



News and Current Events :: ISIS: Is It All About The Oil?

ISIS: Is It All About The Oil?, on: 2014/6/24 15:58

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The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) -- the radical Islamist group in control of large swaths of the two countries from which it takes its name -- has released a map on its web site projecting where it wants to be just five years from now.

If it manages to achieve just a fraction of what its intentions are, there is much to worry about.

(right here is the map)

Is it a coincidence that almost all the countries this radical Islamist group aspires to rule are oil-producers?

I reported last week why I believe ISIS, or as it is also called in English, ISIL --- the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant -- would not stop at controlling part or even all of Syria and Iraq. Indeed, if one understands the historic context of the group's very name, it is easy to comprehend their actions and their intent, as well as why they must be taken seriously.

The map made public by ISIS shows a large swath of black-shaded countries stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans, and includes all of North Africa, Nigeria and Cameroon in West Africa, and Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia on the continent's eastern coast.

The desired territory then crosses over the Mediterranean and Red seas to engulf the entire Arab world.

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine -- and Israel -- as well as Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen would all be part of one big, unhappy family.

Big. But not big enough for ISIS. To that parade of nations, they add Turkey, Iran, and parts of the Caspian region, such as Turkmenistan. Then they swing southwards, swallowing India, Pakistan, Singapore, Myanmar and Indonesia.

Now draw a straight line across the globe; the countries ISIS wants to rule extend from Nigeria to Indonesia. Such a realm would give this new --caliphate-- unprecedented oil riches. With that kind of money and infrastructure, acquiring nuclear weapons, or other weapons of mass destruction, should not be a great difficulty.

If Pakistan, for example, were to fall under the umbrella of the extremists, they already would be in possession of WMDs. It is worth recalling that the Pakistani military, including the ISI, the intelligence services, have been known to have close ties to Al-Qaeda and Islamist groups like ISIS, which, after all, is an offshoot of Al-Qaeda.

Quite possibly, the leadership of ISIS may be confident that this could be achieved, given their recent and seemingly continuing victories in Iraq.

The reality may be much different. It is highly unlikely that ISIS would ever be able to unite such wide-ranging groups of cultures and subcultures, sects, tribes, clans and nationalities as diverse and divided as sub-Saharan Africans and Indians and Arabs.

But assuming for the sake of argument that this is a possibility, it would give ISIS a combined manpower and the ability to recruit among a general population of some 3.9 billion people.

While trying to bring the entire Muslim world under a single political banner sounds like a practical impossibility, the fighters of ISIS may face somewhat less resistance and find they have perhaps a few more allies in the oil-rich Gulf Cooperation Council countries -- Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE and Oman -- than they would as they tried to unite countries such as Turkey or Iran, for example. They may find it particularly difficult in Iran, given that it is a majority Shiite country.

The reasons are two-fold: First, the autochthonous populations of the GCC are overwhelmingly Sunni. (Ironically, fundamental Islamist groups such as ISIS owe much of their success, at least in the initial stages of the Syrian war, to Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which provided funds and weapons to anti-government forces.)

Second, there is a lot of public disenchantment with the ruling families – such as the House of Saud – who act as though their nations were their private domain.

If there was ever an opportune moment for the sheiks who govern the Arab lands along the Gulf to give serious consideration to reforms, now is the time, before it's too late.

This dream of dominating much of the world in the name of one's god is not a new one. In today's day and age it may sound absurd, even insane, to believe such a scheme could work. It would be equally absurd and insane to ignore the threat.

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