

## The Islamic State's Territorial Methodology

[Aaron Y. Zelin](#)

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Since June 2014, when the Islamic State proclaimed itself a caliphate, a pattern has emerged in the way IS expands into new territories and consolidates its control. In this new study, jihadi expert Aaron Y. Zelin provides a framework for understanding how the Islamic State goes from no control to full consolidation of control in a particular area. Three case studies show how this framework plays out: the Islamic State's success in Wilayat Tarabulus in Libya, its failure in Wilayat Idlib in Syria, and its ongoing building process in various self-proclaimed provinces in Yemen. This framework is unique in providing tools to analyze IS's position with regard to expansion or recession irrespective of the locus of IS provinces. This paper thus provides important insights into IS's state-building project and how it hopes to export its model to its constellation of provinces.

Once the Islamic State has a stranglehold on an area, challenge from within is highly unlikely to succeed, so it is imperative that regional and global actors make IS containment a top priority. Otherwise, the grim reality is that the Islamic State will become further entrenched within the region and beyond.

### The Author

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