., 59–60.

44. ADP 6-0, *Mission Command*, 5.

45. Ibid., 11–12. The five mission command systems are personnel, networks, information systems, processes and procedures, and facilities and equipment.

46. "The Kafir's Blood," 34–36.

47. Bar, *Warrant for Terror*, 18–19. See also Qutb, *Milestones*. Qutb believed people are born in a state of awareness that Islam is truth. Consequently, those who fail to accept this truth remain willfully trapped in a spiritual prison from which they must be "liberated."

48. For Ibn Taymiyyah's statement, see Livnat Holtzman, "Human Choice, Divine Guidance and the Fitra Tradition: The Use of Hadith in Theological Treatises by Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya," in *Studies in Islamism: Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, eds. S. Nomanul Haq, Yossef Rapoport, and Shahab Ahmen (Oxford,UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 177; for Qutb's statement, see Qutb, *Milestones* (1964), 20–21.

49. Soohkdeo, *Unmasking Islamic State*, 50. This is in reference to the final battle between the *mujahid* and crusaders in Dabiq, which prompts the arrival of the *Mahdi* (prophesied messiah) and Jesus's destruction of *al-Dajjal*.

50. Lings, *Muhammad*, 149–56.

51. Bar, *Warrant for Terror*, 113.

52. Lizette Alvarez and Richard Perez-Pena, "Orlando Gunman Attacks Gay Nightclub, Leaving 50 Dead," *New York Times* online, 12 June 2016, accessed 17 July 2017, https://mobile.nytimes.com/2016/06/13/us/orlando-nightclub-shooting.html.

53. The killing of Osama bin Laden is one example. His death alone could not contain the spread of his ideology.

54. Phillip Swarts, "CIA Director Echoes Obama: Islamic State is not Islamic," *Washington Times*, 14 March 2015, accessed 28 July 17, http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/mar/14/john-brennan-cia-director-backs-obama-islamic-stat/.

55. Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism*, 31–32.

56. Mattis, *Hearings on the Threat Posed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant*.