The lack of a coherent and consistent lens through which to understand Islamic State’s (ISIS) transnational enterprise is undermining our understanding of the significance of the group’s global agenda. Islamic State’s self-proclaimed “caliphate” today is best understood as an adhocratic global insurgency – an irregularly managed collection of diverse, geographically dispersed militant groups competing to govern in suitable areas – the character of which is reflective of the ideological compulsion, strategic principles, and organizational traits that underpin the ambitions of its larger political project. Drawing on a spectrum of case studies, this lecture will address what these mean for both Islamic State’s core and its global provinces.

Dr. Craig Whiteside is Associate Professor of National Security Affairs at the U.S. Naval War College at its resident program at the Naval Postgraduate School.