



ISIS: A History

By Fawaz A. Gerges

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The Islamic State has stunned the world with its savagery, destructiveness, and military and recruiting successes. What explains the rise of ISIS, and what does it portend for the future of the Middle East? In this book, one of the world's leading authorities on political Islam and jihadism sheds new light on these questions. Moving beyond journalistic accounts, Fawaz Gerges provides a clear and compelling explanation of the deeper conditions that fuel ISIS. This unique history shows how decades of dictatorship, poverty, and rising sectarianism in the Middle East, exacerbated by foreign intervention, led to the rise and growth of ISIS--and why addressing those problems is the only way to ensure its end. An authoritative introduction to arguably the most important conflict in the world today, this is an essential book for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of the social turmoil and political violence ravaging the Arab-Islamic world.

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Editorial Review

Review

Honorable Mention for the 2017 PROSE Award in Government and Politics, Association of American Publishers

One of *Choice's* Outstanding Academic Titles for 2016

One of *Kirkus Reviews* Best Nonfiction Books of 2016 in Current Affairs

A CNN Fareed Zakaria GPS Book of the Week, August 7, 2016

"Well-researched and lucidly argued."--**Malise Ruthven, *New York Review of Books***

"A specific, timely, well-rendered exegesis of the unfolding global threat."--***Kirkus* (starred review)**

"This timely history gives a clear-sighted account of the ascent of the so-called Islamic State (IS)--one with far-reaching implications. The book's findings and conclusions have profound relevance not just for the future of IS in Iraq and Syria, but also for salafi jihadism, regional security in the Middle East and North Africa and international peace and security. . . . Written and edited with pellucid clarity, *ISIS: A History* is an important book that will have broad appeal beyond academic, diplomatic and policymaking circles."--**Chris Harmer, *LSE Review of Books***

"[Written] with energy and clarity, and out of uncommonly extensive knowledge."--**Robert Fulford, *National Post***

"Impressively detailed. . . . His argument is all at once persuasive, deeply depressing, yet hopeful. For all the years of sclerosis in the Middle East, political systems can be rejuvenated. The revolutions of the Arab Spring marked an attempt to do just that, and while hope has been hijacked by extremists, the opportunity to try again and again can never be taken away."--**Daniel Flitton, *Sydney Morning Herald***

"Perhaps the most informative, clearly expressed, sober book on the subject."--**William Armstrong, *Hurriyet Daily News***

"[Gerges's] book is one of the most coherent, comprehensive and persuasive histories of ISIS to date and deserves to be widely read."--**Richard Cockett, *Literary Review***

"[The book's] strength stems from the sheer breadth of the survey offered by Gerges."--**Shiraz Maher, *New Statesman***

"Gerges is clear, and it is here that the book excels, that Isis cannot be explained in isolation but must be examined in the larger sociopolitical context in which it emerged. . . . *ISIS: A History* makes a welcome contribution to the debate, and will be of interest to both general readers and specialists."--**Christina Hellmich, *Times Higher Education***

"This is quite simply the definitive book on the group by a very smart, well-informed guide to the region, superbly researched, well-written and intelligent throughout. Everyone opining about ISIS should be required to read this book first."--**Fareed Zakaria**

"The achievement of Fawaz Gerges . . . in his compelling, insightful book is to highlight the social and

sectarian pressures that led so many Iraqi and Syrian Sunnis to turn to Isis as protectors."--**Michael Burleigh, *The Times***

"Terrific."--**Michael Brull, *New Matilda***

"This is a comprehensive account of how ISIS emerged in the Middle East, triggered by the US invasion of Iraq, Syria's civil war, the collapse of the Arab Spring, and sectarian Sunni-Shi'a struggles. Gerges systematically details the complex social and political dynamics leading to ISIS's prominence among the Salafi-jihadist family of rivals. . . . This authoritative, empirically rich study based on primary Arabic sources should be must reading for policy makers, strategists, scholars, journalists, students, and anyone seriously concerned about the human condition."--**Choice**

"A remarkably clear and detailed taxonomy of ISIS."--**Jerome Donnelly, *America***

"Written and argued with admirable clarity, *ISIS: A History* is a significant book with clear appeal beyond academic, diplomatic, and policy-making circles. This is a highly recommended volume and one that sets the standard for those interested in understanding the phenomenon we have come to know as ISIS."--**Colin Wight, *Australian Book Review***

"This hugely important study is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand the powerful political, sectarian and religious forces currently convulsing the Arab Middle East."--**P. D. Smith, *The Guardian***

From the Back Cover

"Not just timely but unlikely ever to be bettered, this is an indispensable guide to the evolution of the Arab world's leading terrorist organization by a global expert. Fawaz Gerges's book is judicious, well argued, and based on a close personal acquaintance with conditions in Iraq and Syria. It is unrivaled in its ability to unravel the ideological and political power struggles among ISIS leaders. And it is an often shocking indictment of Western missteps in dealing with the organization's growing capacity to harm foreign interests."--**Roger Owen, author of *The Rise and Fall of Arab Presidents for Life***

"Fawaz Gerges, long one of the most perceptive writers about the Middle East, has written a lucid and erudite account of the rise of ISIS that will be read with great profit by both specialists and the general public."--**Peter Bergen, author of *United States of Jihad*, *Manhunt*, and *The Longest War***

"In the flood of recent publications about ISIS, Gerges provides a welcome island of thoroughly researched analysis by a major authority on extremist Muslim movements. Both general readers and specialists will benefit from Gerges's balanced and well-informed understanding of this important and dangerous movement."--**John Voll, professor emeritus, Georgetown University**

"In this original and empirically rich study, Fawaz Gerges persuasively analyzes the rise and power of ISIS. Building on his profound knowledge of salafi and jihadi movements, he locates ISIS squarely in its context, dissecting the ideas and political factors that have made it so surprisingly formidable in Iraq and Syria, as well as disturbingly influential elsewhere."--**Charles Tripp, SOAS, University of London**

"Fawaz Gerges is the right scholar to bring the history of ISIS past its journalistic first draft. This should be a valuable source for policymakers, specialists, and the public alike."--**Noah Feldman, Harvard Law School**

"Fawaz Gerges is a first-class expert on contemporary Jihadist movements. This book should have a wide readership."--**Ian Lustick, University of Pennsylvania**

About the Author

Fawaz A. Gerges is professor of international relations and Emirates Professor in Contemporary Middle East Studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science. His many books include *The New Middle East*, *Obama and the Middle East*, and *The Far Enemy*. His writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Guardian*, *Foreign Affairs*, and other publications.

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