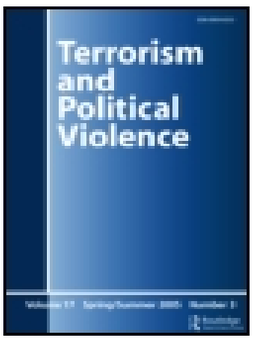

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Violence-producing Dynamics of Fragile States: How State Fragility in Iraq Contributed to the Emergence of Islamic State

S. Yaqub Ibrahimi

Department of Political Science, Carleton University, Ontario, Ottawa, Canada

ABSTRACT

In the post-Cold War era, "Jihadi-Salafi Groups" (JSGs) have emerged as significant "violence-making" organizations. Almost all JSGs have emerged in highly fragile states. The literature on the state fragility-terrorism nexus, by focusing exclusively on whether state fragility is a cause of terrorism or not, has failed to consider the broader impact of state fragility on the emergence of JSGs. The role of state fragility as a condition of the emergence of JSGs, in particular, is mostly overlooked in the literature. This paper, adding state fragility as a condition variable to the causal model of the rise of JSGs, fills this gap. The empirical basis of this research includes a single case study examining the relationship between state fragility in the post-Saddam Iraq and the formation of Islamic State (IS). By adding a new variable to the causal model of the rise of IS, this research makes a strong within-case inference concerning this case. Although the empirical basis of this research includes a single case study, the analytical framework developed in this paper has possible implications for studying a larger number of Jihadi-Salafi groups.

KEYWORDS

International relations; international security; Iraq; Islamic State; Islamism; state fragility; violence

Since the end of the Cold War, "Jihadi-Salafi Groups,"[1] conventionally known as terrorist groups, have emerged as significant violence-producing organizations in the world. In addition to conducting terrorist operations at domestic, regional, and global levels, these groups capture territory and produce asymmetric conflicts which involve sovereign states and conventional armies. Therefore, how Jihadi-Salafi Groups (JSGs) emerge or what causes JSGs remains a significant international security question.

Much of the security studies literature engages with investigating the root causes of the emergence of JSGs in a specific context or different level of analysis.[2] The literature, in general, examines the causes of the phenomenon at three levels of analysis, namely, individual, group, and international/environmental levels.[3] Thus, individual extremists' personal motivation,[4] Jihadi-Salafism as a group ideology,[5] and the US post-Cold War policies in the Middle East[6] are considered as three dominant root causes of the emergence of JSGs. If these three causal determinants are to hold, it begs the question of why JSGs do not emerge in every Muslim country where these elements persist. Why, for instance, did individual jihadis' personal desire for jihad, Jihadi-Salafi ideology, and the US post-Cold War strategy produce JSGs in Afghanistan, the post-Saddam Hussein Iraq, Yemen, and Somalia but not in Saudi Arabia and Qatar? What factor, then, is accountable

CONTACT S. Yaqub Ibrahimi yaqub.ibrahimi@gmail.com Department of Political Science, Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Dr, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6, Canada

for this different outcome in countries which in terms of the presence of the root cause of JSGs are similar?

Taking these questions into account, this paper considers the degree of state fragility in Muslim countries to be responsible for this contradictory outcome. In other words, I agree with scholars who examine the root causes of JSGs at three levels of analysis; however, I argue that the relationship between those causes and the rise of JSGs is conditioned by state fragility in a Muslim country. Thus, this paper adds state fragility as a *condition variable*[7] to the causal model of the rise of JSGs.

Evidence shows that almost all JSGs were formed in highly fragile Muslim majority states. According to state fragility indexes, ten out of the top twenty most fragile states of the world are Muslim majority states which include Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, and Sudan.[8] All these states experienced the emergence and expansion of JSGs in the past two decades: Al-Shabaab in Somalia, the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen, Islamic State (IS)[9] in Iraq and Syria, and Boko Haram in Nigeria, Niger, and Chad. By contrast, in countries such as Saudi Arabia in which the three-level root causes persisted, a strong statehood did not allow for the emergence of JSGs. Therefore, thousands of Saudi jihadis decided to leave their country of origin to form or join a terrorist organization in highly fragile Muslim states such as Afghanistan and Iraq.[10] Saudi Arabia was ranked in 2014 as the 96th fragile state in the world, more stable than Israel (67th) and China (68th).[11] This general observation indicates that almost all JSGs emerged in fragile states. However, despite the significant role of state fragility in the emergence of JSGs, the literature on the relationship between the two phenomena lacks detailed explanations about *how* state fragility contributes to the formation of JSGs. Some scholars have developed general theories about the relationship but they do not address the question of *how* through a case-oriented qualitative research.[12]

The literature on the relationship between state fragility and the rise of JSGs can be categorized into four groups. First, a major segment of the literature, particularly policy-oriented large-N studies, is concerned with the role of state fragility in providing safe havens and operational facilities for JSGs.[13] It emphasizes that fragile states are more prone to harboring terrorist organizations but does not discuss *how* specific aspects of state fragility contribute to the *emergence* of JSGs, in the first place. Second, some scholars consider a weak causal link between the two phenomena.[14] Patrick, for example, sees an imperfect relationship between state fragility and the emergence of terrorist groups[15] and Coggins argues that the relationship is *complicated*, as there is no link in most of the cases.[16] Another group of scholars consider a strong causal relationship between state fragility and JSGs.[17] Tikuisis and Piazza, for example, consider a "strong quantifiable" relationship between the two phenomena. Finally, there is a scholarly approach that rejects any causal link or correlation between state fragility and the emergence of terrorist groups.[18] According to Newman, for example, terrorist organizations operate in weak states but weak or failed statehood does not necessarily explain the emergence of those groups.[19]

Taken together, the existing literature on the relationship between state fragility and the emergence of JSGs shares one common ground, which is an exclusive concentration on the causal role of state fragility and a lack of attention on the *how* question. By focusing exclusively on whether state fragility is a cause of terrorism or not, scholars have

disregarded examining the broader impact of state fragility on the formation of terrorist groups. The role of state fragility as a *condition* of the emergence of JSGs, in particular, is mostly overlooked in the academic debate. This paper, adding state fragility as a *condition variable*[20] to the causal model of the rise of JSGs and through a focussed case-oriented research, fills this gap.

This paper engages with the two-decade-long debate on the relationship between state fragility and terrorism and reads the empirical finding along with International Relations (IR), international security, and development theories. The paper asks: *how* do specific aspects of state fragility in Muslim countries contribute to the emergence of JSGs? I work with the hypothesis that *if the three-level root causes of the emergence of JSGs (motivated jihadis at individual level, Islamist ideology at group level, and the Islamists' reaction to the US post-Cold War policies in the Middle East at international level) are in place, then specific aspects of state fragility in a Muslim country provide the conditions necessary for the establishment of a JSG*. Thus, unlike scholars who exclusively focus on the causal relationship between the two phenomena, I do not consider state fragility as a root cause of the emergence of JSGs. Rather, I argue that the relationship between the three-level causes, as articulated, and the emergence of a terrorist group is conditioned by state fragility in Muslim countries.

The empirical basis of this research includes a single case study, the emergence of Islamic State (IS) in the post-Saddam Iraq. This case study explains how state fragility in Iraq provided the conditions under which some individual jihadis, primarily motivated by Jihadi-Salafi ideology and the US unipolar policies in the Middle East, organized themselves as a uniform, centralized, hierarchical jihadi organization that operates globally. This paper finds that poor legitimacy and lack of authority as two major aspects of state fragility in the post-Saddam Iraq were the most significant conditions of the emergence of IS. The paper also finds that the third aspect of state fragility in Iraq, poor capacity, did not play a determinant role in the case.[21]

This single case study does not seek to produce a general explanation of the rise of JSGs but it investigates within case processes in order to provide an analytical basis for theorization in future.[22] Therefore, the puzzle of interest in this paper lies within the selected case, rather than in cross-case levels.[23] Thus, the purpose of this research is to investigate the working aspects of state fragility in a single case and the ways they influence the formation of a significant Jihadi organization, rather than a cross-case study for a generalizable inference. Building a general theory, in this regard, requires this single-case-oriented analysis to follow by a large-N research or an intensive examination of a larger number of cases.[24]

Conceptualizing state fragility and JSGs

For the purpose of this research, by the state, this paper refers to the "sovereign state," a sovereign territorially-based entity, which primarily emerged as a result of the great transformation from the medieval to the modern era.[25] The sovereign state functions through various institutions to fulfill its fundamental duties including the provision of effective governance, preserving the monopoly over the use of violence, and the provision of basic services in return for taxation.[26] The state's quality in fulfilling these duties is defined "stateness/statehood," which is measured by three variables, namely, legitimacy,

authority, and capacity.[27] In this conception, legitimacy refers to the extent to which a state enjoys popular support domestically and acceptance internationally.[28] Likewise, authority refers to the state's capability in exercising monopoly over the use of legitimate violence within its territory.[29] Capacity refers to the availability of vital resources, the state's economic size, and its capability of acquiring necessary means of governance.[30] State fragility explains different levels of statehood. The states which enjoy higher degrees of statehood represent lower degrees of fragility and vice versa.

State fragility is the outcome of both historical and external causes. In some cases, historical factors such as colonial legacies including juridical and sociological contradictions, ethnic and religious cleavages, and the resistance of suppressed peoples to authoritarian regimes explain different levels of state fragility. Whereas in many other places, immediate and external factors such as invasions and aid cut factor into higher degrees of state fragility. Although both sets of factors, together, explain different levels and aspects of the phenomenon, the severe occurrence of state fragility following the end of the Cold War marked the determinant role of external factors such as the transformation of the balance of power in the world, external invasions, and aid cut in causing the problem.[31] These factors, in turn, activated internal and historical causes. Therefore, the comprehension of state fragility, particularly in the "Third World," requires the simultaneous consideration of historical and immediate external factors. Given these considerations, both external and historical forces are discussed, in a relevant section of this paper, as major drivers of state fragility in the post-Saddam Iraq, with the former being considered the most determinant factor.[32]

The term "state fragility" was produced in a specific historical and scholarly context. Following the escalation of state fragility in Asia and Africa in the early 1990s, terms such as "failed states," "failing states," "weak states," "collapsed states," and the like emerged in scholarly debate on conflict and development. The term "state fragility" was subsequently constructed as an inclusive concept by scholars who seek to incorporate previous terms in a single framework.[33] As a result, a broad scholarly agreement on the usage of "state fragility" as an inclusive term has recently emerged. The usage of "state fragility" in this paper is informed by this scholarly agreement.

JSGs refer to jihadi organizations that follow the Jihadi-Salafi ideology and use violence as primary means of political campaign. Conceptually, Jihadi-Salafism is a strand of Salafist, also known as Islamist, ideology which provides a particular interpretation of Islam and global politics. It differs from other Islamist schools on the basis of its particular interpretation of the four key elements of the Islamist ideology: the definition of an international political problem, the construction of an enemy that causes the problem, the characterization of a method to resolve the problem, and the definition of an ultimate goal. The particularistic interpretation of these elements are evident in almost all JSGs' declarations and statements.[34] Historically, Jihadi-Salafism is divided into two main streams, a majority school which follows a near-enemy-centrist strategy, and a minority branch which is far-enemy-centrist. The four core elements of the Islamist ideology are interpreted differently by the two streams. From the 1970s until the end of the Cold War, the far-enemy-centrists were marginalized when the near-enemy-centrism was the most popular narrative of jihadism in Islamist communities.[35] The near-enemy-centrists of this period defined the secular rule over the Muslim societies as the problem and the "apostatic regimes" in Muslim countries as

the enemy. It also considered a localized jihad as the method and the replacement of the secular regimes with sharia-based "Islamic states" as the goal.[36] With the transformation of the international system at the end of the Cold War, far-enemy-centrism emerged as the most attractive approach in Salafi communities which redefined the core elements of the ideology.[37] In the new narrative, "the American domination of the Muslim lands" was defined as the problem, the United States and its allies were characterized as the enemy, a global jihad was considered as the method, and the establishment of a transnational Caliphate was described as the ultimate goal.[38] The sudden popularity of the far-enemy-centrism was the outcome of the emergence of a generation of Jihadi-Salafis who had fought in the frontlines against the Soviet Army in Afghanistan and were radicalized by the post-Cold War "bitter experiences" of the Muslim societies.[39] Although the contemporary JSGs are essentially far-enemy-centrists, they are flexible in incorporating and adopting the elements of near-enemy-centrism under different conditions. Al-Qaeda's goal, for instance, was defined as fighting the US and its allies. However, al-Qaeda simultaneously supports campaigns against "false" Muslim rulers in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and the like.[40] Likewise, while the IS's ultimate goal is the establishment of a transnational Caliphate, the organization simultaneously justifies operations at a domestic level. Thus, while being far-enemy-centrist in nature, JSGs simultaneously use elements of the near-enemy-centrism.

Analytical framework

This research draws initially on the "levels of analysis" theory of IR which originally arose from the scholarly debate on causes of war and peace in the international system.[41] The theory was subsequently developed by IR scholars into an analytical framework which investigates causes of conflict at individual, group, and international levels.[42] This paper initially acknowledges that multiple factors at all three levels of analysis serve as a causal explanation of the emergence of JSGs. However, it argues that the relationship between those causes and the emergence of JSGs is conditioned by specific aspects of state fragility. Thus, state fragility plays the role of a *condition variable* magnifying the effects of independent causes on the emergence of JSGs. Condition variables are indicated by using the multiplication symbol "×" in causal models.[43] This symbol is used to show that condition variables magnify, but not multiply, the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable.[44] This means that the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable can be magnified by a high value on the condition variable and reduced by a low value for it.[45] In my proposed model, this would mean that a higher degree of state fragility increases the probability of the emergence of JSGs while a lower degree would reduce the impact of the root causes on the formation of a jihadi organization. Taken together, Figure 1 indicates a general model of the emergence of JSGs. Regarding the case study of this paper, the emergence of IS, the model is specified in Figure 2. Given the three general measurements of state fragility (i.e., lack of legitimacy, authority, and capacity), poor legitimacy and lack of authority in Iraq were found as the most effective conditions of the emergence of IS. Thus, Figure 3 indicates an operational model of the rise of IS. Since the lack of capacity played a meager role in the emergence of IS, it is excluded purposefully from the model.

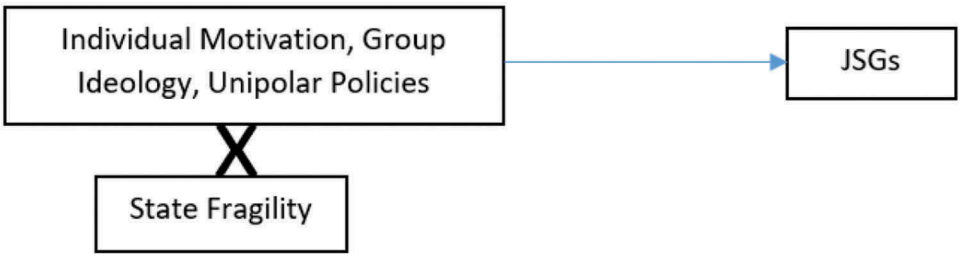

Figure 1. General model of the emergence of JSGs.

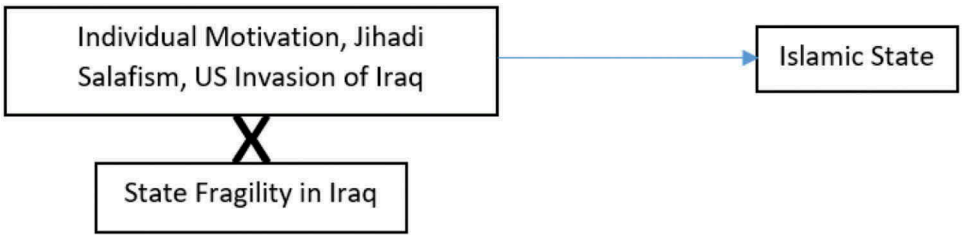

Figure 2. General model of the emergence of IS.

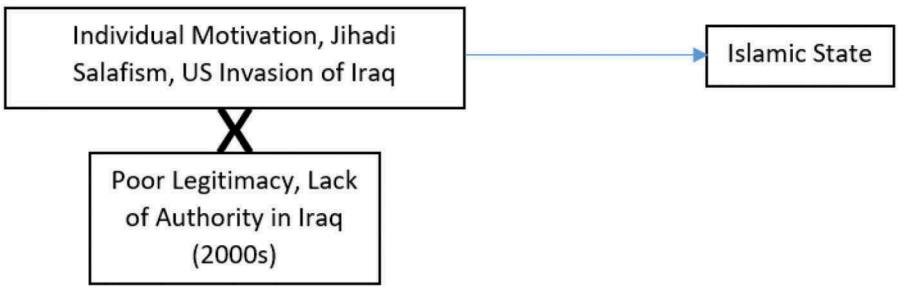

Figure 3. Operational model of the formation of IS.

Background: Root causes

The Islamic State's emergence in Iraq is discussed from several perspectives. However, the narrative that traces the origin of this organization to the emergence of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) is the most prevalent one. According to this narrative, Islamic State is the successor of several anti-American and anti-Shiite insurgent groups that initially merged into AQI and subsequently developed into Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), to Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and ultimately to Islamic State (IS). The ultimate transformation of Iraq-based jihadi and insurgent groups into AQI and its development to IS was inspired, primarily, by Abu-Massab al-Zarqawi's ideas and efforts for creating an anti-American and anti-Shiite Jihadi front parallel to al-Qaeda in Iraq and his doctrine of global Jihad.[46]

Zarqawi (1966–2006) was a Jordanian Jihadi-Salafist who volunteered twice to jihad in Afghanistan (1989–1993; 2000–2002), where he established relations with al-Qaeda and other transnational jihadi leaders and organizations.[47] He created a Jihadi camp named

Jamaat al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (JTJ) in Herat Province of Afghanistan in 2000 which initially attracted only Jordanian extremists. But soon after, Zarqawi successfully managed to attract recruits from other nationals, particularly Palestinian and Syrian Islamists living in Europe.[48] His purpose, then, was to advance JTJ into a mobile army which he could export to anywhere in the world.[49] Following the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, Zarqawi's JTJ left the Afghan battlefield, infiltrating to the mountainous areas of Iraqi Kurdistan via Iran. Following the US invasion of Iraq in April 2003, Zarqawi moved to Iraq's Sunni Triangle where he was capable of both interacting with domestic elements of the Sunni insurgency and mobilizing his network for organized attacks. The Triangle encompassed an area bound by Baghdad in the east, Ramadi to the west, and Tikrit to the North, which was populated by a concentration of Sunni Arab tribes which traditionally supported the Baathist regime.[50] Following Zarqawi's promotion within the Iraqi insurgency, an agreement was reached between him and bin Laden in October 2004 through which Zarqawi was awarded the al-Qaeda franchise in Iraq. As a result of this agreement, Zarqawi's JTJ was promoted to *Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn*, or al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Following the agreement, Zarqawi self-proclaimed the title of "Emir of al-Qaeda's Operations in the Land of Mesopotamia."[51] AQI's development to IS was influenced by multiple factors at all three levels of analysis (i.e., individual, group, and international levels).

Individual level

At this level of analysis, individual jihadis' search for personal security, a sense of revenge among jihadis and Baathists, and the discrimination against Sunnis in the post-Saddam Iraq served as the root causes of the formation of IS. Following the US invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, thousands of international jihadis escaped Afghanistan and infiltrated into other Muslim countries, ending up creating new jihadi cells in Iraq. Moreover, the US invasion of Iraq and its subsequent de-Baathification policy[52] resulted in humiliation, discrimination, and unemployment of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civil and military servants who were worried about persecution by the Americans and Shiite-dominated security forces.[53] In search of personal security, those individuals ended up forming anti-American and anti-Shiite insurgent groups. The interaction of the fugitive Jihadi Salafists and the well-trained Baathists was a main factor that contributed to the transformation of the Iraq-based insurgency into a uniform and strategically flexible organization. Moreover, a sense of revenge among both Jihadis and Baathists was another factor that played a causal role on this level of analysis. Sunnis had lost their power, employment, and access to economic resources to a Shiite-led government, and therefore were ready to revenge the "significance loss." Therefore, while for al-Qaeda only the US and its Allies were the enemy, the Iraq-based jihadis added the Shiites to the list of "the enemy."[54] Finally, since Iraqi Sunnis experienced a severe "significance loss," a fight back meant an "honor restoration" campaign. Scholars believe that if individuals experience a "significance loss," both revenge and honor underlie the individuals' motivation for group formation.[55] Overall, Jihadis search for personal security and survival, and a mixed sense of revenge and honor drove jihadis of different origins to direct the scattered insurgency toward a uniform organization.

Group level

At this level of analysis, Jihadi-Salafism as a group ideology was a determinant factor of the formation of IS. The organization's adoption of this ideology is attributable to Zarqawi, who studied theology with Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi—a prominent Jordanian-Palestinian Jihadi-Salafi.[56] The early leaders of IS, Abu Umar al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, were likewise Jihadi Salafists.[57] The need for the formation of a global jihadi organization like IS was clearly justified by these individuals. In a 2003 statement Zarqawi, for instance, articulated his global jihadi project in which all main aspects of Jihadi-Salafism were incorporated and the requirement for the formation of a uniform global jihadi front in order to operationalize the worldview was justified.[58] Zarqawi's worldview was further elaborated in IS's documents and declarations. For example, "This is the Promise of Allah," a founding declaration of IS, describes the oppression of Muslims and the invasion of their lands by Americans and their allies (particularly Shiites) as the existing "problem." Likewise, the declaration defines the "infidel nations" as the enemy and considers a "global jihad" as the method to fight the enemy and resolve the problem. And finally, the declaration defines the creation of a "Sharia-based" Islamic State over the Muslim lands as its ultimate goal.[59] Drawing on this doctrine, IS formalized the Islamic State's status as the caliphate in 2014, claiming authority over all Muslims and Islamist groups.[60] Jihadi-Salafism, in this regard, functioned as a sense-making causal variable which led the overall process of the development of the Iraqi insurgency in a specific direction, culminating in the formation of a uniform jihadi organization.

International level

At this level of analysis, three factors can be considered as the main causes of the emergence of IS. First, the US invasion of Afghanistan which led to the fleeing of Jihadis from Afghanistan and their reorganization in Iraq. Second, the US invasion of Iraq which put the individually motivated jihadis and Baathists in a direct confrontation with the sole great power. The image of direct confrontation with the US and its domestic ally motivated the scattered elements of the Iraq-based insurgency to unify in a single front. Finally, the domestic and regional consequences of the US invasion of Iraq was another determinant factor. Following the invasion, Saddam's regime was replaced with a Shiite-dominated government which intensified the Shiite vs. Sunni sectarianism. This process led to a severe polarization of Iraq's political environment, pushing the Sunnis towards the creation of an anti-Shiite insurgency. Moreover, the US invasion intensified the regional power struggle that had already divided the Middle East into Sunni versus Shiite camps, contributing to the development of a Sunni-led jihadi organization against a Shiite-dominated government.[61] Taken together, a series of causes at all three levels of analysis factored directly into the formation of IS. Notwithstanding, the causal effects were at work in a specific context—the severe fragility of the Iraqi state in the aftermath of the US invasion in 2003. In other words, the relationship between the root causes at all three levels of analysis, as articulated, and the formation of IS was magnified by specific aspects

of state fragility in Iraq. Therefore, the development of a comprehensive account of the formation of IS requires the effective aspects of state fragility in Iraq to be added in the debate.

State fragility in Iraq

Following the removal of the Baathist regime in April 2003, the Iraqi state entirely collapsed. Although state fragility in Iraq is not a post-invasion phenomenon *per se*, the intense fragility in the post-invasion period was unprecedented in the history of this country. Iraq was built on a disputed region and a territory divided along ethnic and religious lines as a result of colonial rivalries in the aftermath of World War I. Social cleavages were exacerbated through the process of the Iraqi state-building in which the privileged Sunni minority systematically alienated other ethnic and religious groups from power. Therefore, the sovereign state of Iraq constantly faced internal challenges. However, the state always maintained its political authority and monopoly over the use of force in its territory. In the 1990s, for instance, when state fragility due to a series of internal and external pressures increased, the state did not extensively lose its control and security capabilities.[62] Rather, the Baathist regime was capable of maintaining both the formal institutions and the informal networks of authority.[63] No reliable evidence supports the claim that a local force could remove Saddam from power in the early 2000s.[64] Thus, from its creation in 1921 to its collapse in 2003, the Sunni-dominated state was, at least, capable of covering the social cleavages and the exclusion of other ethnic and religious groups under the surface of Iraqi nationalism and patriotism. The cover tore off immediately after the defeat of the Baathist regime. Therefore, the post-Saddam state collapse was the outcome of immediate external causes, particularly the American occupation and its consequences, and was exacerbated by historical factors that were systematically relieved through the state policies. Therefore, state collapse in Iraq was more the outcome of external determinants than internal and historical causes, with sectarianism and insurgency being the outcome of the state collapse, not the other way around.[65] External invasion, in this sense, was the most effective factor of state fragility in Iraq while historical factors reinforced the problem. Thus, both external and historical factors, together, increased the degree of state fragility in the post-Saddam Iraq to the extent that accommodated the emergence of IS. This process would be best explained by a detailed examination of poor legitimacy and lack of authority as the two effective aspects of state fragility in the post-Saddam Iraq.

Poor legitimacy

According to the three basic sources of legitimacy, i.e., traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal,[66] the post-Saddam Iraqi state lacking the traditional and charismatic legitimacy, simultaneously failed to develop a rational-legal source of legitimation. The Coalition force's initial plan was to build a rational-legal state based in modern laws and procedures.[67] In practice, the Coalition sought to enhance state legitimacy by improving political participation. The policy was grounded in the belief that an inclusive political participation would motivate citizens to obey the law through consent rather than

coercion.[68] Nevertheless, the electoral democracy which was presumed as the tool of political participation resulted in the polarization of politics.[69]

In order to provide a clear account of the failure of a legitimation agenda through political participation in Iraq, the issue should be examined in three different phases: the pre-2005 elections, the 2005 elections, and the post-election phases. The pre-election phase includes a timeframe from the US invasion in April 2003 until the Iraqi general elections in December 2005. The elections period covers events from the transitional election in January 2005 to the first general elections in December 2005. The post-election phase encompasses a timeframe from the general elections to the end of Noori al-Maliki's government (2006–2014).

In the pre-election phase, Sunni Arabs were excluded from Iraq's government through the de-Baathification policy which was designed by the American-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) shortly after the occupation of Iraq. Following the de-Baathification of Iraq's military and civil services, the CPA designed the establishment of a new political regime by forming an Iraqi provisional government called the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) in July 2003, in which Sunnis were marginalized both in terms of underrepresentation and their role in decision-making.[70] For example, of the twenty-five IGS members, only five were Sunni Arab, who were disconnected from the society and were considered by Sunnis as parts of a process of "disempowering Sunni Arabs for the benefit of Shiites and Kurds."[71] The presence of Sunni Arab figures such as Naseer Chderchi and Adnan Pachachi in the IGC, for instance, was more celebratory than effective. Marginalization of Sunni Arabs continued with the formation of the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) in June 2004. IIG, which replaced both the CPA and IGC, was overwhelmingly filled with members of IGC. Shiites and Kurds were placed in leading positions, with only the celebratory position of the President being given to a returning Sunni Arab exile from London, Ghazi al-Yawer.[72]

The post-Saddam polarized political environment became more evident in the second phase, the two general elections in 2005. The January 2005 elections to form a transitional parliament and government were largely boycotted by the Sunni Arab parties. Sunni parties claimed that due to their marginalization in the pre-election political process, they did not have equal access to resources to challenge the opposition.[73] The result was a very low turnout in Sunni areas. Turnout in Mosul, for example, was as low as 10 percent, and most of the voters were Kurds. The pattern was repeated in Tikrit, Baquba, Ramadi, Fallujah, and parts of Baghdad. By contrast, the turnout in Kurdish areas was as high as 90 percent and in Shiite areas nearly 80 percent. The outcome of this election was a polarized parliament and government in which Sunni representation was gravely low.[74] Likewise, the December 2005 general elections reflected the divided feature of Iraq's society with electoral campaigns and voting being profoundly sectarian. During the campaigns, the United Iraqi Alliance (an alliance of Shiite parties) hardly showed interest in electioneering in the Kurdish areas, and Kurd candidates hardly campaigned in the southern Shiite or in the central Arab Sunni provinces.[75] As a result, Kurdish parties received 100 percent of the vote in Kurdish areas, Sunni parties received 88 percent of the vote in Sunni areas, and Shiite parties received 86 percent of the vote in Shiite areas.[76] As a result, the UIA dominated the assembly by receiving 41.2 percent of the vote followed by the Kurdish Alliance which received 21.7 percent. By contrast, the Iraqi Accord Front, a union of various Sunni Arab parties formed just two months before the elections, received 15.1

percent of the votes with securing 44 seats in the parliament.[77] Despite the violent threats by AQI which condemned the Iraqi elections as a "satanic project that violates God's law," Sunni participation in the general election of January 2005, with a turnout of 70 percent of registered voters, increased.[78] The Sunnis' cooperation and high turnout raised hopes that they would join the political process to take part in building an inclusive government. Nevertheless, the Sunnis' minimal role and the growth of sectarianism in the post-election phase challenged the possibility of forming a broad-based legitimate government in Baghdad.

The Iraqi government's legitimacy in the third phase shrank dramatically in all Sunni areas as a result of the exacerbation of sectarian politics by the Shiite-dominated government.[79] Following the general elections, a new government was formed on May 20, 2006, under the premiership of Nouri al-Maliki, the leader of the Shiite Dawa Party. In the general elections, the Accordance Front of Sunni Arabs won 44 of the Iraqi parliament's 275 seats, securing only the position of deputy prime minister and six cabinet ministries.[80] But shortly after the formation of the new government, the Accord withdrew from the government because its leaders believed that the party did not have effective influence in the government and accused Maliki's coalition of failing to consult the party on key issues.[81] Although the Accord rejoined the government a year later, the problem of sectarianism and sectarian-based decision-makings in the government continuously grew in Maliki's first (2006–2010) and second (2010–2014) periods in office.[82]

Overall, state legitimacy in all three phases could not sink its roots in Iraq's society. This process developed a political atmosphere which made Sunnis the receptive to the Sunni-led insurgency and allowed the insurgency to expand and unify under the banner of a Sunni-led extremist group against a government they considered illegitimate. In the context of this legitimacy gap, a Sunni-led insurgency played a far more prominent role than any of the Iraqi governmental or military organizations in the main Sunni area, called the "Sunni Triangle."[83] In this area, Sunni jihadis, primarily organized in AQI, accelerated the recruitment of local Islamists, the discriminated Sunnis and the de-Baathified Iraqi soldiers, and simultaneously invested in the unification of insurgency.[84] According to an International Crisis Group report, the evolution of the Sunni insurgency toward the formation of a uniform Sunni-led Jihadi organization with IS lines became inevitable: "Sunnis saw their only chance of surviving in Iraq was to fight as Sunnis against a US-sponsored Shiite-led government."[85]

Accordingly, the emergence of the Iraq-based insurgency and its transformation into a Jihadi-Salafi movement benefited from the conditions provided by a lack of state legitimacy. The pre-election phase, in which Sunnis were disenfranchised in Iraqi politics and marginalized both in the IGC and IIG, contributed to the rise and expansion of the anti-Shiite and anti-Coalition insurgency. Young Sunni Arabs and the de-Baathified soldiers in this phase formed a number of domestic insurgent groups or joined Zarqawi's global jihadi organization. Zarqawi's "anti-Crusader-Safavid" alliance campaign in this period was reinforced by the Sunnis' consideration of the Iraqi state as an illegitimate entity.[86] This environment facilitated the recruitment of local combatants which was termed as the "Iraqification" of AQI by Zarqawi.[87] The second phase, the 2005 elections, motivated Sunni individuals to support or join the insurgency because they felt denied of the right to partake in political processes or deemed seizing power through a democratic political participatory process impossible. And

finally, the post-election phase further expanded the insurgency's influence in the Sunni Triangle as a result of Maliki's centralization of power, the marginalization of Sunnis, and his use of military force against the Sunnis who protested the government policies. This phase led the insurgency toward the formation of a unified Sunni front against the Shiite-led government and its international sponsor, the United States. The incorporation of AQI with five other Iraq-based insurgent groups under an umbrella organization called *Majlis Shura al-Mujahedeen* (MSM) in January 2006, which rebranded itself in October of the same year as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), took place under this condition.[88] Prime Minister Maliki's second term in office, which directed the country toward a severe sectarianism, twined with Syrian civil war which extended ISI's operational ground beyond Iraq, and provided all conditions necessary for the emergence of ISIS and its ultimate announcement of the formation of a Caliphate or an Islamic State (IS) in June 2014.

Lack of authority

The state authority depends on the effectiveness and legitimacy of its "physical force." The "physical force" in the modern world is the "security apparatus" which includes a defense and a security force.[89] Although Iraq's defense and security forces were not highly effective prior to the US invasion in 2003, they were capable of securing the country, preventing internal rebellion, and resisting any regional invasion. Before the invasion, Iraq's armed forces were "down to about 40% of their 1991 Gulf War levels when they fielded some 1 million troops."[90] However, it is believed that before the US invasion the 400,000 Iraqi forces were capable of suppressing any predictable internal insurgency and defending Iraq against an invasion by any regional power.[91] Shortly after the invasion, the CPA leadership assumed that in order to build a new and apolitical armed force in Iraq, it had to disband Iraq's old armed force from top to bottom.[92] Accordingly, the CPA ordered the disbandment of the Iraqi Army which included the Republican Guard, Navy, and Air Force, and the dissolution of the Defense and Information Ministries in early May 2003. As a result, an estimated 350,000 to 400,000 former Iraqi officers and soldiers were dismissed, with some being subject to interrogation.[93]

Following the dissolution of Iraq's forces, the CPA designed a multilateral program to construct a new security and defense system. Despite the CPA agenda, the recruitment, training, and deployment of security forces had a very slow progress in the face of a fast-growing insurgency in the years following the invasion. Lack of a legitimate and effective Iraqi security apparatus made large parts of Iraq ungovernable. When the newly built units of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) proved to be ineffective in countering the emerging insurgency, the Coalition forces directly intervened in the country's security affairs. However, the coalition's effort to fill the security gap with direct operations was caused more outrage in Sunni communities than helping the situation. The Coalition's other emergency measure was to build a series of new Iraqi armed units in major cities, supervising them directly until Iraq's Ministry of Defense would be capable of incorporating them into a uniform system. The Coalition, for instance, created the "Fallujah Brigade" in April 2004 in order to keep insurgents out of the city. But it was disbanded four months later when the US Marines found out that the Brigade was making more trouble than a contribution to the security of the city.[94] Thus, the ISF remained ineffective

in controlling Iraq's territory and countering the anti-government elements in the early years following the invasion.[95]

In order to restore the Iraqi security apparatus, the Coalition put on its agenda three key tasks: to operate as an alternative force until the ISF was restored, to rebuild the Iraqi defense and security sectors which would eventually take responsibility for Iraq's security, and to reconstruct and reform Iraq's defense and security institutions.[96] But despite this agenda, security assessment reports show that by the time the CPA handed authority over to IIG on June 28, 2004, the Coalition had made little progress in its task to restore order and neutralize the insurgency.[97] The Coalition also failed to make remarkable progress in the two other tasks, the restoration and reformation of the Iraqi defense and security forces and their affiliated institutions during the first decade following the invasion. By the time ISI began to grow stronger in 2012, the ISF was only a "brittle force that could neither control Iraq nor resist any major blow."[98] Research shows that the failure in fulfilling the first task on time slowed down the Coalition's second and third tasks, which included the rebuilding and reforming of three major sectors including a national security committee, the defense sector, and the security sector.[99]

Concerning the national security committee, the CPA helped Iraq's political leaders to establish the Ministerial Committee on National Security (MCNS) by June 2004. This committee had engaged in policy-making and strategy development in the security sector and consulted Iraq's security with the IGC.[100] However, its existence due to the lack of a sufficient domestic armed force, and when almost all military operations were being conducted by the Coalition, was not effective.

In the defense sector, the development suffered from three managerial, political, and contextual miscalculations. Concerning management, the CPA did not balance the development of MoD institutions and the ISF, which made the civil management of the ISF difficult.[101] Politically, a weak MoD paved the way for the sectarian-based recruitment in the Army's divisions, which challenged the creation of a representative army that would reflect the ethnic, religious, and sectarian composition of Iraq. Contextually, the primary policy of building the ISF did not consider the actual security problems of the post-Saddam Iraq. The Coalition's primary purpose was to create a "classical army" for external defense, when the main Iraqi problem was internal violence and insurgency.[102] Lack of an initial focus on internal threats favored the growing insurgency. Since ISF was trained to fight an external enemy, it failed to perform well against the fast-growing internal threat.-[103] Even though the focus was revised in spring 2004 with counterinsurgency training being added to the overall program, it was quite late as the Iraq-based insurgency and the domestic and transnational elements of JSGs largely expanded throughout the country by mid-2004.[104] With the ISF being incapable of countering the growing of insurgency, the Coalition created another military force named the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) in early 2004. ICDC's operations mostly "overlapped the police missions while its personnel were trained as soldiers, not policemen."[105] Thus, hurried and short-term measures in the defense sector made more trouble than contributing to the situation.

In the security sector, achievements were complex. Iraq's security sector included two major institutions, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the intelligence services. Because of the Coalition's plan to hand over policing and internal security responsibility to MoI as soon as feasible, the MoI was the only institution which survived the de-Baathification.[106] Although the police recruitment, empowerment, equipment, and other infrastructure

development programs made faster progress than the development of the army, the Iraqi police force suffered from the lack of a uniform vision about Iraq's security priorities and the lack of capacity to provide a national security agenda.[107] The main reason behind the problem was that the Coalition's police advisors in Iraq spent most of their time in managing MoI operations on a day-to-day basis, rather than concentrating on a long-term institutional development and capacity-building agenda.[108] Moreover, the MoI's incapability in managing its border, population, and weapon control responsibilities favored both domestic and cross-border criminality.[109] To deter arms smugglers and foreign militants, the Americans increased the patrolling of Iraq's borders in 2004, which did not provide a permanent solution to the problem.[110] Taking advantage of a weak border force, numerous Jihadi-Salafis from Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Afghanistan, Chechnya, and elsewhere infiltrated into Iraq and found shelter and support from Sunnis in ungoverned areas of the Sunni Triangle.[111] Moreover, the Americans and the MoI failed to guard Iraq's 2,700 identified munitions sites, which were initially looted by the former regime's security forces. Reports show that most weapons and explosives used in attacks against the American and Iraqi troops were looted from those storages.[112] Failure to develop the MoI and Police forces significantly favored the expansion of the insurgency, which was exacerbated by a lack of a central Iraqi intelligence apparatus. Unlike the Coalition's focus on rebuilding Iraq's Police force, the rebuilding of a coordinated Iraqi intelligence apparatus was excluded from the post-Saddam state-building agenda. While a coordinated intelligence is conventionally considered critical to the success of a counterinsurgency campaign, the CPA delayed the establishment of a uniform Iraqi intelligence.[113] The CPA's calculation was that the MoI and MoD's intelligence capabilities would be sufficient in collecting their needed information in the early years of the post-Saddam era. Furthermore, the US First Armored Division in Baghdad had created an Iraqi intelligence cell of its own, which supported the Coalition's intelligence efforts.[114] Evidence shows that the exclusion of building Iraq's intelligence services created an intelligence gap in which the insurgent and jihadi groups easily established and expanded their networks and operational cells.[115]

The Coalition's failure in rebuilding Iraq's defense and security forces is expressed in Tariq al-Hashimi's conversation with the Council on Foreign Relations: "We do not have so far a competent and sufficient national armed forces to rely on and to help the Coalition forces, in fact, either to pull out from the center of the cities or to go back home, for instance … thanks (to) Ambassador Bremer, who established this national army on wrong, wrong basis, non-professional, non-patriotic. . . . At the end of the day, we can't consider the national forces are reliable, trustworthy, non-corrupted, professional or trustworthy."[116] Al- Hashimi served as Iraq's Vice President from 2005–2011. Without Iraqi forces being able to take on security tasks, the Coalition forces were compelled to police Iraq in ways that were unpleasant to the Iraqi public.[117] Lack of a sufficient domestic force and the Coalition's direct operations developed a condition of fear and chaos in Iraq, in which the seeds of IS were planted. Using the condition provided by the security vacuum, the emergence of IS's predecessors and their long journey towards the formation of a uniform jihadi organization was followed through a three-step process: First, the infiltration of international jihadi groups into the Sunni Triangle. Second, the emergence of anti-occupation and anti-Shiite domestic insurgency and their interaction with militarily trained ex-Baathists. Third, the interaction of

the domestic and international elements of the insurgency and their incorporation into a unified organization.

As early as May 2003, international jihadis, particularly Zarqawi's JTJ, moved into the Sunni Triangle and quickly interacted with domestic Sunni jihadis and ex-Baathists. The Sunni Triangle, in fact, was a physical safe haven in which terrorist groups, because of inadequate governance capacity and security force, could freely "organize, plan, raise funds, communicate, recruit, train, transit, and operate."[118] All three elements of the Iraq-based insurgency were mainly located in Fallujah, Ramadi, Samarra, Balad, Mosul, and Tal Afar, and were largely supported by tribes who considered the Sunni insurgency as a defensive and resistance force. According to some tribal leaders, the part of the tribes that supported the insurgency were people who were "harmed" [by Americans and Shiites]. For example, in an interview with PBS on November 30, 2003, the leader of the Bu-Essa tribe in Fallujah, Sheikh Gazi al-Essawi, described the situation as, "the section of the society that was harmed, Baathists that are harmed, yes, they probably have sympathy towards them [the insurgents]." Al-Essawi claimed that even the tribal leaders who met with the Coalition commanders received death threats from their own tribesmen: "Every week we meet with the [Coalition] commander, as sheikhs and religious leaders, and I am one of them. Every week we meet with him. We are looked at as collaborators. Some say, 'You go and meet with the Americans. What did you achieve?' We did get death threats."[119]

Despite many US and Iraqi operations in 2003 and 2004, the Sunni Triangle remained the heartland of insurgency where all steps towards the formation of IS were taken. The Iraq-based insurgent groups freely moved from place to place in the area without a serious disturbance by the Iraqi forces and the Coalition. During the transformation of the scattered insurgency into AQI, Zarqawi and al-Qaeda elements were based in cells and safe houses located mostly in tiny villages around Baghdad and ungoverned parts of the Triangle.[120] For early insurgent groups, cells were the main form of organization. Some cells were multifunctional while others were specialized in specific activities such as preparing propaganda materials and planning special attacks.[121] Insurgent cells were concentrated in villages and towns located in the Sunni Triangle, which was home to the former regime's military and security personnel who supported the Sunni insurgency.[122] This condition facilitated the interaction among different cells contributing to the development of a complex insurgency.[123] Quick interaction, strategy changes, and communication facilities allowed the Iraq-based insurgency to move toward the formation of a uniform organization with a single ideology which initially appeared with the transformation of MSM into ISI.

The formation of ISI marked a new era for the Iraq-based insurgency, turning it into a hierarchical and centralized jihadi organization with a structured cabinet and an Amir at its top.[124] ISI combined all domestic and international elements of the Sunni insurgency in Iraq under a Jihadi-Salafi command which followed a Caliphate-based ideology.[125] ISI ultimately transformed into ISIS/ISIL on April 9, 2013, when Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Amir of ISI, confirmed in an audio statement that Jabhat al-Nusrah was an offshoot of ISI in Syria and therefore "it would be subsumed into the expanded Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham."[126] Thus, the process of the development of the Iraq-based scattered insurgency into a centralized organization mainly took place in areas out of the effective control of the Iraqi security forces. All elements of Iraq's insurgency emerged, interacted, networked,

and incorporated in parts of the Sunni Triangle in which the ISF was largely absent.[127] Some 75 percent of insurgent activities in 2006, for instance, occurred in the four governorates located in the Triangle, including Baghdad, Salahuddin, Ninawa, and al-Anbar.[128] Moreover, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's designation sermon as the *Amir al-Muminin* or "the Commander of the Faithful" and the formal launching of the IS were accomplished in Mosul, the Capital of Ninawa, which was mostly out of the state control.[129]

There are numerous examples of the ISF's both quantitative and qualitative weakness in the Sunni Triangle. Insurgent operations and expansion in the al-Anbar province, for instance, were the outcome of the insufficient number of security forces until mid-2007. There were only 200 Iraqi police officers and provincial troops in Ramadi, the capital of the province, until July 2006, which were deployed to protect the city against thousands of insurgent and jihadi militants.[130] When the number multiplied to 6,700 by mid-2007, insurgent attacks remarkably dropped.[131] In addition to the lack of sufficient numbers in specific areas, ineffectiveness was another problem. A remarkable instance, in this regard, was the fall of Fallujah and Mosul in 2014. In Mosul, for instance, an estimated 30,000 Iraqi soldiers could not defend the city and fled after a quick confrontation with as few as 800 ISI militants.[132] An Iraqi policeman, who was wounded in the battle of Mosul, described the ISF's defeat as "Planes didn't come. Aid didn't arrive. Support didn't come to us. Nothing came."[133] Even in areas under governmental control, the ISF was not capable of providing basic security. In a famous case, the governor of Al-Anbar Province, Abdul Karim Berges, following the kidnapping of his three sons, resigned from his post in return for his sons' release. Barjas too appeared on a videotape announcing his resignation and apologizing for resisting the insurgency: "I am Abd al-Karim Barjas, governor of Al-Anbar. I declare before God and you my repentance of any action I did against the mujahedin, or any act in cooperation with the infidel, the Americans, and I announce my resignation from my post."[134] Thus, despite numerous joint Coalition and Iraqi forces' operations against the insurgency, the Sunni Triangle remained the heartland of JSGs in which all steps towards the formation of IS were taken.

Following the fall of Mosul on June 10, 2014, the United States deployed 1400 more advisors in Iraq to develop ISF into an effective force.[135] But it was quite late, the Islamic State was already established controlling a large territory in Iraq and Syria, in addition to having so-called *wilayats*, or "mini-states," in many other Muslim countries, and terrorist cells all around the world. Both American and Iraqi officials admit that the slow process of forming professional armed and security forces in the post-Saddam Iraq was the main factor of insecurity which provided the conditions necessary for the emergence of IS. According to Jack Keane, a retired American Army Vice Chief of Staff, "[the Americans] began to slowly put together a security force, but it took far too much time and that gave the insurgency an ability to start to rise." In an interview with *Time Magazine* in May 2015, Keane described the Coalition's failure in reorganizing Iraq's army and police immediately after the occupation as "huge strategic mistakes."[136]

Conclusion

This paper examines the relationship between state fragility in the post-Saddam Iraq and the emergence of IS. The paper investigates *how* specific aspects of state fragility in Iraq contributed to the formation of IS. It finds that poor legitimacy and lack of authority are

the two major aspects of state fragility in Iraq which provided a condition favorable for the emergence and expansion of the Iraq-based insurgency and its development to IS. In other words, poor legitimacy and lack of authority magnified the impact of multiple causal factors on the formation of IS.

Lack of a legitimate government in the post-Saddam Iraq produced a Sunni versus Shiite sectarian politics which, in turn, exacerbated the anti-Shiite and anti-America activities in Sunni communities. Under these circumstances, the jihadi elements of Iraq's conflict instrumentalized Jihadi-Salafism in order to lead the Sunni insurgency toward the formation of a uniform organization under a single ideology. Moreover, the Coalition failed to restore and reform Iraq's defense and security sectors in the first decade following the invasion. Lack of a legitimate and effective security force that could secure Iraq's territory and borders facilitated the formation of insurgency cells in ungoverned areas and the infiltration of transnational jihadis into Iraq. Lack of effective security and defense forces developed a security vacuum in Iraq, particularly in the Sunni Triangle, which was filled by the Sunni insurgency that ultimately developed to IS.

The emergence of IS has attracted broad academic and policy attention; however, scholars have overlooked the conditional role state fragility in Iraq played on the rise of this jihadi organization. Considering the gap, this paper adds new evidence and analysis to the debate on the formation of IS. Although the empirical basis of this research includes a single case study, the analytical framework developed in this paper has possible implications for studying a larger number of Jihadi-Salafi groups. Therefore, in addition to making a strong within-case inference concerning the emergence of one of the most significant terrorist organizations of the contemporary world, this paper develops an analytical basis for broader cross-case inquiries on the relationship between state fragility and the emergence of JSGs.

In addition to its contribution to scholarly debate on the emergence of JSGs, this paper has possible implications for policy, making some suggestions concerning development-security nexus. It suggests that investment on enhancing statehood in potential host countries to JSGs is as effective as addressing the root causes of the emergence of such groups. Addressing the root causes of a JSG would help to deal with it effectively. While enhancing the degree of legitimacy, authority, and capacity in a fragile state as a potential host for the rise of a JSG would help to prevent the formation of such an organization, in the first place.

Notes on contributor

S. Yaqub Ibrahimi is a researcher and instructor of political science. Ibrahimi received his PhD from Carleton University. His research interests include international relations, international security, terrorism, conflict Analysis, political development in the Middles East and South Asia, and Afghanistan. His articles have appeared in Small Wars and Insurgencies, Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression, Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict, and elsewhere.

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