

Banners and Signs: The Use of Religious Symbolism in Combat Operations

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

Banners and Signs: The Use of Religious Symbols in Combat Operations, by MAJ Paul M. Aitchison, 45 pages.

This monograph examines how elements of information operations were used leading up to and during the Norman Conquest of England, in the history of the formation of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and expansion also brings elements of information operations into contemporary operations. In the current United States Army doctrine Field Manual 3-13, *Information Operations*, the lack of discussion of religious symbols used is a gap requiring further research and development. The implication from both campaigns is relevant to today's contemporary operating environments as the United States conducts combat missions against entities that use religion and religious symbols to incorporate legitimacy into actions."

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Acronyms

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
AQI	Al Qaeda in Iraq
FM	Field Manual
JP	Joint Publication
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISI	Islamic State in Iraq
JTJ	<i>Jama'at al-Tawhid wa'al-Jihad</i>
IO	Information Operations

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Introduction

He will also lift up a standard to the distant nation, and will whistle for it from the ends of the earth; And behold, it will come with speed swiftly.

—Isaiah 5:26, *New American Standard Bible*

Armies carrying black flags will come from Khorasan. No power will be able to stop them and they will finally reach Jerusalem where they will erect their flags.

—Sunan Tirmidhi, *Kitab-al-Fitan*, Hadith 2371

The Norman conquest of England created a new authority on the periphery of Europe. Duke William I of Normandy successfully gathered and led a multinational force of over 7,000 knights, foot soldiers, and their baggage over the English Channel in a fleet of around 700 ships. Historians argue that this invasion changed the course of events in northwestern Europe for the next millennium. The ability for an individual to successfully lead this organization to victory in multiple battles after such a massive undertaking is difficult to understand fully. The duke embodied the leadership qualities needed to sustain the morale of a force in a hostile and foreign country with a significant line of communication back to northern France. The size and scope of the later First Crusade (1095-1099) paralleled the scale of the Norman Conquest, and both used religious fervor to achieve the end state. The success of this invasion was in no small part due to William's use of what is today termed information operations. This, coupled with the military forces under his control, was of paramount importance to Duke William in 1066.

The campaign of Duke William, who took Bretons, Flemings, Normans, and Burgundians into his army for the three-month operation to conquer and be crowned King William I of England, relied in no small way on the recognition and support received from the Roman Catholic church. Assisting William was his inherent charisma and determination to take what he believed was rightly his. William involved himself in every detail of the invasion, from organizing which force would embark on particular ships to where each ship was to sail from France to the southern coast of England. The Norman led coalition included the counties that bordered William's duchy. Perhaps the single most important court that William secured support

from was that of Pope Alexander II in Rome. Alexander recognized the Norman claims to England and more importantly justified and gave public notice of this decision by granting a banner of Saint Peter to the duke, thus sanctioning and blessing with papal authority the military operation to conquer Anglo-Saxon England.¹ William accomplished this by moving his army over 1,000 miles into the southeast portions of England, which culminated with his coronation on Christmas 1066.

Medieval scholars have long debated William's religious motivations and whether his reasons for the conquest involved true religious conviction. In the 1070s, William de Poitiers, archdeacon of Lisieux, wrote a history of the life of the king after the conquest of England. He had served as the court chaplain for several years and was in a prime position to observe how the Conqueror's religious observance was of use for his planned invasion. While it is true that William de Poitiers was determined to show the Norman invasion and conquest in the best possible light, as an ordained priest in the Roman Catholic church, he was also not required to be a supplicant and sycophant to all William did in 1066. In the larger political context for the century, the ongoing investiture conflict pitted secular rulers against the Papacy for the control over appointments of men to religious posts within countries. Therefore, William de Poitiers brings to the forefront his master's exemplary conduct before God, thus implying that the handling of the invasion was the will of God. He writes concerning the behavior of the duke as the epitome of a Christian prince: protector of the weak and sick and upholder of the law; a man who lived up to his coronation promises. This characterization of William comes from a Norman priest, who was around the duke daily for many years.²

¹ Carl Erdman, *The Origin of the Idea of Crusade* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 154.

² Uta-Renate Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 34.

William de Poitiers described the duke's conduct during the Latin readings of the services William attended; he often joined in the daily office of the clergy and monks of the churches near where he was staying. The duke firmly held to and defended an orthodox doctrine of the significance of the Eucharist, and he attended mass daily, if possible. He eagerly sought the company of clerks and monks of good reputation, and not least the learned Lanfranc, Abbot of Caen (c.1010-89), whom William later made Archbishop of Canterbury. William rewarded the service and loyalty of the clergy within his duchy with even further honors after the conquest and destruction of the agricultural regions of northern England. This support from the local clergy had an impact on the way the laity of the duchy of Normandy saw their liege lord.³

The local clerical support continued through the founding of additional religious houses in Norman and England. William's foundation of the abbey of St Martin at Battle, the supposed site of the death of King Harold, Sussex in the 1070s was both thanks— offering for victory and also a penance: “paying back for the bloodshed there by an unending chain of good works,” as the Battle Chronicle says. The abbey was a place to sing the praises, as well as pray for the soul of William. Moreover, it served as one of the focal points of Anglo-Saxon Church reform that the instituted as a part of the formal agreement and alliance between the duchy of Normandy and the pope.⁴ This monument further reinforced William's victory and right to rule. In the medieval Roman Catholic world, the separation between secular leader and the spiritual leader was not always clearly defined nor always apparent, as it is in Islam. Certain regions within England, such as the County Palatine of Durham, were under the direct control of the bishop. This separation allowed regional and minor nobility in Europe to appeal to a higher authority that was to reign on both heaven and earth in their geographic struggles. In Rome, the popes of the Middle Ages sought as much temporal power as they could get in directing and limiting the endless wars of

³ David Crouch, “God and the Normans,” *History Today* 52, no. 10 (October 2002): 11.

⁴ *Ibid.*

conquest. William used the authority and spiritual power of the Roman Catholic church to further his own claim to the throne of England and was beholden to no one but himself and his ability to leader and command.⁵

William is of course not the only individual or organization to use religious symbols to support a military operation. A contemporary example of using religious symbols to influence a populace that led to the rise and global reach is the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. In conventional operations, the rise of ISIL began as a movement within the morass of Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003-2010) and further developed during Operation New Dawn (2010-2011). The head of the self-styled caliphate was Ibrahim al-Baghdadi, later known as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, an Iraqi religious student and amateur scholar who rose up with other Sunni Muslims after the toppling of the Saddam regime in 2003. He and his subordinates proclaimed the beginning of God's kingdom on Earth and that Judgement Day was drawing closer.⁶

The ISIL leadership rule a complex terrain through the use of fear, brutality, and religious fervor and continue in their diminished form by apocalyptic themes and passion within the organization. The leadership uses the symbology of Islam to bring tens of thousands of Muslims from all parts of Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas together to fight for a regime that is supposed to conquer the world. The black flag of ISIL invokes the past military conquest of Islam, beginning with the original conquest of Mecca by the prophet Muhammad in 630. The use of a black flag is in an effort to legitimize the takeover. In in past, Islam also had internal strife at the onset of the expansion outside of the Arabian Peninsula as different religious authorities vied for power as the representative of Allah on earth.

ISIL draws inspiration from the founding of the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258) and the raising of the original black flag. The nascent group led by an descendent of Muhammad,

⁵ Erdman, *The Origin of the Idea of Crusade*, 156.

⁶ William McCantiss, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015), 1.

overthrew the Umayyad Caliphate in 750. With the new Caliphate drawing lineage from the prophet's descendants, it began to explore the writings outside of the Qur'an, such as hadiths, the oral traditions about the life and works of Muhammad, to lend legitimacy to its authority. The black banner was first flown by Abu Muslim, as he started the revolution against the Umayyads from the Khorasan Province in 747. The source for use of the standards is from a tradition that formed around the prophet and his family, and the hardships that befell the family of the prophet. The prophecy centered on a messianic salvation which is fulfilled in an army carrying the black flag as its standard. This army would judge the rulers of the world and those who practice tyranny.⁷ The military leader of the movement, Abu Muslim, unfurled the black flag, dubbed "the Shadow," on a lance twenty-one feet long and publicly proclaimed the Abbasid's revolutionary call in June 747. The caliphate wanted to spread not only over the Middle East but to spread over the world to bring final judgement, in the words of the Abbasid chronicler, "As the clouds cover the earth, so would the Abbasid preaching. And as the earth is never without a shadow, so it would never be without an Abbasid caliph to the end of time."⁸ ISIL looks to continue this line through the institution of a new caliphate in the Middle East.

ISIL competes for the religious authority of the Islamic world and challenges the current Middle Eastern power structure by upending the relationship between the nation and the international community. Theological debates form the primary guide to ISIL's form of government. This is in contrast to secular intuitions or states. The new order that ISIL is attempting to create in the world is a new religious movement that is not tied to territory, but rather based on religious identity. Disenfranchised and religiously minded individuals are drawn

⁷ Khalil Athamina, "The Black Banners and the Socio-Political Significance of Flags and Slogans in Medieval Islam," *Arabica* 36, no. 3 (November 1989): 307-326; McCantis, *The ISIS Apocalypse*, 26.

⁸ Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *The History of the al-Tabari: The 'Abbasid Revolution*, trans. John Alden Williams (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 65-66; McCantis, *The ISIS Apocalypse*, 27.

to it through its apocalyptic and eschatological imagery and symbology. This imagery is focused on the narrow geographic area in the Middle East that has witnessed centuries of conflicts.⁹

As ISIL emerged as a threat to the region in Iraq and Syria, the overall goal became clear to the international community: a broad Sunni-Muslim-based revolution against the government in Iraq in order to establish a caliphate, which, for historical and religiously apocalyptic reasons, should cover the area around the city of Dabiq in northern Syria. This area is critical to ISIL because of hadiths outside of the Qur'an predict this is where the final battle is to take place.¹⁰

History of the Norman Conquest of England (October-December 1066)

According to contemporary chroniclers, Duke William issued a formal protest against the Anglo-Saxon coronation in England of Earl Harold Godwinson. William's protest centered on the reign of the previous king, Edward the Confessor, who died without a legitimate heir. Before Edward's death, he had named William as his heir in the 1050s, according to Norman sources. Furthermore, he did so after deciding to live a semi-monastic life, with William being his first cousin, once removed. William asserted that Harold had sworn obedience and allegiance to him after being rescued from a shipwreck in the English Channel. Norman sources and chroniclers, writing during and shortly after the conquest, were quick to point out the righteous claim that William had on the throne of England. In England, just as many Anglo-Saxon chroniclers and writers were writing about the legitimate claim that Harold had on the throne of England. It was left for the one who had the right and the force to make good on his own claim. Words alone would not remove Harold from his throne, so William began preparations to claim the English throne by force. The preparation effort that followed over the next six months included detailed

⁹ Murat Yesiltas and Tuncay Kardas, "The New Middle East, ISIL and the 6th Revolt Against the West," *Insight Turkey* 17, no. 3 (Summer 2015): 74-75.

¹⁰ Lars Erslev Anderson, "The Mole and the Mallet: Islamic State and al-Qaeda in the 'Thirty Years' War' in the Middle East," *Connections* 16, no. 1 (Winter 2017): 21.

planning, supplying and execution of a successful invasion required money and support most of all.¹¹

The timeframe between acknowledging the fact of Harold's ascension to sovereignty and when William sent out a clerical embassy to the papal throne in Rome is unknown, but could not have been longer than a few weeks. Fortune or fate was on the side of William. The man occupying the throne of Saint Peter, Pope Alexander II, wanted to increase the temporal, as well as the spiritual power of Rome and he was intensely interested in finding a faithful son to be an instrument of that end. The Roman pontiffs during the High Middle Ages (1000-1250) did not yet have the temporal authority to excommunicate entire countries and so sought powerful secular leaders to press their agendas. William wanted to the mutual cooperation between Rome and Normandy and could use the abuses in the Anglo-Saxon church as a means to press his claim. William's messenger was the Archdeacon of Lisieux, Gilbert, who traveled straight to the reform-minded Hildebrand, the future Gregory VII, the leader of the reform movement within the papal court. The rampant lack of clerical celibacy within the Anglo-Saxon church placed even more emphasis on Gilbert's mission and he had little difficulty in persuading Hildebrand of the holiness of William's cause, in turn, Hildebrand was able to influence Alexander II to provide his blessing. Once given formal approval, William's emissaries promised that if he won the English throne through force of arms, he would keep it for — "God and Saint Peter."¹²

A conclave of the cardinals, who at this time were the part of the twenty-eight parochial churches of the city of Rome and the seven dioceses that bordered Rome, assembled to debate the righteousness of William's cause. Norman expansion began in the generation before William, with the Norman conquests of southern Italy. Conquered with the approval of Pope Benedict VII, the Normans were under the supposed suzerainty of the papacy but in reality, had carved out an

¹¹ Eric Linklater, *The Conquest of England*. (New York: Dorset Press, 1990), 205; Philip Russell *William the Conqueror* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), 102.

¹² Russell, *William the Conqueror*, 104-105.

independent kingdom. With this conquest fresh in mind and so close to papal lands, Alexander decreed William was the rightful heir and claimant to the English throne. Furthermore, excommunication by a papal bull or letter patent supported the Norman side further. As a further visual guarantee of religious blessings on his crusade, Alexander II gave two presents to William; one was a banner displayed within his army, and the other was a ring which is reported to have had one of the hairs of Saint Peter in it.¹³



Figure 1. The Gonfalone (Standard) of Saint Peter (Pope Boniface VIII, 1294-1303). Petro Ludovici, “The origin and historical significance of the Banner of the Sacred Roman Church,” *Vaticana*, accessed 25 October 2018, http://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/documentazione/documents/sp_ss_scv/insigne/bandiera_storia_it.html.

William further cemented his relationship with the church through his generous grants and charters in the duchy itself before the invasion. An example close to the center of ducal power is the Norman Benedictine Abbey of Saint-Etienne de Caen and the sister foundation of the Abbey of the Holy Trinity. Established by William and his wife Matilda respectively in 1063, included tithes, customs, and privileges which increased the influence of the Benedictine monastic lifestyle, especially after the Norman conquest of England.¹⁴ William also attempted to

¹³ Russel, *William the Conqueror*, 106-107.

¹⁴ Benjamin Pohl, “Eight Twelfth-Century Charters from the Norman Abbey of Saint-Etienne de Caen,” *British Library: A Catalogue and Commentary* (2017) 1; Mary Anne Everett-Green, *Lives of the Princesses of England from the Norman Conquest* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1857), 1-14.

merit divine favor by enrolling his oldest daughter Cecilia of Normandy as a novice at the Abbey of Caen in 1066. This generosity of the couple was in turn reciprocated by William's vassals, thus enriching the church even further and creating a relationship that was a driving factor in early Norman England. With the clergy in support of his expedition, William set out to bring the nobility of the duchy fully in line with his ambitions against the throne of England.

The fact that William was able to coopt, force, cajole or coerce his nobles and personal retainers into the execution of the conquest showcase his ability to influence information to those around him and to press forward to see a problem through until completion. The heir, William's oldest son Robert, was fourteen years old and his mother Matilda of Flanders, assumed the role of the regent of the duchy during the campaign.¹⁵ William called for a council of the mighty men of the realm and related how, with the help of God, and his faithful subjects, he would obtain what was by right to him by law. Many of the nobility in attendance were family and related in some way to William's family, either through blood or marriage. Key figures included William's two half-brothers Odo, Bishop of Bayeux and Robert of Mortain. These men were to be a force to rally the lesser nobles around during the difficult times in the coming months of the conquest.¹⁶

The nobles debated and decided that "a speaking" or *parlement* of barons of the realm should gather to hear what William proposed. William Fitz Osbern, Lord of Breteuil, presided over the assembly. Duke William spoke from his ducal throne while they, in accordance with the custom of the time, stood on the earthen floor to hear him speak. The most significant distinction among the nobility concerned their feudal obligations due to William. In the minds of many of the barons those dues were limited to the geographical limits of the duchy. The duke proceeded in the coming weeks to use his charisma to speak with his vassals separately and bent all to his power of persuasion. Thus, in the end, he was able to beat down his barons and bring them to heel

¹⁵ Linklater, *The Conquest of England*, 206; Russell, *William the Conqueror*, 110.

¹⁶ Russell, *William the Conqueror*, 111.

to his will. Now having the laity and clergy under his influence and control, William actively sought the support of the regional powers such as Flanders and Denmark to gain their support. In the event he was unable to bring the rulers over to his side of the conflict he worked to remove or reduce the ability of Harold to gain support.¹⁷

William sent out emissaries to all over Europe, to the courts of kingdoms with family ties to either himself or to Harold. He met with the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry IV, King Swegen of Denmark, King Phillip I of France, his feudal overlord, and Baldwin, Count of Flanders, who was his father-in-law. William was unable to secure any help from these princes, but neither was Harold and in the invasion Harold had to rely upon his local levies while William army came from many different regions and continued to move into England up through his coronation.

In providing both man and material from the regions of northern Europe, William did not empty his duchy of the means of sustaining itself. The supplies instead flowed into the duchy and then north across the channel to southeastern England as William continued campaigning around London. The Bayeux Tapestry, created around the time of the invasion, is a powerful visual example of how William wanted his operation to be portrayed to the public. The tapestry visualizes ships building, supplies stored in ships and horses marching into them fully laden with armored knights is a pretty scene but doubtful historically.



¹⁷ Russell, *William the Conqueror*, 111.

Figure 2. Musée de la Tapisserie de Bayeux. “The Bayeux Tapestry,” accessed November 25, 2018, http://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/Chronologia/Lspost11/Bayeux/bay_tama.html.

Historians believed somewhere around 700 ships assembled for William between January and September 1066. There was not sufficient time to build large-scale war or cargo ships, and many of those used were the coastal craft made for quick sea voyages and had limited cargo space. Papal recognition and authority augmented the call for volunteers and supplies for the channel voyage. All the regions and cities that William and his vassals traveled to and recruited volunteers had a Roman Catholic religious majority and recognized the pope in Roman as the head of the religion.¹⁸

The need for men was so great that William accepted Europeans from all regions, background, and nationalities. All the regions of modern, France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Netherlands joined his ranks. The army traveled to the mouth of the river Dive, west of the river Seine, almost due south of London. As soon as the fleet and army were ready to sail, the only thing that was required was a fair wind, which did not come for the entire month of August 1066. With the foul weather, the murmuring of the men and desertion increased. William resorted to his two strengths, his charisma, and the religious authority. He brought from the church the body and relics of St. Valery, a seventh century hermit who had lived on the headlands near the sea and had preached to and taught the Gauls. His abbey later became a refuge for those seeking protection from Viking raids of the ninth and tenth centuries. The irony was lost on the Normans that relics used as protection against their ancestors raiding the coast of Normandy were now being used to invoke God to provide them a safe passage over the channel. As the body passed, soldiers fell and prayed for the intercession of the saint. On the night of 26 September, the very night of the

¹⁸ Timothy Baker, *The Normans* (New York: Macmillian, 1966), 100-101; Linklater, *The Conquest of England*, 206; Russell, *William the Conqueror*, 114.

procession, the wind shifted to the south and William ordered his ships to set sail.¹⁹

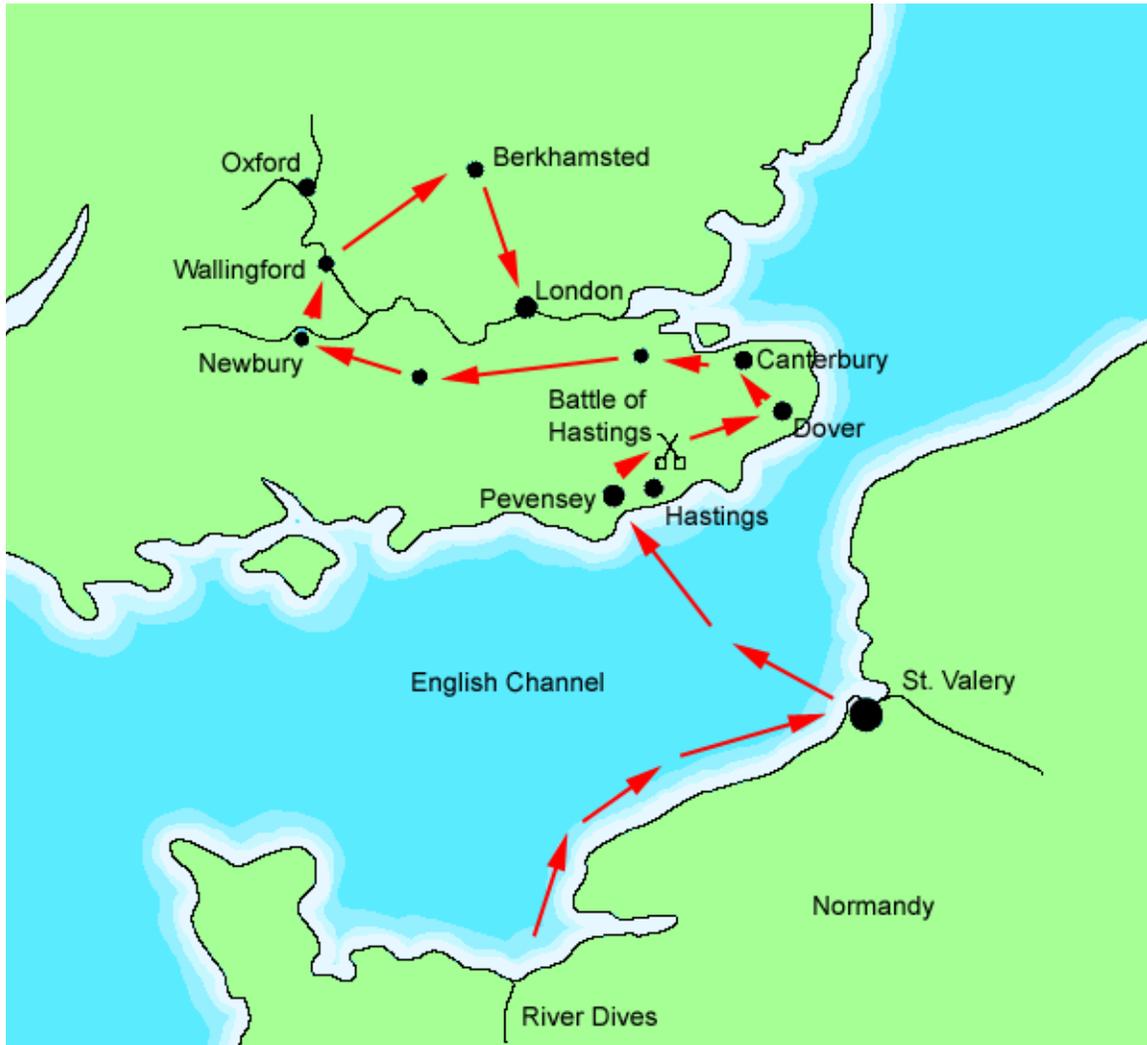


Figure 3. Giotto, Michael, Penfield School District, “Map of the Conquest of England by the Normans October – December 1066;” accessed 25 October, 2018, <https://www.penfield.edu/webpages/jgiotto/onlinetextbook.cfm?subpage=1505054>.

The crossing and landings at Hastings occurred without incident, and William immediately began to fortify his position at the closest point that granted him an advantage, being high on a hill and along the route to the center of Anglo-Saxon power. The village of Hastings

¹⁹ Baker, *The Normans*, 101; Linklater, *The Conquest of England*, 206; Russell, *William the Conqueror*, 129-131; David Bates, “A charter of William the Conqueror and two of his sons,” *Tabularia* (February 2017): 21; David Bates, “Normandy and England after 1066,” *The English Historical Review* 104, no. 413 (1989): 851-855.

lies along a direct path to London and William fortified the area with a wooden fort. The Normans laid waste to the local countryside while they gathered intelligence and supplies and hoped to draw Harold from the north of England.²⁰

As soon as Harold heard that William had landed in Hastings, he rushed from York in the north of England to the south, sending ahead runners to have the local *fyrð*, or levies called back from the autumn harvest and sent to rallying points in the south. He was victorious at the Battle of Stamford Bridge, defeating Harold Hardrada and the Norwegian threat and now had to pivot and attempt to overcome the Norman threat in the southern coastline of England. Six miles from Hastings, Harold assembled his army on a hill overlooking a marshland, to block the overland route to London. This situation would force William to attack Harold and attempt to dislodge and destroy his forces.²¹

The night before the battle, the chroniclers, all of whom were clergy wrote concerning the combatants confessing their sins, praying, and making vows to the images and saints and relics. The Normans formed up early in the morning and advanced in three main battle groups. The center was under William personally and had the papal banner and his personal standard, and he carried on his person the holy relics. The left flank consisted of Bretons and volunteers. Mercenaries made up the right flank. The archers went before the three main groups, and mounted knights made up the rear.²²The battle commenced with the Normans formed up at the bottom of the hill.

The Normans attacked the Anglo-Saxon position in three waves, with the battle cry of “God aide us!” The archers and missile troops harassed the English and served as skirmishers. The exchange of arrows was not sufficient, however, as the bows of the Normans and the English

²⁰ Baker, *The Normans*, 102-103; Linklater, *The Conquest of England*, 206; Russell, *William the Conqueror*, 146.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

were unable to penetrate the shields and armor of the knights and men-at-arms. The battle devolved into a confusing and chaotic melee of individual knights ‘charges up and down the hill as well as lines of Norman soldiers standing side by side in shield wall marching up the hill to face the *theyns* and housecarls of the Anglo-Saxons.²³

In the chaos, rumors circulated William himself died on the battlefield. His half-brother, Odo the bishop, brandished his mace and rallied the men around him in the center column. William had been unseated from his horse, but remounted and rode in front of his troops, and rallied them for a final charge. In the meantime, the Anglo-Saxons, believing that they won the day, decided to charge down the hill to attack the Normans who they believed were in disarray. This error was a fatal mistake, and the Normans exploited it through the combined charge of infantry and cavalry to attack and defeat the shield wall of the English, who broke and retreated under the weight of the combined attack on the exposed end of the Anglo-Saxon line.²⁴

On the morning of 15 October 1066, William was the conqueror of southeast England, but he was not the crowned king. Marching on London was not a possibility with the Norman army in a state of disorder after the battle, and so William had to plan his next move carefully. William of Poitiers writes in his chronicle of the conquest that one triumph did not make William king of England, even in name, and in practice, it left him master only of the counties around Hastings.²⁵

On the summit of the hills, William later built Battle Abbey and dedicated it to Saint Martin, a patron saint of Gallic warriors, as a testament to his triumphant battle over the Saxons, as well as to highlight in stone and mortar, who he believed helped his army win over his enemies. William continued his monastery and abbey building projects as he extended his control

²³ Baker, *The Normans*, 110-111; Linklater, *The Conquest of England*.206; Russell, *William the Conqueror*, 148-149.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

over more of England. Subsequently, his principal vassals did the same in the areas they controlled.²⁶

The English were not yet ready to abandon their kingdom to a foreign usurper. The *Witenagemot* or wise men of England assembled in London as soon as the death of Harold was known and decided on a new king. The wise men selected Edgar Etherling, born in Hungary and the last in the line from Edward the Confessor, who had died the previous January. He was a nephew of the confessor and was in his teenage years. There was, however, such a division in the ranks of the Witenagemot that Edgar was not crowned king, which gave William even more incentive to gain control of London and be crowned king in Westminster.²⁷

Reinforcements from Normandy came within a week of the battle of Hastings. Moreover, William set out to appease the surrounding counties. He did so because his supplies and lines of communication were long and tenuous from Normandy and the weather was beginning to turn poor. Understanding that the English were not ready to submit to foreign rule, William conducted both the carrot and stick approach to diplomacy with southeastern England, seeking capitulation without violence while still maintaining the ability to do so. The short-term goal of the Normans was to gain control of the religious center of England, with the arch-episcopal city of Canterbury in the southeastern county of Kent.²⁸

The residents of Canterbury were in no mood for the wholesale destruction of the city and promptly sent out emissaries to make the necessary arrangements for their capitulation without bloodshed. Most the towns in the surrounding area did likewise, and after securing the religious center, William next set Winchester in his sights, the financial center of England. It duly submitted to Norman rule without a fight. The duke and his army controlled three of the most

²⁶ Baker, *The Normans*, 102-103; Linklater, *The Conquest of England*, 206; Russell, *William the Conqueror*, 163-165.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

critical areas in England, the southern coast, and the spiritual and financial centers all without having to fight another pitched battle against the English.²⁹

William made no attempts to storm London by force, but rather encircled the city and waited for the response of the English. In the period before Christmas 1066, the young uncrowned king of England, Edgar, the surviving loyal earls Edwin and Morcar from the north, and the leading clergy of the country capitulated. Edgar could not continue in power without the consent of the surviving loyal nobility and clergy and this was no longer possible in their eyes. William promised to be “a gracious liege-lord” to the nobles of the land. England was now under the control of the Normans. William’s crowning occurred on Christmas day in Westminster, where the Saxon king Harold had been crowned less than a year before. During the ceremony, the acclamation of the crowd for William was so loud that the Norman guard set fire to the surrounding buildings to ward off what they believed was an attack on the new sovereign. The resulting confusion is apparent in the writings of the chronicles who note the sad and ominous ending to the coronation. What mattered to William was not how he was crowned but that he was now installed as the ruler of England and able to begin his reign with the legitimate backing of the Roman Catholic church.³⁰

History of the formation of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant is a Salafi-Jihadist militant organization in Syrian and Iraq whose goal is the establishment and expansion of an Islamic Caliphate. Founded in the early 2000s, it began as a group that trained religious extremists in military tactics against the coalition forces operating in Iraq. The group started as Jama’at al-Tawhid wa’al-Jihad (JTJ) and swore allegiance to Al Qaeda in Iraq. The leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian, was radicalized while incarcerated in a Jordanian prison for attacks against the Jordanian government. In Iraq,

²⁹ Baker, *The Normans*, 102-103; Linklater, *The Conquest of England*, 206; Russell, *William the Conqueror*, 167-169.

³⁰ Ibid.

the group's goal was to expel the foreign troops and disrupt the domestic political transition to democracy as much as possible. With the end of the Sunni rule in Iraq and the political rise of the Shia majority, JIJ was determined to undermine the government as much as possible. Its tactics involved attacks focused on non-combatants, such as aid workers and local nationals who worked with the coalition.³¹

In 2004, after JIJ formally joined Al-Qaeda, JIJ's name changed to Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Many Sunnis within Iraq saw the goal of driving coalition forces from Iraq and stopping a Shia takeover of the government as essential to their survival. The focus on fomenting sectarian violence through attacks on Shia religious sites, attacks on popular Sunni leaders within Iraq, and the infiltration of foreign militants into the group began to work against potential Iraqi long-term support.³²

After Zarqawi's death in an airstrike in 2006, AQI was a group without an effective leader to continue fighting in Iraq. The remaining leadership, through a council, sought out an effective and eloquent leader that could convince smaller insurgent groups to join. The council decided Abu Umar al-Baghdadi would be the new leader and announced the formation of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). The new goal of ISI was to unify resistance to coalition forces in Iraq. Furthermore, ISI wanted to gain the attention of the global jihadist network and through that gain the experience needed to set up government structure in Iraq after the withdraw of foreign troops.³³

The withdraw of foreign troops from Iraq was years away and the resistance to ISI particularly in western Iraq did not initially give them the needed space to fight effectively. The

³¹ "Jamaat al-Tawhid wa'l-Jahid, "GlobalSecurity," last modified 6 December 2006, accessed 26 October 2018, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/zarqawi.htm>.; Stanford University, 2017. "Mapping Militant Organizations," Stanford University, last modified 23 October 2017, accessed 26 October 2018 web.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/1.

³² "Jamaat al-Tawhid wa'l-Jahid, "GlobalSecurity," last modified 6 December 2006, accessed 26 October 2018, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/zarqawi.htm>.

³³ Ibid.

Anbar Awakening in 2007, in which local Sunni cooperated with coalition forces against the insurgency severely weakened ISI and it was unable to provide security or governance in the areas under its control and struggled to hold onto the territory. The influence of ISI continued to wain through the withdrawal of US forces in 2011 and only after their complete withdraw was it able to reassert authority under the new leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The Iraqi Shia majority government's lack of unity allowed ISI to regain momentum lost during the previous five years. The Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011, also provided a ground ripe for sowing dissent and unrest in an area adjacent to Iraq.³⁴

In 2013, ISI changed to ISIL with the majority of leaders moving to Syria as an area more conducive to conducting their operations in the midst of the Syrian Civil War. The ongoing operations in Syria went against Al Qaeda leadership plans for the region, and after dismissing reconciliation attempts, Al Qaeda officially renounced any connection to ISIL in February 2014.³⁵

In spite of the ideological and official separation of the two organizations, ISIL expanded insurgent operations in Syria and western Iraq, conducting attacks against both governments, Shia militia groups, the Kurdish people and militias, and other terrorist and insurgent organizations fighting for and against the Syrian government. On 29 June 2014, ISIL announced an Islamic State and declared the reinstatement of a Caliphate, headed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the caliph or successor of Muhammad.³⁶

³⁴ "Jamaat al-Tawhid wa'l-Jahid, "GlobalSecurity," last modified 6 December 2006, accessed 26 October 2018, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/zarqawi.htm>.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ "Jamaat al-Tawhid wa'l-Jahid, "GlobalSecurity," last modified 6 December 2006, accessed 26 October 2018, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/zarqawi.htm>; Kadi, Wadad; Shahin, Aram A. "Caliph, Caliphate," in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 81–86.

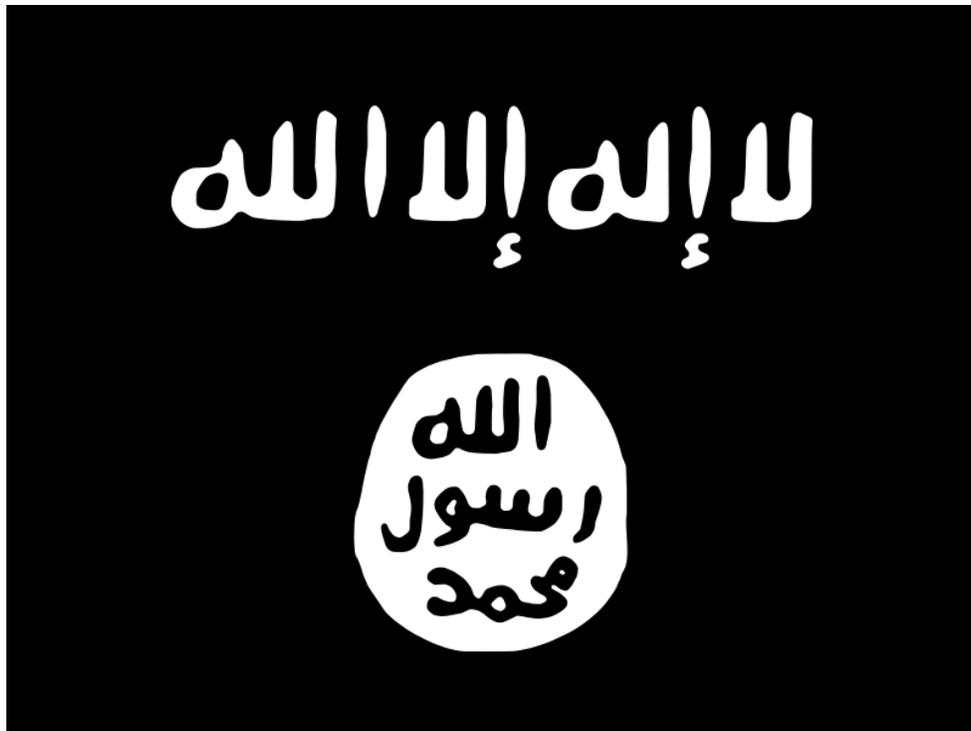


Figure 4. Wikipedia Commons, “The Flag of the Islamic State,” accessed 25 October 2018, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AQMI_Flag.svg.

The territorial gains in Syria and Iraq began to slow in 2014 after ISIL started fighting in territory that did not have a Sunni majority. The increased resistance to the strict interpretation of Islamic law with a Wahhabism, or ultraconservative Islamic reform movement designed to restore monotheistic worship, preference did not sit well with the local population. The seizure of Mosul, Fallujah, and most of northwestern Iraq gave other terrorist and Islamic militant organizations the incentive to declare allegiance to ISIL and conduct attacks within Africa and Europe in their name.³⁷

The instability in Libya in 2015 also allowed ISIL to expand attacks and efforts within northern Africa. While not being able to hold onto territory around Sirte in north Libya, ISIL was able to conduct raids to destabilize both Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia. Indeed, ISIL continues to

³⁷ “Jamaat al-Tawhid wa’l-Jahid, “GlobalSecurity,” last modified 6 December 2006, accessed 26 October 2018, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/zarqawi.htm>; Wadad Aram, *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, 81–86.

inspire and promote attacks throughout the Middle East, Africa, and Europe with the aim of bringing as much of the world under the influence and control of the Islamic State.³⁸

Use of Religious Symbols in Operations

Campaigns require steady pressure exerted through military force, in conjunction with civilian agencies to secure a nation's long-term strategic objectives. In the historical examples, the Normans and ISIL used all instruments of national power to achieve goals. Supporting the execution of these campaigns is the use of information operations, and both examples used religious symbology at the forefront of directing their particular military operations.³⁹

The use of religious symbology in warfare has happened since the beginning of records. Ancient Egyptians recorded the victories against invaders and foreign enemies, describing in relief the action and praising their gods for the achievements. In contemporary military operations, the organization upon which the military builds is complex and includes the people, processes, and tools that allow for learning at the individual as well as collective level. The leader at the top of the organization is responsible for establishing the culture that promotes a shared understanding of the goal at hand. Both William I and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi created cultures that lasted beyond the campaigns and provided a mutual intent to their respective organizations.⁴⁰

To augment and bolster shared understanding during the Norman Conquest of England, William elicited the assistance of Pope Alexander II and the Roman Catholic clergy of his duchy. William understood having the moral high ground over the Anglo-Saxons in England in the

³⁸ "Jamaat al-Tawhid wa'l-Jahid, "GlobalSecurity," last modified 6 December 2006, accessed 26 October 2018, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/zarqawi.htm>. Wadad; Aram, *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, 81–86.

³⁹ US Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 3-13, Information Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 1-1, defines information operations (IO) as the integrated employment, during military operations, of information-related capabilities in concert with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, or usurp the decision-making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting our own.

⁴⁰ Kathryn Bard, *An Introduction to the Archeology of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 128-133; US Department of the Army *Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 3-25.

manner of religious authority brought a greater shared understanding over the overall goal, which was in line with the religious tenets of the time. An example of the determination and shared understanding that the Norman knight exhibited is in the collective shouting of “God is our help” before battle. If the Norman army believed God was on their side, they would in theory fight with harder than not. William made sure that priests reinforced this throughout the campaign.⁴¹

William worked within the information environment of the late eleventh century, with long distance travel times and misinformation being spread through peoples’ fears of the unknown. A major information organization within William’s sphere of influence was the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy, that all spoke the same language, Latin, and had the means to disseminate information through the clergy who spoke Latin. These clerics from different countries would then have to translate these orders to the local parish priests accompanying the armies that did not have a master of Latin beyond the liturgical scripts necessary to complete the divine service.

For ISIL, al-Baghdadi claimed the mantle of Caliph Ibrahim and in doing so proclaimed himself to be the head of Islam as “The mujahid, the scholar who practices what he preaches, the worshipper, the leader, the warrior, the reviver, the descendant from the family of the Prophet, the slave of Allah.”⁴² Those qualifications needed to be believed by as many insurgent groups and jihadists as possible. With the title of caliph, Abu Bakr alleged a familial connection to the family of the Prophet Muhammad. This connection gave him the credibility to gather further support for ISIL.⁴³ The IO theme ISIL uses alongside other lines of operation disrupts and corrupts the traditional Islamic religious authorities’ ability to counter extremist themes.

⁴¹ David Crouch, “God and the Normans,” *History Today* 52, no. 10 (October 2002): 1; Z. N. Brooke “Pope Gregory VII’s Demand for Fealty from William the Conqueror,” *The English Historical Review* 52, no. 10 (April 1911): 227.

⁴² Jay Sekulow, *The Rise of ISIL* (New York: Howard Books,) 22; William McCantis, *The ISIS Apocalypse*, 15.

⁴³ Sekulow, *The Rise of ISIL*, 22; McCantis, *The ISIS Apocalypse*, 15.

The operational environment and information domain for both Abu Bakr and William focused on information capabilities and the speed and diffusion of both information and disinformation to influence opponents. Both used religious symbolism in the information domain to promote religious authority. The papal bull allowed William to kill his fellow Christians and to reform the English churches. He accomplished this through the introduction of various European and Norman prelates to head the different religious houses and diocese. Within ISIL, Abu Bakr announced prominent messages on the authority of ISIL through the language of religion. Tying the current Islamic State to historical caliphates provided a shared understanding with the past in the minds of the adherents to ISIL.⁴⁴

The brutality of the formation of both Norman England and prior caliphates brings the brutal tactics that ISIL uses further into the IO realm. ISIL was able to rise so quickly through the use of IO, especially in the realm of social media. The use of social media highlighted ISIL's mass murder of prisoners alongside the seemingly wanton application of violence upon Iraq's civilian populace. The atrocities against Iraqi civilians and prisoners seems to be achieving a strategic goal. These atrocities seem to go beyond just the extermination of ethnic and religious minorities that are to be fought against but rather to stimulate a mass exodus of civilian from the region and ISIL maybe looking to inject a flood of refugees into the West in order to sow further turmoil.

Information operations create effects both inside and outside of the organization. The Roman Catholic Church was also aware that relationships outside of the clergy was changing. By the eleventh century, the church began to alter its understanding of the relationship between the secular leaders in society and the religious. It did so in stages during the Norman campaigns of 1066, clergy accompanied the army into the field of battle. Priests ministered to the soldiers

⁴⁴ US Army, *ADP 6-0* (2012), v; US Army, *FM 3-13* (2016), 1-1; Sekulow, *The Rise of ISIL*, 22; McCantis, *The ISIS Apocalypse*, 15-20.

before, during, and after the fight. The religious celebrations fortified and uplifted the soldiers for the upcoming contests. William de Poitiers described how priests moved among the rank and file soldiers before the battle, offering blessings, comfort, and absolution for sins. The Norman priests wore vestments that distinguished them from the soldiers in William's army, thus the visual representation of his army was different from Harold's priests, marking another aspect that informed both the Norman and English sides in the campaign.⁴⁵

ISIL, in contrast, seeks to influence both inside and outside of the organization; and does so by using religious authority in communicating. Nowhere is the black banner mentioned in the Qur'an; it is in five hadith's, which is Islam's second most authoritative source and comes from traditions surrounding the Prophet Muhammad. In three of them, a symbolic message centers on a group that carried the black flag as a truth-bearing organization, a legitimate struggle against those who oppressed Muslims. It stresses that Muslims worldwide are obliged to join and support the cause. The use of these hadiths is at the center of ISIL's IO campaign to inform those sympathetic but not aligned with them.⁴⁶

The use of pro-ISIL propaganda in local mosques in the west and Middle East assists in growing and spreading the influence of ISIL religious doctrine through publications and speeches that carry the weight of religious authority to the larger populace. In regards to the "*bay'a*" or pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr as the caliph, there is an internal as well as external debate within Islam. The criticism centers around the radical nature and brutality of ISIL and whether or not its tactics go too far even in the bringing about of the final judgment on the world. The charismatic and religious authority that Abu Bakr achieves as the head of state and head of

⁴⁵ Robert Jones, *Bloodied Banners: Martial Display on the Medieval Battlefield* (London: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2015), 150-151; US Army, *ADP 6-0* (2012), v.

⁴⁶ Mustazag Bahari, Muhammad Hassan, "The Black Flag Myth: An Analysis from Hadith Studies," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis* 6, issue 8 (September 2014): 3; US Army, *ADP 6-0* (2012), v.

government within ISIL drives the information operations of ISIL, which creates specific effects, such as an increase in adherents zeal for fighting against their enemies.⁴⁷

Islamic scholars write about the striking characteristics that should be in a caliph and those supporting ISIL highlight how these are in Abu Bakr. Rulers should have justice, understand Islamic law, and in the traditions outside of the Qur'an, and have physical courage to face the enemies of Islam. Islamic scholars argue that since Abu Bakr is a new caliph with the credentials required, then the populace of the caliphate should adhere to his authority. Amplification of the IO theme occurs in both the governmental and social structure of ISIL.⁴⁸

Using IO to influence the decision making of enemies and adversaries is a crucial component for any operation. The Normans and ISIL used religious authority, appointed from either divine inspiration or from the religious representatives on earth to supplement their power to act or command forces. The information contained within the symbols used, such as the priestly garb and black banner align IO with the commander's intent for operations. The immediate effects, such as the exploitation of adversaries, partners or neutral parties can occur in a short amount of time. Influencing the cognitive dimension of the enemy, such as in the willingness to fight in a cause that seems lost, takes longer. William was able to change the remaining Anglo-Saxon resistance in the weeks after the Battle of Hastings through his IO campaign in the cognitive dimension.⁴⁹

ISIL operates with some affiliates organizations or splinter groups that are not a formal part of the organization. ISIL rules through a system of convenient alliances that do not produce

⁴⁷ US Army, *ADP 6-0* (2012), v; Stéphane Lacroix, , and George Holoch. *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011, 11; Bahari and Hassan "The Black Flag Myth: An Analysis from Hadith Studies," 8; Joas Wagemakers, "The Concept of Bay'a in the Islamic State's Ideology," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9 no. 4, Special Issue on the Islamic State (August 2015): 98.

⁴⁸ Wagemakers, "The Concept of Bay'a in the Islamic State's Ideology," 98; Lacroix and Holoch, *Awakening Islam*, 12.

⁴⁹ US Army, *ADP 6-0* (2012), 6; US Army, *FM 3-13* (2016), 1-4.

homogeneity but rather fragmentation under a symbol of pretended control. There is some general feeling of hostility and resentments towards the governments of both Iraq and Syria and ISIL, and affiliated groups can capitalize on those feelings. Smaller insurgent and radical groups are not destroyed or driven out but instead fighting a common enemy of the respective governments.⁵⁰

In the Norman conquest, William took various ethnic groups from northern Europe and built a force that was capable of fighting together despite the different goals and dreams of the subgroups; including monks fighting for the privilege to found new monasteries to mercenaries looking for gold and treasure to minor nobles and second sons of families eager for land. In no small way, the religious authority from Rome gave additional credibility to the power of William and enhanced his ability to influence through IO the nationalities within his army. It is entirely possible and probable that William, with the military support and secular alliances secured could have successfully invaded England and swept away the Anglo-Saxon rulers without the assistance and blessing of the Roman Catholic church. It is apparent from the Norman records that William felt he had an authoritative claim to the throne of England even before seeking the assistance of Pope Alexander II.⁵¹

Implications on Contemporary Operations

The two events surveyed highlight ways that religious symbols influence and shape broader events. The historical significance of these two operations helps to understand today 's contemporary operations. Both the Normans and ISIL incorporated elements of IO into their respective campaigns to influence the outcomes. IO campaign planning occurs before, during and after the desired end state is achieved as political objectives change. There are three interrelated efforts within IO: a commander-led staff planning and synchronization effort, a preparation and

⁵⁰ Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, "Jaysh al-Mujahideen Iraq Statements: Clashes with the Islamic State: Translation and Analysis," 24 August 2014, accessed 24 October 2018, [http://www.aymennjawad.org/2014/08/jaysh-al-mujahideen-iraq-statements-clashes-with-;](http://www.aymennjawad.org/2014/08/jaysh-al-mujahideen-iraq-statements-clashes-with-) US Army, *ADP 6-0* (2012), 6.

⁵¹ Linklater, *The Conquest of England*, 206; Russell *William the Conqueror*, 110.

execution effort and an assessment effort. In preparation for the invasion of England, William conducted commander-led staff planning with his nobles while clerical ambassadors executed IO. ISIL has shown a surprisingly well-organized execution of IO through both Western targeted media and internet-based products. The feedback provided back to the commanders validated the measures of effectiveness and assisted in modifications within the respective operations of the Normans and ISIL.⁵²

During major operations, commanders conduct IO to achieve effects against the enemy. The IO planning and integration requires the weighting of efforts to each task. William considered the support of the papacy higher denying the Anglo-Saxons alliances with the nations surrounding Normandy. ISIL has placed emphasis and weight on appealing to disenfranchised Muslims living in Western societies and focused its IO message on receiving either tacit approval for actions or at least apathy to any western intervention. The goal of IO is to achieve objectives and conclude hostilities with conditions that are favorable and to do so within a long term sustainable framework.⁵³

It is important to note how complex contemporary operations are, but that is not to suggest that past campaigns were simple affairs. William had logistical, sustainment, and mission command struggles in the Norman Conquest of England almost a millennium ago. In commanding his army, William relied on feudal obligations from his vassals to keep his army in the field. The Anglo-Saxons did not stay in their traditional counties, but levies from all over southern England fought at Hastings. Today, adversaries use technology to link those sympathetic to their cause to communities and vulnerabilities ripe for exploitation. ISIL use IO technology uniquely adapted to destabilizes opponents. Abu Bakr, as the spiritual and strategic leader of ISIL, uses both his charisma as well as Islamic religious texts to justify his organization's actions

⁵² US Army, *FM 3-13* (2016), 1-5.

⁵³ US Army, *ADP 6-0* (2012), 3; New American Standard Bible *Exodus 20:1-20* (1996); US Army, *FM 3-13* (2016), 1-5.

to the audience within and outside. The changing nature of the complex environment in the Middle East requires al-Baghdadi to reframe his strategic objectives periodically.⁵⁴

The mission command warfighting function is a blend between the art of command and the science of control. IO's focus on protecting information, such as the landing place of the Norman invasion, enhances the commander's ability to integrate all warfighting functions and created shared understanding. In providing clear commander's intent, William laid out the case not only for the successful invasion of England but also for the conquest and subjugation of the island as a whole with Scottish King Malcolm III swearing fealty to William as his feudal overlord in 1072. This intent required great personal charisma as demonstrated by the parliament assembly in Normandy before the invasion. His influence on the principal vassals providing the opportunity to co-opt the rest into supporting his claim and cause. In the aftermath of the battle of Hastings, William continued to pursue the best course of action that would provide success and the crown of England. He took control of both the religious as well as the financial centers of the kingdom and then encircled the capital, which cut off any hope of reinforcement from the countryside.⁵⁵

In comparison, ISIL, the formation and announcement of the Islamic State did not initially disrupt the surrounding region. Building on early successes in western Iraq, ISIL and Abu Bakr looked to expanded rapidly into Syria and subsequently into North Africa and Afghanistan. Technology allowed extremist groups who had no prior connection with ISIL pledged resources and loyalty to the organization to increase their legitimacy and the perceived size of the caliphate. Both examples provide evidence of how clear commander's intents can shape and sustain operations far from logistical or sustainment base.

⁵⁴ US Department of the Army *Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-0 Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 1-1; US Army, *FM 3-13* (2016), 1-7.

⁵⁵ US Army, *ADRP 6-0* (2012), 1-1; US Army, *FM 3-13*, (2016), 1-7; Richard Oram, *David I: The King Who Made Scotland* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2008), 29.

In accepting a prudent risk, uncertainty exists in any enterprise, especially in military operations. This risk was apparent during William conquest of England where he was the overall commander of the operation. He took control of the center portion of the Norman army during the battle of Hastings at the tactical level as well as coordinating where the fleet would assemble and stage in Normandy. He accepted the risk of the operation and that his forces would arrive on time and in good enough order to begin the conquest. ISIL commanders, on the other hand, allow and take a risk in being tactical and operational commanders. The personal bravery of ISIL commanders is a crucial trait to have and instill in the rank and file of ISIL. The interpretation of Islamic law and al-Baghdadi's leadership style highlight the importance of accepting the prudent risk. The willingness to take prudent risk is often the key to exposing enemy weaknesses.⁵⁶

Both commanders focused on creating opportunities rather than merely preventing defeat. William continued to pursue the English throne after the declaration of Edgar Atheling as the next king of England. He instead attacked the centers of English power, the religious in Canterbury in south east England and the financial in Winchester in the central portion of the island. The use of the religious leaders, such as Archbishop Stigand of Canterbury, by William after the battle of Hastings further cemented William claim and legitimacy in the eyes of the populace. Rebellions occurred after his coronation but focused on land redistribution and taxes rather than William's right to rule.⁵⁷

ISIL's risk versus reward calculus worked differently. ISIL was estimated to have in 2014-2015 anywhere from 9,000 –200,000 local members in Iraq and Syria with around 30,000 of those being fighters. It recruited roughly 1,000 soldiers each month from radicalized portions of the world population. Some radicalized fighters later returned home to conduct attacks using the expertise learned during their time in ISIL. The risk of losing a few soldiers each month to

⁵⁶ US Army, *ADP 6-0* (2012), 6; US Army, *ADRP 6-0* (2012), v.

⁵⁷ Linklater, *The Conquest of England*, 206; Russell, *William the Conqueror*, 169.

return to their respective counties was worth the risk of having additional acts of terrorism to subordinate local governments.⁵⁸

Commanders also want to avoid inadequate planning and preparation during the planning process. There is an art to command, such as deciding how long to wait to begin a conquest or invasion, with the planning process always continuing. There is a myriad of factors to take into account, many which the attackers have no control over, such as the weather or location, disposition, and strength of the defending forces. Only nine months went by between the death of Edward the Confessor and the invasion by the Normans and the battle of Hastings. William deemed it necessary to delegate many tasks to trusted subordinates. Those tasks included the support from the papal throne in Rome and the Norman vassals. Secondary responsibilities included conducting and concluding various alliances and non-aggression pacts with other European regional powers.⁵⁹

ISIL avoided inadequate planning and preparation through its phased expansion goals. The ongoing civil war in Syrian in 2011 did not motivate ISIL to conduct full-scale expansion into the country, but rather to support ground level movements. The overall goal of ISIL was to build a Sunni-Muslim based revolution against both Iraq and later Syria by the establishment of a caliphate. The central geographical focus of the territory was Dabiq, for both religious, apocalyptic and historical reasons that predict it will be the location for the battle of final judgment.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Linklater, *The Conquest of England*, 206; Russell *William the Conqueror*, 110; Stephen Schemenauer, "Using the Rule of Law to Combat the Islamic State" *The Army War College Review* (2016), 4.

⁵⁹ Linklater, *The Conquest of England*, 206; Russell *William the Conqueror*, 168; US Army, *ADP 6-0* (2012), 6; US Army, *ADRP 6-0* (2012), v.

⁶⁰ Lars Andersen "The Mole and the Mallet Islamic State and al-Qaeda in the 'Thirty Years' War' in the Middle East," *Connections* 16, no. 1 (Winter 2017): 21; US Army, *ADP 6-0* (2012), 6 ; US Army, *ADRP 6-0* (2012) , v.

In contemporary operations, technology and economies are even more interconnected than before. However, the world remains very diverse in culture, health, education, and religion. ISIL sees this diversity as a threat to its goal of conquest and subjection of those who do not support or adhere to its particular interpretation of Islam. ISIL uses Islamic religious symbols as well as the destruction of other religious and cultural symbols to help its own goals. ISIL has operated in both Iraq and Syria destroying cultural heritage sites, artifacts, and historical archives. The widespread belief that ISIL does this with the intent of destroying the local culture and in the hopes that in doing so the local community will either leave or come out and fight ISIL and be crushed. These attacks seek to shock the international community with their brutality.⁶¹

Conclusion

The Norman Conquest of England required a daring and bold leader to win. The operation was organized and funded quickly for a military operation in the Middle Ages. As supplies and vessels arrived at the staging river, they were moored in sections by what they carried. On the diplomatic front, William immediately sent envoys to the papal court in Rome to secure the backing and authority of the pope while he worked to bring his vassals in line with his vision for the conquest. With the political and religious influence in line with his vision as the commander of the expedition, William was able to complete the conquest rapidly, from the initial landing in October to the coronation in December of 1066. The indirect and direct support that William received from the pope contributed directly to the success at Hastings and coronation at Westminster in London.⁶²

ISIL's growth under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was exponential throughout a short few months in 2014-2015. The success of the expansion into both Iraq and Syria was in no

⁶¹ Kristy Campion, "Blast through the Past Terrorist Attacks on Art and Antiquities as a Reconquest of the Modern Jihadi Identity," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, no. 1 (February 2017): 30.

⁶² Linklater, *The Conquest of England*, 206; Russell, *William the Conqueror*, 110, 168.

small part to the creation and announcement of the Islamic State or caliphate, dissolved previously after the end of World War I and the breakup of the Ottoman Empire in 1922-1924.⁶³

Carl von Clausewitz states in *On War*, “No one starts a war...without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it. The former is the political purpose; the latter its operational objective.” Both the Normans as well as ISIL believed that with the power of religion on their side, they had the clear mandate to conduct their respective military operations to conquer territory and gain prestige in the international community.⁶⁴

IO directly supports the Clausewitzian maxim. The commander must be able to effectively promote and disseminate his intent to both friendly and enemy forces. The regulation of forces and the alignment of the warfighting functions work together to accomplish the mission of the commander’s intent. This accomplishment is done through the science of control and requires planning and organization such as that demonstrated both the Normans and the Islamic State. The systems and procedures put in place are used to improve the commander’s understanding and support the accomplishment of the mission. The two leaders are the focus and central figures in their respective organizations. They are the conduits for both information and orders to support their visualization as well as the accomplishment of the mission.⁶⁵

William launched his campaign at the time which gave him the best chance to defeat the Anglo-Saxons. With King Harold in the north defending against the Norwegian invasion under King Hardrada and the levies in the south being dismissed to tend to the autumn harvest he was able to attack forces piecemeal as they arrived in the south of England. ISIL too was able to capitalize on the political and religious unrest in Iraq and Syria, after years of civil strife and

⁶³ Hakan Ozoglu, *From Caliphate to Secular State: Power Struggle in the Early Turkish Republic* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO), 8.

⁶⁴ Clausewitz, *On War*, 34.

⁶⁵ US Army, *ADP 6-0* (2012), 9-10.

insurgency. ISIL declared itself both a secular and religious authority in the region and those who did not support it had the option of fighting back or departing from the territory they controlled. The religious symbols used by both examples, with the papal banner and the flag of the Islamic State helped rally disparate people to the causes. The network, or grouping of people or things interconnected and enlarged for a purpose.⁶⁶

The success of the Norman conquest and the growth of the Islamic State provided the historical foundation for both English and European power struggles throughout the Middle Ages, but also for contemporary operations in the Middle East today. As the Normans began to have success in the aftermath of Hastings, that success, in turn, contributed directly to the capitulation of the remaining Anglo-Saxon nobles which then led to the coronation in Westminster at the end of 1066. ISIL began to see success on the battlefield and in the social media conflict as its territory began to grow and other insurgent and extremist organization join with and support the success of ISIL.

Implications for today's operations are transparent. The use of symbols is a fundamental concept of military operations, whether in an analog or digital form. Religious symbols invoke a reaction from the individual rather than the collective whole of an organization. Military leaders and planners must understand to the highest possible extent the cultural and religious significance placed on symbols in and around operations. This requires an emphasis be placed on being religiously and culturally aware of any operational environment. This requires both the commander and staff time and effort.

The historical examples provide concrete examples of the significance of religious symbols and the effects they have in a tactical and operations fight. Planning for the Norman conquest as well as ISIL expansion into Syria Iraq considered using religious symbology to justify as well as expand the possibility of control. While both operations were by no means

⁶⁶ US Army, *ADP 6-0* (2012), 11.

smooth and coordinated, the fervor ignited by the use of symbology assisted in the successful campaigns.

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