

Intellectual Deviance and Terrorism: A Perspective on ISIS'S Terrorist Approach

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Abstract

The unprecedented shift in contemporary terrorist acts and the rise of terrorist and extremist groups such as ISIS, which threaten the security of societies and the peaceful coexistence of nations, threaten the stability and security of societies around the world. This paper attempts to analyze and understand the discourse of the most prominent and important leaders of ISIS (Abu Musab al-Zarqawi the founder and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the caliph), and identify the manifestations of intellectual deviations and distortions in the logic, doctrine, and ideology of their terrorist ideology to disseminate ideas with the aim of entrenching violence with intellectual narratives that transcend social and political boundaries within a broader theoretical framework. The results indicate that the extremist religious ideology adopted by the terrorists in the context of this paper (Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi) is the product of intellectual deviations and behavioral distortions that came out in a religious cloak, as the formation and organization of brutal factional groups is evidence of the rejection of mother societies and the departure from the order and collective behavior of safe societies, and thus the formation of incubators and gatherings of supporters and followers who share these leaders' ideas and orientations in searching for oneself or escaping from the lived reality as a result of the difficulties of belonging and adaptation, especially in the presence of the resonant religious speeches and the promises of the greatest victory and the establishment of their imagined utopia.

Key words: Intellectual Deviance, ISIS, Extremist Religious, ISIS's Discourse, Ideology.
Introduction

Introduction

ISIS attracted the attention of politicians and academics around the world at least until 2017, not to mention the great media attention and focus on its activities and the rhetoric of the media, which shocked the world and its societies with the unprecedented barbarism and brutality of human life, which exceeded all norms, laws, principles governing the security and stability of individuals, societies around the world, and worse than that, it tried to appear in the cloak of the Islamic religion, which is innocent of it, in fact, ISIS's terrorist approach is a departure from the heavenly religions and their spiritual principles. The organization's approach to employing an unprecedented terrorist strategy to achieve its goals on the ground in Iraq and Syria, and exploiting the media and propaganda to attract recruits regionally and globally, has prompted researchers and academics to research the organization's strategy and the root causes of its emergence and influence, including attempts to link ISIS terrorism to religious extremism, which is an abstract approach based on the widespread use and employment of religious texts in ISIS's discourse¹, while the approach of transferring ideas to the lived reality of those in

¹ Cinoglu, H. (2010). Sociological understanding of the relationship between terrorism and religion. International Journal of Human Sciences. See also, Juergensmeyer, M. (2013). Religion as a Cause of Terrorism. In *The roots of terrorism* (pp. 133-144). Routledge. See also, Tarlow, P. E. (2017). The interaction of religion and

charge of the terrorist project under the cloak of religion requires paying attention to deviations Intellectual and imagined outcomes and the process of transferring and applying them within a broader strategy aimed at influencing the targeted communities. The clash of ideas requires the refutation of false claims and ideological deviations with strong argument and sound logic within the context of a comprehensive national strategy aimed at immunizing individuals and protecting the social fabric from the threat of terrorism and terrorists. In fact, contemporary social studies have dealt with terrorism and terrorists extensively, including through psychological theories of terrorism, which have mostly ruled out a causal relationship between mental disorder/illness and terrorism; The behavioral psychology, which is the focus of this paper in research and discussion.

Intellectual deviance

Intellectual deviation is a relatively changing concept², as it is a concept that differs from one society to another, according to the moral values, religious beliefs, and social, political, and cultural system prevailing in a society. It is related to the outputs of human behavior in action or discourse, and therefore it is the product of the stock of thought, moral values, and religious standards of individuals based on their orientations and perceptions of social reality, or the rigidity in these tendencies and perceptions as a result of social isolation, or the rigidity in ideological opinions and tendencies, and thus alienation from oneself and the social environment in a way that hinders constructive interaction in the social fabric and the existing system.³

Moreover, the phenomenon of intellectual deviance is one of the issues of great importance and priority in societies, especially in the psychological, social, religious, and intellectual fields, due to its great impact on the security of societies and individuals, and the stability of countries.⁴ In fact, in recent decades, this phenomenon has gained particular importance due to its growing association with the extremist ideology and ideas of contemporary terrorist groups, most notably ISIS, which has had a very serious impact on safe societies around the world in general, and the lives of individuals in particular, not to mention destroying infrastructure, state capabilities and unity⁵.

The impact of intellectual deviation and extremist ideas is one of the most serious security issues facing countries and societies, especially in the Arab region, as it targets the values, customs and traditions of societies and individuals, which constitute the moral, religious and social controls necessary for the stability and security of human societies.⁶ As a result of employing these intellectual deviations with ideological and religious motives based on imaginary ideas that are outside the controls and principles of societies in peaceful coexistence, moderation, moderation, and the rejection of extremism and extremism.

In the context of contemporary terrorism and the ideology of aggression and aggression among terrorists, the apparent involvement in deliberate murder and intimidation of already or

terrorism. *IJSTH*, (16), 1-24. See also, Carvalho, J. P. (2026). 15 Religion and Terrorism: The Religious Utility Hypothesis. *The Cambridge Handbook on the Economics of Terrorism*, 332.

² Hassan, S. M., & Al-Mijbil, A. A. S. (2024). The community environment and its impact on intellectual deviation (inmates of the Directorate of Intelligence and Combating Terrorism Prison/Iraq).

³ Rapley, M. (2004). The social construction of intellectual disability. Cambridge University Press.

⁴ Abdellatif, C. A. (2026). Education and the Problem of Achieving Intellectual Security for Youth. *Social Sciences Journal*, 20(1), 51-66.

⁵ Gharaibeh, Y., & Ibrahim, Z. (2024). Legal Support for Sustainable Development in Middle East. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & Planning*, 19(4), 1439.

⁶ Al-Jedaiah, N. A. (2021). The Role of Intellectual Security in Countering Extremism and Terrorism. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(8).

discursive societies is undoubtedly part of the context of intellectual distortions and deviations that are alien to logic and that call for deviation from the prevailing social, political, and even ideological systems. Thus, detachment from the collective and inherited balance that governs societies and turn into a factional system that governs the individual opinions and whims of those in charge of terrorist projects, who claim perfection and monopolize knowledge and knowledge of religion. They call those outside their circle ignorant, infidel and tyranny, and they evoke the distant past under the cloak of the Islamic religion into a lived reality governed by the regulations⁷, legislation based on the Islamic religion, and the constructive coexistence based on peace and harmony that represents the spirit and teachings of the true religion⁸.

ISIS's terrorist strategy refers to its extremist ideological character in achieving political and social goals, as it has sought to invade and distort sound ideas by various means, cultural, religious and media, by challenging the principles and ethics of safe societies, weakening their capabilities, distracting the efforts of the state and individuals, provoking strife and doubts in their social fabric, and questioning the principles. The values that regulate social cohesion, and the replacement of prevailing concepts, values and ideas with terrorist principles with a religious cloak aimed at destroying the intellectual and social system of individuals and societies.⁹

Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi "The Founder"

Al-Zarqawi, who became famous in Iraq at the beginning of the third millennium, after his terrorist activities received growing international media coverage, took terrorist ideology to a new stage, an ideology based on the literal interpretation of the Holy Qur'an and the systematic selection of Sunni verses and hadiths to justify terrorism and brutality, interpretations that are not based on the logic and methodology of the Islamic religion as Muslims know it.

On more than one occasion, Zarqawi's speech demonstrated the Salafi Takfiri ideology and the extremist intellectual trajectory of his terrorist approach, which translates Salafi-jihadi concepts into takfir of the other and the role of leadership (imamate) for Muslims around the world, and his rejection of all forms of political systems, legislation, and laws governing safe societies in the Arab region and around the world¹⁰.

In July 2003, Al-Zarqawi addressed a letter to his clan in Jordan (the Bani Hassan clan), one of the largest tribes in Jordan, which carried with it many Quranic verses, hadiths, and religious interpretations that reflect the distortions and intellectual deviations that Al-Zarqawi elaborated on, addressing a wide segment of the Jordanian people with the aim of attracting their religious and tribal emotions and thus dissociating themselves from the social fabric and the existing system, and revolting against the lived reality and existing customs according to the sheikh's perspective in the religious cloak. Most of his message is based on texts from the Holy Qur'an, the hadiths of the Prophet, and interpretations that reflect his intellectual principles and ideological premises, for example, he mentioned that God Almighty created the creatures in this great universe, sent the messengers, and sent down the books. Calls for jihad were issued, and people were divided into two groups: the guardians of God and the guardians of Satan.¹¹

⁷ Juergensmeyer, M. (2018). How Cosmic War Ends: The Case of Isis. *Numen*, 65(2-3), 125-140.

⁸ Khwailah, K. M. (2025). International trade and environmental protection: reconciling competing interests under the WTO law. *Multidisciplinary Science Journal*, 8(3), 2026220.

⁹ Ter Haar, G. (2005). Religion: source of conflict or resource for peace?. In *Bridge or Barrier* (pp. 3-34). Brill.

¹⁰ Shakhathreh, H. J. M., Salman, A., Aldrou, K. K. A. R., Comite, U., & Alazzam, F. A. F. (2023). Analyzing the relationship between inventory policies and CSR practices: Case of Jordanian companies. *Economics*, 11(s1), 141-163.

¹¹ Spencer, R. (2015). *The complete infidel's guide to ISIS*. Simon and Schuster.

The Almighty said: "And We have revealed to the nations that you should worship God and avoid the Taghut" (An-Nahl: 36). This is an explicit call to reject the existing political systems and legislation regulating societies, including Islamic and Arab, whose constitutions and legislation stipulate that the Islamic religion is their religion and the religion of their societies, and that their legislation is derived from Islam and the Holy Qur'an. Thus, people are divided into two groups: the guardians of God (those who follow and obey Zarqawi and his followers) and the guardians of Satan (those who are outside Zarqawi's circle, approach and orders). In other words, people are divided into "protectors of the merciful" Those outside his party are "protectors of Satan" and should be expelled from religion and thus killed. Zarqawi also forbade the worship of false gods (leaders and rulers) who rule people against the orders of God Almighty. He claimed that the circle of atonement and apostasy expands to include countries that adopt secular constitutions and laws.

Moreover, calling those in charge of political regimes as tyrants (infidels) and expelling them from the religion of Islam, which is contrary to the spirit of the true Islamic religion, and the reason for this is that issuing rulings to excommunicate the other and expel him from the religion of Islam is a matter that belongs to God Almighty, the Creator alone. He imposed his alleged leadership on others, under the cloak of the Islamic religion, which rejects this proposition in its entirety. Islam is a religion of mercy, moderation, moderation and peaceful coexistence.

Once again, Zarqawi reveals his intellectual deviation, extremist ideas, and beliefs in extremism, terrorism, and extreme hostility to the Jordanian regime in court in the "Pledge of Allegiance to the Imam" case. "O people, why do I call you to survive and you call me to hell?" he said. "You rule other than the law of Allah, and people in this age have taken other forms of gods by obeying them and following them, so they have permitted what they desire, what is forbidden and what is lawful. Those who followed them considered them gods, and this is a clear indication that he claims that his path is the path of victory and salvation, and that it is the right way, and that people worship the rulers by obeying them and following them, which is an explicit call to reject the existing systems, norms and legislations that regulate society¹².

Zarqawi's letter to his tribe and his statement before the court showed his terrorist ideology and organizational affiliation, using many Quranic verses, prophetic hadiths and statements by religious scholars. He also declared himself and his group to be fighters for Islam and Muslims, living under injustice and facing oppressors who have wronged Islam and Muslims. The Jordanian regime and its employees have been placed outside the circle of religion. He showed open hostility towards the Jordanian government and people, describing the king as a tyrant and the employees of the institution as infidels, and followers of a secular system established by those who deviated from the goals of monotheism and unity in the Islamic religion.¹³

Therefore, based on Zarqawi's discourse that focused on monotheism, which is the main pillar of Muslims, and on God's legitimization of jihad (killing) in Islam, Zarqawi's Salafi-takfiri ideology refers to clear intellectual distortions and deviations, calling for the rejection of laws and legislations, and calling on Muslims to embrace Islam! He also criticized the country's political system, which adheres to Islamic law in its rule, describing it as an infidel regime that kills people and spreads corruption in the name of democracy. If you understood that blatant

¹² Jarah, B. A. F., Alzubi, E. A., Ineizeh, N. I., Almatarneh, Z., Al-Khawajas, H. A., & Al-Jarrahs, M. M. (2025). The relationship between the accounting information system and perceived performance: The moderating effect of managerial qualifications according to company law. *Calitatea*, 26(208), 50-59.

¹³ Sarmad, Arqawi (2011). Available online: http://sarmad-agrawi.blogspot.com/2011/01/blog-post_8657.html. Also: https://www.cia.gov/library/abbottabad-compound/DC/DCB8B311E3F082561D5F534A01EC87FA_Zarqawi-Ver2.pdf.

disbelief lies in relying on legislators, whether they are scholars, rulers, sheikhs, or others, and if you were aware of the words of Allah Almighty: "Allah does not forgive shirk by Him, but He forgives whom He wills less than that" (al-Nisa', 48), you would understand that I am calling you to the truth. Moreover, he tried to spread extremist ideas by employing them and putting them into practice on the ground, including the formation of specific think tanks or think tanks. His first attempt was with the Tawhid Organization (Allegiance of the Imam) in Jordan in 1994, and shortly thereafter, he was arrested along with his followers and imprisoned. It then moved to Jund al-Sham in Afghanistan in 2000, and ended with the Organization for Tawhid and Jihad in Iraq in 2002. Zarqawi announced the first official statement of his organization, Tawhid and Jihad, by signing him as "Emir of the Organization for Tawhid and Jihad" during the naval attack on the port of Basra, followed by a broadcast in May 2004 in which Zarqawi ¹⁴ beheaded U.S. citizens Nicholas Yavan and Berg, and the execution was widely circulated on social media. This execution launched a media tool to serve the terrorist project, particularly ¹⁵ to attract and recruit fighters.

Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi "The Caliph"

In fact, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has been credited with many audio recordings and videos that were released by the group and circulated in the media around the world, but in this approach, the focus will be on the videos in which al-Baghdadi appeared, focusing on his rhetorical style and the intended intellectual context in which they were delivered and on occasions that were crucial and pivotal in the group's life. These are the video in 2014, in which he declared the so-called caliphate, which is the peak of the group's control and spread, and the video in which al-Baghdadi appeared for the second time, which was published in 2019 after the organization lost most of its command and organizational structures after the international coalition to fight the organization launched a large-scale military campaign in Iraq and Syria ¹²¹⁶.

In June 2014 at the Great Mosque in the Iraqi city of Mosul, al-Baghdadi made his first public appearance wearing the cloak of a Muslim imam and ascending the pulpit at the Mosul Mosque, addressing members of the group and Muslims around the world, announcing the establishment of a new state (the caliphate) after the group took control of Mosul, Iraq's largest city, and large areas of Iraq and Syria, and called on all Muslims around the world to join the so-called young Islamic caliphate.

In this sermon, al-Baghdadi declared himself the sole leader of the Islamic Ummah, in a clear detachment from reality, taking advantage of the security and political chaos in Iraq and Syria, and the rapid spread of the organization, rejecting all political regimes and entities in the Arab region and Islamic countries as well as other countries of the world. "O Muslims everywhere, good news for you and wait for the good. Hold your heads high, for today, by the grace of God, you have a state and a caliphate, which will restore to you your dignity, your strength, your

¹⁴Abo- Mua'ab, Z. (2007). Shining words. Available online: <https://alqaagate.org/vb/forum/ac/ap/3673-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B0%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B9%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D8%B1%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%8A>.

¹⁵ Levitt (2003b); "Fugitive Cast in Role as Super-Villain," The Los Angeles Times, March 7, 2004; BBC News, "Profile: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi." Bin Sewid, who was captured by Jordanian authorities soon after the assassination, has confessed that al-Zarqawi provided funding and weapons for the murder.

¹⁶ Almatarneh, Z., Alawneh, N. F., Al-Jarrah, M. M., Alzubi, E. A., & Jarah, B. A. F. (2026). Legal Challenges and Digital Accounting Adoption in Jordanian Commercial Companies: The Moderating Role of Legislative Solutions. Journal of Organizational Behavior Research, 11(1-2026), 178-189.

rights and your leadership. It is a state in which the Arab and the non-Arab, the white and the black, the East and the West are brothers." It is a clear sign and evidence of the attempt to ¹⁷ dismantle the social contract that regulates safe societies regionally and around the world, and to call on them to reject the lived reality and migrate to the so-called caliphate that he wanted to be dominant with the Islamic identity. This reflects an intellectual deviation and moral distortions that are detached from reality, and the attempt to impose a reality and a political system under a new religious cloak that rejects the other and all those who are outside the circle of the organization and do not obey the orders and instructions of Imam al-Baghdadi (the Caliph). Moreover, in an explicit call to fight the other and release the hand of murder The bloodshed and intimidation of the faithful in their Muslim communities, and those who are outside the circle of the organization, he says: "There is no better deed in this holy month (the month of Ramadan) or in any other country than jihad for the sake of Allah, so take this opportunity and follow the path of your righteous ancestors. Support the religion of Allah by jihad for the sake of Allah. Go ahead, Mujahideen for the sake of Allah. Terrorize the enemies of God, and seek death wherever you expect it, for this world is perishable, and the Hereafter is eternal."

In 2019, al-Baghdadi returned to public in an 18-minute video for the first time since July 2014 and is believed to be the last before he was killed. Al-Baghdadi appeared in this clip to confirm his presence and ability to lead the organization in its most serious existential crisis, after the great losses inflicted on the organization, pointing out that the recent defeats were only temporary and called on his supporters to remain steadfast and that he lost a battle rather than a war, and that this retreat is a temporary stage on the road to great victory, and the supreme goal He said, "The caliphate is crowding out the nations, it is on its way, and it is certain of its victory," and called on his followers to adopt new tactics commensurate with the current situation by adopting guerrilla warfare and war of attrition, and avoiding direct clashes and open military operations of the international coalition and their supporters. In this context, al-Baghdadi's speech emphasizes the adoption of a renewed strategy based on ideological foundations and firm convictions based on religious principles, and justifications that he invoked from the distant past of Muslims and how there are many examples in Islamic history In this way, he is attracting the sympathy of his supporters and Muslims around the world that his alleged project is based on ideological foundations and that he will rise again, and therefore the immediate defeats are temporary and that what he calls the Crusade led by the United States of America targets all Muslims, and thus he considers himself the protector and defender of the causes of Muslims around the world against Western countries and their collaborators from the Arab countries. He considered the Arab countries participating in the coalition as infidels who must be fought. He urged his group and supporters to wage jihad against Arab governments, calling them agents, infidels, and those who fight Muslims. "We tell them and remind them that the only way to deal with these tyrants is to fight for the sake of Allah," he said. He encouraged the restoration of the dignity of Muslims as a reason for calling for jihad against Arab governments, explaining that "jihad oppresses tyrants, and through jihad Muslims regain their dignity, because these tyrants benefit them only by the sword." Baghdadi also called on Muslims to wage jihad against governments instead of revolutions and demonstrations, which he described as absurd.¹⁸

¹⁷ Abdulhadi, M. N. M. (2020). Ideology of ISIS: Social and Linguistic Practices of Abu Bakkar Al Baghdadi's First speech. *Al-Adab Journal*, (132), 45-66.

¹⁸ Dawshi, B. (2020). Al-Baghdadi and the Art of Terrorist Persuasion. Ayad, M. (2019). The Baghdadi Net': How A Network of ISIL-Supporting Accounts Spread Across Twitter. *London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue*. Beese, Y. (2024). *The Film of the Islamic State: The Cinefication of Jihadi Video*. Springer Nature.

He directed his group to adopt new tactics in the fight after the group's defeats, using methods of war of attrition and guerrilla warfare. Baghdadi welcomed the new members of the "caliphate": in July 2019, ISIS elements in Libya released a video announcing their renewed loyalty to al-Baghdadi. On June 18, 2019, Boko Haram announced that it had renewed its allegiance to al-Baghdadi, along with Caucasus Province, Azerbaijan Province, and other armed groups around the world. He concluded his speech by appealing to his sympathizers to launch separate retaliatory attacks against coalition countries.

Discussion and Conclusion

On the one hand, in his letter to his Jordanian tribe Bani Hassan, he tried to rebuke public opinion, call for a break from the social fabric and social entity, and to refrain from the lived social reality, to win over Zarqawi's imagined thought with the aim of mobilizing public opinion to an issue that was developed and framed under the cloak of religion, and then obtaining. On the other hand, in an approach that is considered one of the approaches of Zarqawi's intellectual deviations, he moved in his speech before the judges in court to try to influence the legitimacy of the political system and the legislation and laws regulating the lives of individuals and Jordanian society and even rejecting it. Therefore, Zarqawi's methodology on both occasions was not a coincidence, but was according to a methodology and contexts that were prepared in advance, in a sequence that corresponds to the achievement of his terrorist goals in destroying the social and political structure of the country, an attempt, although it does not go beyond rhetoric and rhetoric, it largely ignored the social and political cohesion in the country. He believes in the Islamic religion, which is the safety valve and the religion of society and the state, which was reflected in Al-Zarqawi and his friends with more social isolation and the rejection of Jordanian society by them and the imaginary and alien intellectual logic of the governing principles and the inherited and collective history of individuals and society. Once again, after the arrest of Zarqawi and a number of his comrades in cases related to national security in 1994 and his imprisonment for 5 years, he moved to Afghanistan and founded his cell and his small community of friends and their families, inspired by the flood of Zarqawi's poisonous ideas, before moving to Iraq at the beginning of the third millennium, where they found the security and social environment conducive to the beginning of translating ideas and imagined future on the ground.

Following in the footsteps of Al-Zarqawi, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi appeared in the cloak of the Islamic religion, emphasizing the intellectual distortions and deviations that appear to be guidelines and a platform for the terrorism and the mentality of terrorists in the deliberate separation from the reality of individuals and societies and the denial of modernity and modernization by calling for a return in time to fundamentalism and the rationale of reality before 1400 years before the time of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, in an explicit and deliberate disregard and an attempt to escape from the contemporary reality of societies that believe in Islam and its principles of justice and equality, peaceful coexistence, and the rejection of extremism and terrorism. The intruder on safe societies is governed by ideological deviations aimed at killing and destroying and seeking the stinking strife that is rejected by Islam, religious scholars and Muslims around the world.

Baghdadi's speeches revealed his determination to adhere to his extremist religious ideology and to emphasize his call to fight in the name of religion (jihad). The first speech was characterized by his declaration of the establishment of a caliphate and the establishment of a caliphate and appointed himself as the head of the religious state, rejecting all political systems, Islamic, Arab, and global. Throughout his speeches, Baghdadi has made sure to present himself as a religious and military leader capable of mobilizing enthusiasm among fighters and supporters around the world. Despite al-Baghdadi's suffering and the organization's losses, his

public appearances and regular speeches continued to make impassioned speeches, in an attempt to convince the other that the so-called caliphate is not defeated by battles, as it is an ideological and ideological issue that will rise again, as he claims. This is a clear indication that al-Baghdadi's ideological deviations have reached advanced stages that guide behavior and actions under the cloak of the Islamic religion, and therefore they are not immediate or mere chance, but rather are imaginary principles of action and orientations that are intended to survive after choosing their factional and stinking factional owners It rejects the other and uses terrorism and murder as a means to achieve its social and political goals.

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