

More than the Voice of the Caliphate: The Destructive Legacy of Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani

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Abstract: *The August 2016 killing of Abu Muhammad al-Adnani in a U.S. drone attack is an important step in degrading the Islamic State (IS). His symbolic and strategic importance as a propagandist and as an overseer of the caliphate's external terror operations cannot be doubted. Adnani was in the forefront in exhorting and directing IS operations to kill Westerners. The Paris, Brussels, Munich, San Bernardino, Orlando and Nice attacks can be linked to his impressive oratorical and organizational abilities. Adnani's September 2014 audio address urged IS supporters in North America and Europe to kill Westerners by any means possible. Adnani's propaganda express a Salafi-jihadist world view composed of three core principles al-wala' al- bara', jihad and takfir. This essay examines Adnani's propaganda messaging and his role in the caliphate's organization. First, it examines Adnani's audio addresses built around al- wala' al- bara', jihad and takfir. Second, it examines his role in the caliphate's external terror operations. Finally, it assesses the significance of his death.*

Keywords: *[Islamic Extremism] [Jihadism] [Caliphate] [terrorism]*

1. INTRODUCTION

The August 2016 killing of Abu Muhammad al-Adnani in a U.S. drone attack is an important step in degrading the Islamic State (IS). His symbolic and strategic importance as a propagandist and as an overseer of the caliphate's external terror operations cannot be doubted. Adnani was in the forefront in exhorting and directing IS operations to kill Westerners. The Paris, Brussels, Munich, San Bernardino, Orlando and Nice attacks can be linked to his impressive oratorical and organizational abilities. Adnani's September 2014 audio address urged IS supporters in North America and Europe to kill Westerners by any means possible.¹ The caliphate's sympathizers in the West obeyed his command often swearing allegiance to IS before or during their killings of Europeans, Canadians and Americans.

Adnani's official IS biography is written by Turki al-Binali the caliphate's most prominent ideologue and religious authority.² Binali is a fitting proponent of IS's ideology for he was a student of Al Qaeda theorist Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi who like another Maqdisi student Abu Musab al-Zarqawi broke from his mentor.³ Binali represents the intergenerational gap between IS and Al Qaeda and how progressively the jihadist movement has radicalized. Binali justifies IS' brutality by referencing 18th and 19th century Wahhabi rule in Saudi Arabia.⁴ He is considered to be Adnani's likely successor. Binali tells us that Adnani was a committed religious student whose capacity to recite the Quran impressed all. This includes Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi the current leader of IS who was "moved" by Adnani's recitations.

Born in Syria Adnani was imprisoned by the Assad regime for his jihadist activities. He was one of the early members of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) joining the organization soon after the 2003 US invasion. He swore fidelity [bay'ah] to AQI's emir Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Binali informs us that Adnani played a critical role in the guidance of AQI's training camps. After being imprisoned by US authorities at Camp Bucca, Adnani was released by Iraqi officials after the US departure. His service to AQI led to senior positions in its Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) successor that in 2006 prematurely declared an emirate. Adnani swore loyalty to Zarqawi's successors including Abu Bakr al Baghdadi who in 2010 assumed leadership of the network. ISI's revitalized network capitalized on the power vacuum left by the US departure and the sectarian antagonisms percolating in the region.⁵

Adnani emerged as ISI's second in command and he played a pivotal role in the formation of its Syrian network. He along with Abu Muhammad al-Golani assisted in the creation of Jabhat al-Nusra

(JN) that eventually broke away from IS and later Al Qaeda (AQ) to form Jabhat Fatah al-Sham [Levant Conquest Front].⁶ His importance as a propagandist is incontrovertible for his prolific audio addresses pillory IS' many opponents that include "Zionist-Crusaders", Kurdish "apostates", the Shia, Alawites and Al Qaeda. He presents a didactic universe where IS aligned Sunnis confront a despotic world in which their struggle is divinely ordained to triumph over impossible odds. Significantly it is Adnani that declares the formation of the caliphate on June 19, 2014:

*"We clarify to the Muslims that with this declaration of the khalafah, it is incumbent of all Muslims to pledge allegiance to the Khalifah Ibrahim and support him (may Allah preserve him). The legality of all emirates, groups, states, and organizations, becomes null by the expansion of the kalafaha's authority and the arrival of its troops in their areas."*⁷

Adnani's caliphate pronouncement was reaffirmed by Baghdadi (renamed Caliph Ibrahim) in his July 2014 Grand Mosque of Mosul sermon. Within the Muslim world this declaration was considered extraordinary and controversial. Not since the liquidation of the Ottoman Empire in 1924 by Kemal Ataturk's secular state, had there been a transnational Islamic state demanding the Muslim world's loyalty. Adding religious significance the declaration was made during the advent of Ramadan.⁸ With its authority spanning across the Iraqi-Syrian territorial divide, IS altered 19th century era colonial borders.

The impact of this development cannot be overstated. IS' construction of a proto jihadist state altered the territorial integrity of two nations. Buttressing the caliphate's creation was the Iraqi army's collapse in June 2014 and IS' seizure of vast amounts of American supplied arms and its expropriation of bank accounts. With tens of thousands of well-armed fighters and vast financial network enriched by expropriations, taxation and illicit enterprise IS was a formidable force that by summer of 2014 threatened Baghdad and Iraqi Kurdistan.

Adnani's caliphate proclamation was rejected by most Muslims and proved controversial among jihadists. Though IS's predecessor was expelled from Al Qaeda's network for failing to heed its emir Ayman al-Zawahiri's directive to disband its Syrian network, Baghdadi's Mosul address intensified the intra-jihadist war between the two organizations.⁹ Central to the IS-AQ dispute is the legitimacy of Adnani's proclamation and Al Qaeda's assertion that its *caliphate* was unilaterally created without the consent of the jihadist movement.¹⁰

The controversy centers on the propriety of IS' shura [consultation] council ruling that its governing authority and its emir Baghdadi fit the necessary religious and political conditions to establish the caliphate. In his *This is the Promise of Allah* address Adnani argues that Islamic State has an obligation to declare such an entity and that Baghdadi's religious training and descent from the Prophet's tribe make him the ideal caliph.¹¹ Having given its allegiance to Taliban leader Mullah Omar, Al Qaeda refused to swear fealty to Baghdadi's state and argued that AQI's prior bay'ah to its organization obligated its successor organization to abide by its command.

Restoring the caliphate is central goal of the global jihadist movement. It is seen as the means to combat the moral rot of *jahiliyyah* [ignorance of authentic Islam] and the military means to conquer the world.¹² Jihadist theoreticians argue that Islam's incorporation of European secular influences have undone the *divine stitching* of Muslim religious order. Theological innovations [bidah] not based upon Quranic authority during the Modern era have, moreover, altered Islam's divine trajectory and stagnated its vitality. Having diminished the role of the Quran and hadith [statements and actions attributed to Muhammad] jihadists contend Islam has regressed toward jahiliyyah. Jihadi ideologues argue the decline of the Ottoman Empire and its collapse was due to these heterodox innovations.¹³

The Muslim world resurrection can, according to this narrative, proceed by returning to its original founding principles as practiced by Muhammad and his four *righteous* successors. By necessity this requires a transnational authority capable of purifying the Muslim world of *apostasy* and defending the *ummah* from external threats. Echoing this tradition Adnani's declares "So rush O Muslims and gather around your khalifah, so that you may return as you were once for ages, kings of the earth and knights of war."¹⁴

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Adnani's messaging is reinforced in its official English language magazines *Dabiq* and its successor *Rumiyah* that closely mirrors his ideas underscoring his significance. *Rumiyah* [Rome] venerates

Adnani as a martyr who will be avenged.¹⁵ Adnani's speeches express a Salafi-jihadist world view composed of three core principles *al-wala' al- bara'*, *jihad* and *takfir*. This essay has a tripartite structure. First, it examines Adnani's audio addresses built around *al-wala' al- bara'*, *jihad* and *takfir*. Second, it examines his role in the caliphate's external terror operations. Finally, it assesses the significance of his death.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Adnani's audio addresses propound key IS themes that the Muslim world is in a state of discord [*fitna*] and ignorance [*jahiliyyah*] that can only be overcome through fortification of medieval Islamic values. This crisis he contends is exacerbated by a *Zionist-Crusader* alliance with Iran that aims to annihilate righteous Sunnis who will join with IS in a final prophetic apocalyptic war. He depicts IS aligned Sunnis as facing a vast diabolical conspiracy. In *That They Live By Proof* he declares:

*"The whole world has not come together to wage war against us except because we command the worship of Allah, alone without partner, and we incur others to do so. We make wala based upon it and we declare the disbelief of those who abandon it. We warn of shirk [polytheism] in the worship of Allah, and we are severe against it. We make enemies based upon it and we declare the disbelief of those engage in it. This is our call. This is our religion. For this alone, we fight the world and they fight us"*¹⁶

Al-wala' al-bala' [loyalty and disavowal] shapes Adnani's Sunni centric world view. This doctrine separates a community of believers from what it views as a despotic world.¹⁷ It conveys a communal identity [*umma*] governed by a shared faith that dissociates from the world. The doctrine divides the world between a sphere of virtuous belief and an outside order governed by wickedness. It seeks to create a community congruent with early Islamic practice whose virtuous ideal is Muhammad's Medina community.

By forming a spiritual refuge isolated from *apostasy*, jihadists aspire to expand their micro-community that through violent conquest. Nelly Lahoud notes *al-wala' wal- bara'* is a key principle of the jihadist movement¹⁸. It is, moreover, an individualized concept for each jihadist can determine community's standards. This may explain rivalries within and the progressive radicalization of the jihadi movement for each jihadi has his standard of doctrinal purity. Taken as a collectivity Adnani audio declarations speak to a fanatical and paranoid Sunni centered perspective.

His 2011 address exhorts Sunni tribes to reject the US funded and armed Awakening Councils that badly degraded AQI between 2007-2010 as enforcers of a *Crusader-Zionist* plot to oppress Sunnis and empower the Shia.

*"O, our people the Sunnis! O, you, the tribes of good! You have tried all regimes, and you have witness the treachery of all these parties and those failing perverted groups. ...You are invited to join hands with your sons, the mujahidin. To form a solid front against the Crusader-Rafidi plots and the Magi Iranian expansion in Mesopotamia and all Muslim lands; so as to restore your Islamic caliphate..."*¹⁹

Though Adnani advocates Sunni interests it is clear that it represents a narrow subset excluding all co-religionists unaligned with Islamic State. He describes the Awakening Councils as "satanic sahawat" and he condemns Sunnis whose lack of religious virtue and opposition to IS make them diabolical traitors.²⁰ Adnani's castigation of Sunni tribal leaders allied with Baghdad is reinforced by its 2011-2014 assassination campaign that killed hundreds of Awakening Movement members.²¹

The Islamic State's decimation of the Sons of Iraq Awakening militias plays a critical role in its shattering of the Iraqi's army's morale and facilitated IS' capture of much of North West Iraq. Adnani does, however, offer former Sunni opponents reconciliation and redemption to fortify its ranks. Despite its savage violence ISI did engage in tribal engagement with leaders willing to accept its authority. Where tribes refuse to swear bay'ah to Baghdadi they are annihilated.

As a guiding principle *al-wala' al-bara'* propensity for violence is rooted in early Islamic history. The Kharajites were so wedded to Muhammad's Medina ideal that they rebelled against his successors for their Quranic *deviations*.²² Their desire to create an ideal micro-culture led them to expel those whose faith they questioned. Early Islamic rule was often convulsed by internecine violence driven by doctrinal conflicts and power struggles.²³

Al-wala' al- bara' lends itself to a takfirist world view. Jihadists sharply separate good and evil. Their demonization of the outside world propels them toward violent confrontation. Since jihadists view

Muslim society as stricken by a post-Islamic ignorance [jahiliyyah] most co-religionists are *apostates*.²⁴ Jihadists see these societies as gravely ill for they venerate man's law over God's rightful sovereignty (*hakimiya*). They view societal ignorance as so pronounced that that missionary preaching [*da'wa*] has little utility. With regimes so implacably vile jihadists only recourse is societal separation and rebellion.

If jihadists are to perform their *divinely mandated* mission to purify Islam they must resort to violence against regime supporters. Given theological prohibitions against murdering fellow Muslims, this requires co-religionists expiation from the faith. Historically *takfir* was practiced selectively against impious individuals subject to clerical adjudication.²⁵

Over time, however, jihadists expanded *takfir's* scope. Some expiations are political (regime officials and their supporters) others sectarian [Shi'ites, Alawites and Druse) and some reflect intra-jihadist quarrels. The latter is seen in the fighting between the Islamic State and Al Qaeda.²⁶ Takfirists often reference Ibn Taymiyyah medieval rulings on *apostate* Mongol Muslim rulers, Shi'ites, Alawites and Duse interpreting them broadly.²⁷ Abu Musab al-Zaraqwi, for example, expanded Taymiyyah ruling that Shi'ite leaders should be killed into a sectarian genocidal campaign.²⁸ The Islamic State represents the crest of this progressive radicalization that can be seen in Adnani's discourse. He presents the Shia [rafidah] as *apostates* and *devils* in league with a nefarious Zionist-Crusader world order and he describes their towns and villages are "nests of treachery" and "centers of filthiness".²⁹

Resorting to takfirist excommunication legitimates killing Muslims. By preserving intra-community purity jihadists defend an *authentic* interpretation of the faith. This requires a strategy of offensive warfare [*jihad*] to (1) ensure the *umma's* protection and (2) expand the boundaries of its governance. Jihad and martyrdom are the centerpiece of IS' propaganda

Jihad's meaning invites controversy.³⁰ Multiple interpretations engender complex doctrinal and definitional debates. Historically jihad involved personal struggle with one's faith [*greater jihad*] and defensive war against aggressors [*lesser jihad*]. Modern jihadists have expanded it to include aggressive warfare against *apostates* and their *infidel* masters. It is a strategy of expansive war that seeks the annihilation of all enemies. Accordingly Adnani's pleads:

*"O, Allah. Support us against America and its allies of the Jews, Crusaders, Rafidah, atheists, groups, fronts, and apostate factions, and against the Nusayriyyah [Alawites] and their allies"*³¹

Jihadist doctrine seeks the creation of a pure Islamist micro-culture. Despite their opposition to the Islamic State's *caliphate*, Al Qaeda ideologues envision an emirate to lead the global jihadist struggle. Abu Bakr Naji, for example, advocates creating a nascent jihadist state from disorder and upheaval.³² Once implanted this micro-community would serve as an insurrectionary jihadist vanguard committed to regional destabilization.

Naji's book *The Management of Savagery* is viewed as the Islamic State's model for warfare and Sharia governance.³³ In Dabiq first issue IS sketches Naji prescribed path to power falsely attributing his stages to Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) founder Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.³⁴ The Islamic State sees its headquarters in Raqqa as its new Medina and its caliphate's governing blueprint. According to Aymen Jawad al-Tamimi Raqqa's administrative and judicial rulings have been extended throughout IS's Iraqi-Syrian *wilaya* [provinces].³⁵

What makes the Islamic State distinctive within the jihadist movement is its apocalyptic orientation. Such sentiments are relatively absent in Al Qaeda's discourse. Will McCant argues Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri sharply criticized ISI for its apocalyptic orientations.³⁶ The Islamic State's envisions an apocalyptic war against Crusaders in Syria that where its predestined victory in the Syrian town of Dabiq will lead to its conquest of Rome. The caliphate's English language magazines echo this millenarian word view.³⁷ Prior to the Islamic State only the 19th century Sudanese Mahdiyyah defined itself as an apocalyptic jihadist movement. Within this eschatological context Adnani predicts:

*"We will conquer your Rome, break your crosses, and enslave your women, by permission of Allah, the Exalted. This is His promise to us. He is glorified and he does not fail in His promise. If we do not reach it that time, than our children and grandchildren will reach it, and they will sell your sons and slaves at the slave market"*³⁸.

Complementing his oratorical skills was his position within the Islamic States media and terror operations. Adnani reportedly oversaw production values and content for IS' execution videos of

enemy soldiers, homosexuals, western hostages, sorcerers, adulterers and Christians. The theatrical punishments (burials, drownings, immolations, beheadings, fire squad, casting people off of tall buildings) graphically shown were designed to inspire fear and generate support from young jihadists attracted to IS' video game violence.

Featured in many videos are European rap artists whose hip hop messages are designed to recruit Western fighters. In his profile of thirty thousand Syrian foreign fighters Richard Barrett documents that vast majority of these fighters are young males who dominate in the ranks of the Islamic State soldiers.³⁹ Among the five thousand European fighters French, Belgian and British nationals are prominently displayed in IS' videos including the late British executioner Mohammad Emwazi nicknamed *Jihadi John* and Abdelhamid Abaaoud the organizer of the November 2015 Paris attacks who would later die in a police raid.⁴⁰

Adnani, moreover, directed IS external terror operations across the world. Based on testimony by a German IS defector Adnani screened European candidates trained in the caliphate's camps to carry out the Paris and Brussels assaults.⁴¹ French and Belgian fighters were especially enthusiastic about committing attacks against their home countries. The Brussels suburb of Molenbeek has been a den for IS recruitment and terror planning.

Working with French ideologue Fabien Clain and Belgian team organizer Abdelhamid Abaaoud foreign fighters were trained, guided and dispatched to Europe to sow chaos.⁴² Though some plots were disrupted; others succeeded spectacularly. The training these teams received increased the lethality of IS' terror campaign. The caliphate's external operations in November 2015 killed more than 130 people across four locations in Paris and in March 2016 over 30 people perished in Brussels when IS terrorists attacked a metro line and airport." IS operations in Turkey have prioritized the targeting of Kurds and areas inhabited by Westerners. Its attacks outside the Blue Mosque and Ataturk International Airport in Istanbul were designed to destroy the tourism industry.

Beyond directing teams to kill Westerners, Adnani hoped to inspire *lone wolf* and *homegrown* terrorists. Adani's incendiary style can be seen in the passage below that eerily foreshadows attacks by IS sympathizers. His September 2014 address urges IS follower to:

*"If you kill a disbelieving American or European-especially the spiteful and filthy French-or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbelievers from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries they entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely on Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be. Smash his head with a rock, or slaughter him with a knife, or run over him with your car."*⁴³

Since Adnani's call over two dozen plots or attacks have been committed in the West by Islamic State sympathizers. Heeding his entreaty Europeans and North Americans have been stabbed, bombed, axed, shot, beheaded, and in the most lethal *lone wolf* attack a IS sympathizer in Nice ran over 86 Bastille Day spectators with a tanker truck. Significantly the vast majority of those killed or wounded have been civilians. Trains, parade grounds, concerts, restaurants, shops, night clubs have been attacked. Many of the attackers swore fidelity to IS before they committed their atrocities.

Though it is impossible to gauge Adnani exact influence (terrorists have complex motives and multiple allegiances) it is reasonable to assume that his exhortations had some impact. The frequency of IS attacks greatly eclipses Al Qaeda's post 9-11 assaults against the West suggesting that in Europe and North America the caliphate has many more supporters than Zawahiri's network. Al Qaeda's signature *far enemy* strategy of attacking the Western homeland has been appropriated by the Islamic State. The chart on the next page sketches IS directed and inspired attacks in the West.

Islamic State Directed or Inspired Attacks in the West

Date of Attack	Location of Attack	Weapon Used in Attack	Killed and Wounded in the Attack
May 2014	Jewish Museum in Brussels, Belgium	Automatic Weapon	Four People Killed by IS trained terrorist who is later detained and in France and extradited to Belgium
June 2014	Endeavor Hills, Australia	Knife	Two Counter-Terrorism Officials stabbed by IS sympathizer who is killed by Police
October	Saint-Jean-sur-	Car	Two Soldiers Killed by IS sympathizer

2014	Richelieu, Canada		who runs over them and later detained
October 2014	Ottawa, Canada	Automatic weapon	One soldier shot and killed and one policeman wounded by IS lone wolf who storms in Ottawa Parliament building who is killed by police
October 2014	New York City	Hatchet	One person wounded before IS sympathizer killed by police
December 2014	Paris, France	Knife	Three police wounded by IS sympathizer who is killed by police during the attack
January 2015	Paris, France	Automatic Weapon	IS sympathizer takes people hostage at a Kosher grocery store killing four before being shot dead by police
February 2015	Copenhagen, Denmark	Automatic Weapon	Attack at free speech event at a synagogue leaves no fatalities. One guard at a Jewish Cultural center later is later killed by IS sympathizer
May 2015	Garland, Texas Curtis Cutwell Center	Automatic Weapons	Two IS sympathizers are killed after they attack a free speech event featuring cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad
June 2015	Saint-Quentin=Fallavier, France	Knife and Car	IS supporter beheads his employer and tries to ram his car into a gas cylinder outside a factory. Later detained and commits suicide in prison
August 2015	Thalys Train Attack	Automatic weapon and pistol	One passenger shot and wounded before IS supporter subdued by three passengers
November 2015	Paris, France	Automatic Weapons, Grenades, and Suicide Explosive Vests	130 killed and 368 wounded when IS trained teams attack four different locations
December 2015	San Bernardino, California	Automatic Weapons	Two IS sympathizers kill 14 people and wound 24 at office Christmas party later killed by police
March 2016	Brussels, Belgium	Automatic Weapons, Bombs and Suicide Vests	Four IS terrorists kill 32 people and wound 340 at attacks at the airport and metro. Three of the suspect die in the attack and one is later detained
June 2016	Orlando, Florida	Automatic Weapon	IS supporter kills 49 people at gay nightclub
June 2016	Paris, France	Knife	IS sympathizer beheads French police officer and his female companion in their residence before being killed by police
July 2016	Wurzburg, Germany	Axe	Four train passengers wounded by axe wielding IS supporter who is later killed by police
July 2016	Ansbach, Germany	Bomb	IS supporter blows himself up outside an outdoors music concert injuring 15 people
July 2016	Saint-Etienne du-Rouvray Church attack	Knife	French priest beheaded and three people wounded by two IS supporters who are killed by police when they storm the church
July 2016	Nice, France	19 Ton Cargo Truck	IS lone wolf drives over bystanders watching a Bastille Day Parade killing 86 people and injuring 434 before being shot dead by police
August 2016	Charleroi, Belgium	Machete	Two police women wounded by IS supporter who is killed by police

Source: Harleen Gambhir, "ISIS Campaign in Europe" March 25, 2016 Institute for the Study of War accessed at <http://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-campaign-europe-march-2016>

4. CONCLUSION

While it is premature to predict the caliphate's demise, there are signs that IS extremism is eroding its popularity. Declining popular support has been exacerbated by the coalition's relentless air campaign targeting the caliphate's military positions and finances. US military authorities estimate that 45,000 IS fighters have been killed and the caliphate has lost over forty percent of its Iraqi territory in Iraq and 20 percent of its Syrian holdings.⁴⁴ Precision air strikes have targeted IS oil wells, natural gas facilities, transport tankers and banks crippling the caliphate financial base. By some estimates revenue from clandestine oil sales are down by some two-thirds.⁴⁵ Buttressed by 5,000 US military advisors Iraqi security forces are recovering offensive capability.

The caliphate's military reversals between 2014-2016 at Mosul, Dam, Amerli, Kobane, Tikrit, Palmira, Ramadi, and Falluja are notable. The jihadist state's twin capitals of Mosul and Raqqa are now threatened. The probable fall of Mosul comes after the embarrassing capture of the *prophetic* town of Dabiq by Turkish supported Free Syrian Army (FSA) rebels threatens to derail the caliphate's apocalyptic narrative. Kurdish, regime and international forces aligned against the caliphate has proven difficult to resist. Reports of IS defections and summary executions within the group suggests morale is low. With diminished resources to pay fighters and maintain services IS's administration is forced to raise taxation further eroding its support. Efforts by states to restrict foreign fighters from going to Syria and tighter control over the Turkish border deny the caliphate the means to replenish its shrinking forces. IS, however, has responded vigorously to these challenges. Its demise is anything but guaranteed.

Adnani's reign as IS's chief spokesman elicited contrasting assessments. His colorful language (he describes President Obama as a "mule of the Jews") no doubt was designed to inflame, provoke, amuse and generate support.⁴⁶ Analysts often mocked Adnani's grandiose style, Olympian confidence and hyperbolic language seeing it as delusional and fearful.⁴⁷ These critiques underestimate his strategic role as a propagandist and director of IS media and terror operations.

Adnani's polemical skills and organizational acumen will be difficult to replace for a movement under extreme pressure. Significantly the US directed war against the caliphate has killed six of the seven of IS' original shura council members.⁴⁸ Adnani's death does not end the Islamic State that is likely to survive not as a government but as a global insurgent movement that has vastly eclipsed Al Qaeda ----, a fact that many terror analysts continue to resist. Perhaps foreshadowing his own demise Adnani's last audio address in May 2016 declared:

"Would you be victorious if you kill ash-Shishani, Abu Bakr, Abu Zayd, or Abum Amir? No! Indeed victory is the defeat of one's opponent. Or do you, O America, consider defeat to be the loss of a city or the loss of land? Were we defeated when we lost cities in Iraq and were in the desert without any city or land? And would we be defeated and you victorious if you were to take Mosul or Sirte or Raqqa or even take all of the cities and we were to return to our initial condition? Certainly not! True defeat is the loss of willpower and the desire to fight."⁴⁹

Adnani's warning suggests that the IS movement like its Al Qaeda progenitor will endure. ISI's 2012-2014 reconstitution fed off the sectarian and political antagonisms raging in Syria and Iraq. While the IS's state project is likely to be destroyed its remission to insurgency will guarantee its resilience. Neither the Syrian civil war nor the ethno-sectarian conflicts in Iraq show any sign of abating. Western forms of rationality mean nothing to jihadists who are content to build earthly *gates of paradise*. Barring that they are content to be gloriously *martyred* in the pursuit of their totalitarian utopian project. Though the Islamic State is far from defeated Adnani's killing is welcome news and a pointed reminder of the fate awaiting his successor.

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