Does ISIS Satisfy the Criteria for an Apocalyptic Religious Cult?

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The U.S. has been battling ISIS and its forerunners for over two decades; however, ISIS continues to endure and expand. While described as a death cult by some political leaders and other key stakeholders, this assertion received little consideration in the scholarly literature. The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether ISIS satisfied the criteria of an apocalyptic religious cult through the application of a historical qualitative research design and meta-analysis. Based on the results, the null hypothesis that ISIS does not satisfy the criteria of an apocalyptic religious cult was rejected, and the hypothesis that ISIS satisfies the criteria of an apocalyptic religious cult was accepted. This outcome has significant implications regarding U.S. policy and how practitioners develop effective strategies to neutralize threats from cults. Our follow-on research includes the development of a dataset of thousands of cults; this dataset will be used in a variety of analyses to look for patterns leading to a cult's demise.