

Capture of Mosul from Islamic State

Why in news?

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The capture of the Grand al-Nuri Mosque in Mosul by Iraqi forces, from where Islamic State (IS) proclaimed the caliphate nearly three years ago, marks the end of the 'caliphate' in Iraq.

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Where did IS come from?

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- It started out as the Jamaat al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, established by the Jordanian Al-Zarqawi in 1999.

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- In 2004, al-Zarqawi took an oath of loyalty to Osama bin Laden, and his organisation became the **al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)**.

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- Al-Zarqawi was killed in 2006, but AQI continued to hold significant territory in Iraq.

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- It began to call itself 'Islamic State in Iraq' and, after taking parts of Syria in 2013, the **'Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham'**, or ISIS.

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- Since al-Sham, the area around the eastern Mediterranean Sea (including Syria) is translated in English as "the Levant", ISIS became **'Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant'**, or ISIL.

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- ISIL gained prominence in early 2014 when it drove Iraqi government forces out of key cities, followed by its capture of Mosul.

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- In June 2014 it announced the formation of the global Islamic "Caliphate".

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- ISIS/ISIL thus dropped the geographical connotations to its name, and became just the **'Islamic State'**, or IS.

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What is their ideology?

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- ISIL is a theocracy, proto-state and a Salafi or Wahhabi group.
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- It follows an **extremist interpretation of Islam**, promotes religious violence, and regards Muslims who do not agree with its interpretations as infidels or apostates.
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- It represents the **restoration of the caliphate of early Islam**, with all the political, religious and eschatological ramifications that this would imply.
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- A caliphate is an area containing an Islamic Leader known as a 'Caliph' a person considered a religious successor to the Islamic prophet, Muhammad, and a leader of the entire Muslim community.
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- When the caliphate was proclaimed, all who do not believe in the group's interpretation of the Quran will be killed.
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What is their source of revenue?

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- Proceeds from the occupation of territory - including control of banks, oil and gas reservoirs, taxation, extortion, and robbery.
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- Kidnapping for ransom.
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- Donations from Saudi Arabia and Gulf states, often disguised as meant for humanitarian charity.
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- Material support provided by foreign fighters.
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- Fundraising through modern communication networks.
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Why were they successful?

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- Unlike al Qaeda, ISIS has proven to be more brutal and more effective at controlling territory it has seized.
- In spite of their medieval ideology, **they run a modern and an effective administration.**
- ISIL is headed and run by **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**. Advising him is a **cabinet of senior leaders**, while its operations in Iraq and Syria are controlled by **local governors**.
- Beneath the leaders are councils on finance, leadership, military matters, legal matters - including decisions on executions.
- From the cabinet and the governors to the financial and legislative bodies, ISIS' bureaucratic hierarchy looks a lot like those of some of the Western countries.

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What are some of the important events?

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- 2004: Abu Musab al Zarqawi establishes al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).
- April 2010: Abu Bakr al Baghdadi becomes the leader of ISI.
- July 2012 - July 2013: ISI launches its **“Breaking the Walls” campaign**. It carries out 24 bombings and eight prison breaks, freeing jihadists who had participated in AQI attacks.
- March 2013: **Raqqa falls** to the Syrian opposition, and the IS started operating in Raqqa.
- December 2013: ISIS militants in Iraq take control of Fallujah and parts of Ramadi.
- **June 10: ISIS takes over Mosul, launching its largest offensive to date.**
- May 2015: ISIS take overs Ramadi, Iraq and seizes the ancient Syrian city of Palmyra.

- **June 2017:** Iraqi government troops captured the ruined mosque at the heart of the IS's de facto capital Mosul, and the Iraq PM has declared the end of caliphate.

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What is the significance of Mosul recapture?

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- Iraqi PM has managed to **stitch together a difficult alliance** to fight the jihadists.
- Despite conflicting interests the joint front they (between Iraq, Iran & US) forged against the IS could be a **replicable model elsewhere**, especially in Syria where the IS still controls territories.

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Source: The Hindu

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