

THE BUSINESSMAN'S BRIEFCASE OF ISIS PROPAGANDA

The Guardian has a story today about what it claims is ISIS' manual in state-building which explains – the Guardian concludes – how it became the richest and most destabilizing Jihadi group of the past 50 years (as if that's a category tracked somewhere).

A leaked internal Islamic State manual shows how the terrorist group has set about building a state in Iraq and Syria complete with government departments, a treasury and an economic programme for self-sufficiency, the Guardian can reveal.

The 24-page document, obtained by the Guardian, sets out a blueprint for establishing foreign relations, a fully fledged propaganda operation, and centralised control over oil, gas and the other vital parts of the economy.

The manual, written last year and entitled Principles in the administration of the Islamic State, lays bare Isis's state-building aspirations and the ways in which it has managed to set itself apart as the richest and most destabilising jihadi group of the past 50 years.

It explains that this manual came from a businessman "working within ISIS" who in turn handed it onto scholar Aymenn al-Tamimi.

The document came from a businessman working within Isis via the academic researcher Aymenn al-Tamimi, who has worked over the past year to compile the most thorough log of Isis documents available to the public.

For safety reasons, the Guardian cannot reveal further information about the businessman but he has leaked nearly 30 documents in all, including a financial statement from one of Isis's largest provinces.

That's the news in this article, in my opinion – that this documents, as well as a slew of other purportedly ISIS documents, including a widely-cited financial one that “proved” ISIS was funding itself using extortion rather than donations from US Sunni allies – all came from the same businessman.

I had been pondering the financial one for some time, mostly wondering why it is that everyone believed this document that showed up out of nowhere. Now we learn there's a series of documents showing up out of nowhere, forming a key basis for public understanding of ISIS.

And yet somehow that businessman keeps wandering off with ISIS' founding documents without getting executed.

That's, um, rather incredible.

Which, I suggest, ought to raise questions about who might want to produce the understanding we're getting from these documents, and why that entity would be pushing this particular understanding.

Let me be clear. It is possible this really came from ISIS. But I would suggest its continued supply means either that ISIS wants it out or it's not from ISIS.

Of related interest is that this story keeps getting fed, first, to non-US media outlets.