Hassan Abu Hanieh
Dr. Mohammad Abu Rumman

The "Islamic State" Organization

The Sunni Crisis and the Struggle of Global Jihadism

The "Islamic State" Organization

*The Sunni Crisis
and the Struggle of
Global Jihadism*

Not for sale

The "Islamic State" Organization

*The Sunni Crisis
and the Struggle of
Global Jihadism*

By:

*Hassan Abu Hanieh
&
Dr. Mohammad Abu Rumman*

2015

**FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG**

Dedication

To those who dream of a better and more beautiful future, and believe that the hopes of the Arab peoples transcend the limits of despotic regimes and sectarian militias.

This book is dedicated to those individuals who do not choose internal chaos and civil wars, those who recognize that the only path to achieving the desired future is through the struggle to establish democratic and pluralistic systems, based on the essential values of respecting human rights, liberties, and dignity; systems that stand upon the pillars of justice, citizenship, and the rule of law.

Foreword

Anja Wehler-Schoeck
Resident Director, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Jordan and Iraq

With the gradual rise of what later became known as the 'Islamic State' Organization or IS, the year 2013 marked a turning point in global Jihadism. IS introduced previously unknown forms of recruiting, propaganda and operating. In 2014, the terror organization managed to overtake al-Qaeda as the dominant player of global Jihad. IS has been recruiting on a much larger scale than al-Qaeda and across a far broader range, including converts to Islam from many Western countries. Since IS practically overran Mosul in June 2014, hardly any topic has received more media attention than the Islamist terror organization. The subsequent declaration of a caliphate and the expansion of IS-controlled territories as well as their ominous attraction to young recruits and the extreme brutality of their actions are being observed with growing concern around the globe.

Yet, the public discourse is not seldom influenced by sensationalism and conspiracy theories. With the publication of this book, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) wishes to contribute to an educated discussion of the new developments in global Jihadism. The authors, Dr. Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh go back to the sources of al-Qaeda and IS and analyze the differences of both terror organizations with regard to ideology and strategy as well as to organizational structure and leadership. They explain the

genesis of the rift between the two organizations, which has evolved from mere ideological differences to a full-fledged military conflict. Against the backdrop of the political developments in Syria and Iraq in the past few years, the authors show how IS was able to rapidly gain strength.

FES Amman has created a line of work dedicated to Political Islam aiming at shedding light on the various streams and trends and at promoting an informed discourse on Islamist movements. In this context, a publication series was launched in 2007, under which nine books have been published to date. Through these publications, we aspire to make academic analyses of Islamist movements accessible to a broad audience.

The team of FES Amman wishes to express their heartfelt gratitude to the authors Dr. Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh, both of whom are renowned experts on the issue of Political Islam and who have proven to be invaluable resources in this field.

We thank you for your interest in the events and publications of FES Amman and wish you an interesting and insightful read of "The 'Islamic State' Organization. The Sunni Crisis and the Struggle of Global Jihadism".

Table of Contents

Chapter Three:
The Road to Announcing the "Caliphate"

Chapter Four:
The Schism of Al-Qaeda: Disputes and Implications of Discord

Chapter Five:
The Struggle over the Ideology of Jihadi Salafism

Chapter Six:
The Evolution of the Islamic State's Structure

Conclusion:
The Day After: The War against the 'Islamic State'

Appendices

Introduction

Introduction

The Islamic State's swift military advance and takeover of the city of Mosul and other Iraqi regions in June 2014 flabbergasted the world. The attack was shocking, and within days, IS was able to gain control of several other vital Iraqi provinces, while the Iraqi armed forces quickly collapsed in its wake. In an attempt to justify and explain this sudden event, an Iraqi official speaking to the media found no other words to say except: "We are facing a foreign invasion." At the same time, there is irony in the fact that armed Sunni factions in Syria themselves considered the "Islamic State" to be a tool in the hands of external parties aiming to thwart the Syrian revolution and conspire against it – in other words, a "foreign invasion" as well.

The topic of the "Islamic State"[1] (IS) did not merit much attention or interest prior to the Mosul events and the subsequent shock that bewildered not only Iraqis, but the Arab and international public opinion as well. Yet since then,

---

[1] Material written about this organization, whether in the media, political statements, academia, or elsewhere has used various names and titles to refer to the "Islamic State," a group which calls itself the "Islamic Caliphate State" (*Dawlat al-Khilafa al-Islamiya*). Common titles include the "Islamic State" (IS) (*Al-Dawla al-Islamiya*), or use of the title previously held by the organization "The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant" (ISIL), with the Levant denoting the area of Greater Syria (*Al-Sham*) in (*Al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-'Iraq wa al-Sham*), denoted by the acronym (ISIS). The organization came to be dubbed as "*Da'esh*" in Arab media, based on the acronyms in Arabic. This book refers to the organization as "The Islamic State" or IS. [Translator's note]

the topic has come to top news headlines covering the Arab region, and became a hot topic for conferences and debates that are frequented by large audiences in search of convincing answers in evaluating the true level of power of IS, and to unravel the conundrum that is the complete collapse of Iraqi and Syrian armed forces before IS troops. There is a keen urge to explain the organization's bloody violent behavior towards its opponents, and the video scenes broadcasted by its media outlets on the Internet and social networking sites.

The media and public "obsession" with following and monitoring the news about IS did not dissipate with time; on the contrary, the announcement of establishing the "Islamic Caliphate" reinforced the volume of questions and the puzzlement about this new local and regional "violent entity." Indeed, this entity has essentially overturned both the local and the regional political and security equations. World powers began to consider the "Islamic State" a threat to their interests, prompting the U.S. administration to spearhead a large global and regional coalition to interfere militarily, once again, in the region (albeit limiting such intervention to air bombardment thus far). This move comes despite analyses confirming that the U.S. Administration has little desire for such interventions under its current President Barack Obama.

Despite this large volume of information, media coverage, conferences, seminars, and political and intellectual debates regarding the "Islamic State," this new entity nonetheless continues to be surrounded by an "aura" of ambiguity, casting a spell of confusion and puzzlement on popular, and perhaps elitist, analyses and explanations about it. And, because the Arab intelligentsia is often enamored by "conspiracy theories", various – and often conflicting analyses and explanations – spouted, linking the rise of this

organization and its actions to international and regional agendas. Some intellectuals speak of IS as an "Iranian tool," while others endeavor to come up with analyses and accounts that puts this entity within the context of an American agenda aimed to divide the region on sectarian-religious-ethnic bases.

Hence, it is no wonder that they would hold on dearly to various fabricated and fictitious narratives attributed to former U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, in which she allegedly describes IS as an "American invention." Other bizarre narratives insist that the "Caliph Al-Baghdadi" was trained at the hands of Israel's Mossad. These unsubstantiated grand captions came to headline the news of various Arab and regional media outlets without any basic scrutiny or fact checking of the authenticity of such accounts, or the reliability of their sources. Such stories often go public without concern for the extent to which their validity affects the media outlets' own credibility and professionalism.

Many explanations insist on linking IS with factors that are "outside" the current Arab social or political contexts, be it in Iraq or Syria, especially as the Arab intellectuals, preachers, politicians, and the public and mainstream current, in general, have washed their hands from this "beastly trend," dismissing it as "alien" to the Arab environment. Such dismissal fundamentally denies that this "entity" is, in fact, a true and genuine product of the current reality and is objectively indicative of the extent to which political, moral, cultural, and social conditions have deteriorated. They dismiss it as an "entity" alien to the outcomes and consequences of corrupt authoritarian regimes, on the one hand, and deteriorating social contexts, on the other hand. These malaises are further exacerbated by the stagnation and

defects of the intellectual and jurisprudential systems in the region as a whole.

Perhaps, such analyses attempt to avoid acknowledging that this organization is indeed an invasion; however, it is more of an internal invasion rather than a foreign one, which this book means to prove. The book proposes that the "Islamic State" is an expected product of the current Arab social and political reality, particularly in Iraq and Syria. IS has re-emerged and found a fertile chaotic climate, where sectarian and ethnic conflicts are raging, and the nature of the struggle has transformed into an identity-driven one, turning political processes into societal conflicts, rather than purely political or partisan competition.

This argument is not the explanation that is trending today in Arab political and media circles, but perhaps, this is indicative of the significance and timeliness of this book. The following chapters seek to present an analytical reading of the "Islamic State," its path, transformations, and the role of realistic objective conditions in explaining the emergence of this "vicious entity" and the factors that facilitated its recent rise and expansion.

The "Islamic State" organization, in its roots and trajectory, has clashed with the global Jihadi Salafist current, and engaged antagonistically with the central Al-Qaeda organization and Al-Nusra Front, hence overturning that relationship from "unity and brotherhood" to animosity, discord, and ideological and armed conflict. This constituted in its own virtue yet another shock to the followers of the Jihadi Salafist movement in general, who considered talk of any internal disagreements within the movement as a scheme of the opposition's psychological warfare and propaganda against it. This overturn shocked the Jihadi Salafists for a

while until they themselves entered into a state of sharp polarization within the current, between those who support the Islamic State and its Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and those proponents of the central Al-Qaeda, headed by Al-Zawahiri, and Al-Nusra Front, headed by Al-Jolani. This polarization has spilled over and extended well into the communities within the Arab and Muslim worlds that are influenced by Jihadi Salafist ideology, to ignite yet another internal war throughout the midst of the movement, particularly after the schism of Al-Qaeda itself into two currents that disavow each other as "infidels" (*takfir*) and "innovators," and viciously fight each other ideologically and on the battlefield.

These "internal dynamics" generate a second argument that this book seeks to pull to pieces and analyze; which is that discord between the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda has roots that date back to the era of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, the godfather and actual headman of the "Islamic State." Such discord gradually deepened in later stages, despite remaining unpublicized until it burst and unraveled when Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, head of Al-Nusra Front, rejected the announcement by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, head of the Islamic State, to merge both organizations into one under the name of "The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham" (ISIS) in April 2014.

Hence, this book seeks to answer a number of central questions and complexities vis-à-vis the Islamic State as an organization, in the first place, and the Islamic State's relationship with Al-Qaeda and Al-Nusra Front, in the second. The prominent questions and issues include:

• What are the main hallmarks of the ideology of the Islamic State?

- How do we explain IS' swift rise and rapid military victories in both Iraq and Syria prior to the formation of the regional and international coalition against it?

- Are the factors behind its rise linked to the organization's network of relations associated with shadowy regional interests? Or, are they linked to other subjective, or objective and realistic conditions, or to more complex and compounded factors?

- Are the conflicts between the Islamic State and the central Al-Qaeda network linked to a struggle over power, influence, and control? Or, are there real ideological and political differences between the discourses of each organization?

- What is the nature of the internal makeup and structure of the Islamic State? Does it possess military or administrative experience in dealing with the serious challenges facing it? And, what are the estimations of the size and strength of the organization?

- What are the prospects and indicators projected for the future of the Islamic State and its options in the near future in confronting the regional and international coalition against it?

To answer these questions and to dismantle the "aura" of obscurity surrounding the Islamic State organization, and to address the conflicting readings about it, and to further examine the commonalities and differences between it and the central Al-Qaeda organization, this book will survey and analyze the path of development of the Islamic State, the stages and transformations it went through, and the factors behind its retreat in the past years before its more recent second, and rapid, reemergence.

This book also addresses Al-Nusra Front, within the Syrian scenario, and discusses the internal conflicts between it and the Islamic State, conflicts that ultimately led to a serious schism within Al-Qaeda and a struggle between the two currents. The book attempts to distinguish between the ideological construct of the Islamic State and that of Al-Nusra Front, in particular, and the Jihadi Salafist current, in general.

The final chapter examines the internal dynamics and makeup of the Islamic State, how it developed over the past few years from a simple group to an entity that mimics the contemporary state system, but peculiarly attempts to pair this contemporary element with its own version of Islamic jurisprudential legacy.

The book concludes with an exploration of the key indicators of – and prospects for – the upcoming phase of confronting the Islamic State, in light of the war against it led by the international and regional coalition, and also in the context of the conflicts and discord within Al-Qaeda and the Jihadi Salafist current in general.

The analyses presented in this book depended mainly on direct references and resources about these Jihadi Salafist movements and their ideological discourses, referencing main sources available on the Internet to ascertain the narratives and visions of these movements, which rarely have the opportunity to publish in mainstream media outlets, and whose political narratives of events are often censored or excluded, which constitutes a methodological difficulty in research, especially amid the instability of online news websites and the possibility of the loss and deletion of its archives.

This was experienced throughout the writing of this book. The two researchers faced the "disappearance" of online material and broken links used as references, necessitating more efforts in searching for alternate sources, a problem that exist with other referenced links as well.The problem of depending on online resources was most evident in dealing with websites associated with the Islamic State and al-Nusra Front, among others. As these groups face an electronic security war, their websites are often hacked and blocked, prompting them to change names and links until they are re-discovered again, resuming the ever-ending cycle of censorship. Circumventing this problem, followers of these organizations endeavor continuously in reposting deleted material on various other websites; hence, simply entering the title and author of a specific material in a search engine may provide an alternate reference. Yet, the problem continues to pose a hurdle for researchers in the field of Jihadi Salafist movements and groups, particularly in the context of the current regional and global conditions ■

Chapter One

The "Islamic State" Organization: Its Roots, Path, and Transformations

Introduction

While the U.S. administration was celebrating the toppling of the Saddam Hussein regime (on April 9th, 2003) and the defeat of his army, a young Jordanian man, named Ahmad Fadhil al-Khalayleh (Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi), was in Baghdad busy arranging for his small group to start a new phase of conflict with the U.S. occupation, from its first day.

Abu Mus'ab was not known except in limited circles, despite the fact that the then U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell had named him in the context of linking former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein to terrorism. But, in only a few years, this obscure individual became the leader of one of the most significant insurgency groups fighting the U.S. occupation in Iraq, and among the most prominent wanted individuals on America's terror list. Al-Zarqawi was able to expand the scope of his group to carry out operations against U.S. and coalition forces, newly formed Iraqi security and military apparatuses, and Western embassies and interests.

Two factors helped Al-Zarqawi in building his substantially fierce organization; first, the American policies during the first phase of occupation, including dissolving the Iraqi military and courting the Shiite segments of Iraqis at the expense of Sunnis, and second, Iranian expansion through domination and influence over Iraqi Shiite political forces, which represented the most important actors in the new political order in Iraq. Such policies created a climate that

was advantageous to Al-Zarqawi in his ability to recruit and gain a social "incubator" and host in the Sunni community, which was growing apprehensive of ongoing developments that were heading in a direction opposite to its interests and political and social gains during the previous decades.

Al-Zarqawi exploited well the political vacuum in the Sunni community, and also added to his group hundreds of Arabs and foreigners who came into Iraq, either to fight alongside Saddam Hussein (only to be surprised by the rapid collapse of his military and security forces), or those who came after the occupation while Al-Zarqawi and his group were rising to insurgency stardom in Iraq and gaining a strong reputation in the global Salafi Jihadist mediums around the world. And; because countries in the region, such as Syria, Iran, and Arab Gulf states were wary of the "American Project," and of the discourse of neo-conservatives that spoke of changing the entire region through "spreading democracy," such regimes accommodated and colluded with the phenomenon of Arab volunteer fighters, turning Iraq within a few years into a new and effective regional hub for Al-Qaeda, and even a source and exporter of sympathetic cells to other countries in the region and to Europe.[2]

Although Al-Zarqawi declared his allegiance to Osama bin Laden and merged his group into Al-Qaeda in 2004, yet the challenging conditions and obstacles facing the central organization after the global war against the regime of Afghanistan's Taliban, headed by the United States towards

---

[2] See: Naomi Klein, "*Baghdad Year Zero: Pillaging Iraq in Pursuit of Neocon Utopia*," Harper's Magazine, September 2004, available at: http://harpers.org/archive/2004/09/baghdad-year-zero/. Compare with, Anthony Cordesman, "*Iraq: What is to Be Done*," Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington DC, May 5, 2004, available at: http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/iraq_whatdone.pdf

the end of 2001, led to Al-Zarqawi gaining prominence that was growing parallel in rank, prestige, and influence to historic leading figures of Al-Qaeda. This growing stardom compelled Al-Qaeda's leadership to overlook ideological differences with Al-Zarqawi, and work to overcome and contain them from being publicized. During that phase, the two sides never really reached a consensual vision or understanding regarding these differences, which continued to accumulate and snowball until they became a dividing line between two distinctly different visions and two contrasting approaches to the "struggle," its priorities, and paths.

Thus, the Islamic State organization did not come about as a matter of chance, and did not appear suddenly with the storming of Mosul (in June 2014); rather, it is a result of a developing and accumulating course carrying in its folds multiple factors that took place between 2003 and 2014. The first factor is the objective factor, exemplified by the reality of the U.S. occupation, the expansion of Iranian influence, and the domination of the pro-Tehran Shiite forces over the new political system in Iraq. The second factor is the character of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi itself and his ideological vision that is distinctly different and contrasting with the ideology of the central Al-Qaeda, despite having officially joined the mother organization. The third factor is characterized by the new state of affairs of the Sunni community, its growing concern of being excluded and marginalized following the occupation of Iraq, the Sunni political vacuum, and the absence of an inclusive and uniting political platform in the new Iraqi order.

To track the nascent and initial phases that sketched the roots and transformation of the Islamic State organization, this chapter will discuss the emergence of organization and

the factors that contributed to both its rise and decline between the years 2003 (the beginning of U.S. occupation of Iraq), and 2010 (the withdrawal of U.S. troops). It will also address the ideological thoughts upon which the organization is founded, and the path through which its approach to political struggle was formed. This chapter concludes with the phase of the organization's decline and retreat, which coincided with the U.S. troops "surge" strategy and the emergence of the Sunni Awakenings (*Sahawat*) against Al-Qaeda in Iraq. A discussion of the more recent phase that witnessed the re-emergence of the organization around the time of the Arab uprisings and revolutions is deferred to chapter three.

1. The Legacy of Al-Zarqawi: The Godfather of the 'Islamic State'

No one who knew Ahmad Fadhil al-Khalayleh, in his childhood and youth days or even the Jordanian security officers who interrogated him, ever envisioned that this rash and feisty submerged young man from the humble Ma'soum neighborhood in the densely-populated Jordanian city of Al-Zarqaa' would become one of the most important Jihadist figures in the world, and the founder and "Godfather" of the Islamic State organization, a person and an organization that had become a hot topic for politicians and the media throughout the world.

There are numerous stories and narratives about the reasons for the major transformation in the life of Al-

Khalayleh. It is known that he went to Afghanistan in 1989, via Peshawar, Pakistan to participate in the Afghan Jihad, where he settled in the city of Jalalabad, a suburb of Peshawar, which was the rear base for Arab and Afghan Mujahideen. It is there that the "*Bayt al-Ansar*" (House of Supporters) is based, which housed fighters and supporters of Al-Qaeda and was headed by Osama Bin Laden, and also the "Services Desk," which belonged to Abdullah Azzam, both facilities served as first posts for receiving Arab volunteer fighters.

Shortly afterwards, in the spring of 1989, Al-Zarqawi moved with a number of other new fighters from Peshawar to the region of Khost, in eastern Afghanistan, but did not participate in the fighting because the war against the Soviets had ended prior to their arrival. He did, however, take part in some of the battles that erupted between Islamist parties and other pro-communist parties there until 1993.

It is around this time in Peshawar that Al-Zarqawi met Abd al-Rahman al-Ali, an Egyptian who goes by the nom de guerre Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir, and 'Issam al-Barqawi, known as Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, through a Palestinian named Abu al-Walid al-Ansari al-Falastini, who was a close associate of Abu Qutada al-Falastini.[3] Al-Zarqawi was strongly influenced by these figures, all of whom later became some of the most important theorists and ideologues of the Jihadi Salafist current in the world.[4]

---

[3] Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, "*Al-Zarqawi: Munasara wa Munasaha, Aamaal wa Aalaam*" (Lit.,*"Al-Zarqawi: Advocacy and Advice, Hopes and Pains*"; pg.1, available [in Arabic] at the following link:
http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=dtwiam56

[4] It is worthy to note here that rapidly changing developments – the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the start of the civil war between the Mujahidin factions (in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal), the end of the Second Gulf

After returning to Jordan in 1993, Al-Zarqawi began to meet with Al-Maqdisi again. The two joined forces to propagate the calling (*Da'wa*) to Jihadi Salafism, and established a Jihadi group that came to be known in the media as "*Bay'at al-Imam*" (Pledging Allegiance to the Imam).[5] Soon after, the Jordanian security apparatus discovered the new organization and arrested Al-Zarqawi on March 29, 1994. Al-Zarqawi, Al-Maqdisi, and other members their group were sentenced to 15 years in prison. Al-Zarqawi's time in prison proved to be a new turning point in his trajectory; he emerged as a commander, and imposed himself as an "emir" for the Jihadi Salafist prisoners. His stern personality (in the eyes of members of the growing Jihadi

---

War and finally the hunt for the "Arab Afghanis" in Peshawar – forced certain choices upon the three men: Abu Qutada decided to seek asylum in Great Britain; al-Maqdisi returned to Jordan; and, al-Zarqawi (and Al-Muhajir) chose to remain in Afghanistan where they joined the military camp of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and took part in the "second wave" of the Afghan civil war battles at the side of Jalalludin Haqqani. Al-Zarqawi underwent military training in several training camps, and in particular, the "Sada" training camp. See: Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh, "*The Jihadi Salafist Movement in Jordan after Zarqawi: Identity, Leadership Crisis, and Obscured Vision*," Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Amman, Jordan, 1st ed., 2009, pp. 12-29.

[5] The Jordanian security forces arrested members of the organization and were able to dismantle the group before it carried out any armed operation. Through a series of raids, group member Abd al-Hadi Daghlas was among the first to be arrested, exposing hallmarks and key members of the organization, including: Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, Mustafa Hassan Musa, Khaled Mustafa al-'Arouri (Abu al-Qassam), Sulaiman Talib Damra (Abu al-Mu'tasem), Muhammad Wasfi Omar (Abu Muntasir), Nasri 'Izz al-Din al-Tahayneh (Abu al-'Izz), Nabil Yusuf Abu Harthiyah (Abu Mujahid), Sharif Ibrahim Abd al-Fattah (Abu Ashraf), Ahmad Abdullah Yusuf al-Zaytawi, Muhammad Abd al-Karim Ahmad al-Rawashdeh, Muhammad Fakhri Musa al-Saleh, 'Alaa al-Din 'Atef, Sa'adat Abd al-Jawad, Talal Kayed al-Badawi, and Abd al-Majid al-Majali (Abu Qutaibah).

Salafist current in Jordan), began to manifest, particularly in his brazen defense before the court.[6]

Al-Zarqawi managed to impose himself in the image of a leader, and was able to attract large numbers of followers of the Jihadi Salafist movement. His thoughts and choices began to crystalize, albeit in a manner opposite to his Sheikh and mentor Al-Maqdisi, and in a direction that emphasized the need for direct militant and armed struggle. In contrast, Al-Maqdisi's attention was focused on propagating the new Jihadi Salafist ideology in the local Jordanian scene, and transferring it to Palestine, as he himself later stated.

Immediately after his release from prison (by a Jordanian royal pardon that included all Jordanian prisoners, on March 23, 1999), Al-Zarqawi embarked on journey to return to Afghanistan. He settled in Jalalabad, at the outskirts Peshawar near the Afghanistan-Pakistan borders. There, and in a short period of time, he managed to build a network of supporters and followers, aided by his previous relationship with Bin Laden and other Al-Qaeda members, in addition to his association with Abu Qutada al-Falastini and Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir.

By then, however, the Pakistani security campaigns had escalated after Al-Qaeda established the "Global Jihadi Front to Fight against the Crusaders and the Jews," in 1998, and

---

[6] Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, "*Ifadat Aseer: Ya Qawm Mali Ad'oukum ila al-Janna wa Tad'ouni ila al-Nar*" (Lit. "Affidavit of a Prisoner: O My People! What of Me, I Call You Forth to heaven and You Call Me Forth to Hell's Fire"); available [in Arabic] at: http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=ou3wjvb3.

In his defense before the military tribunal, Al-Zarqawi's words reflected the extent to which the Jihadi Salafist ideology has become inculcated in his personality. He addressed the judge, saying: "Oh Judge, who makes judgment with that which God has not sent forth. And, if you know this, and it becomes evident to you that blatant unbelief, clear polytheism and idolatry is the imposition of a legislator other than God alone—whether it has been 'legislated' by a scholar, a ruler, a parliamentarian, or a tribal chief." P.8.

following the targeting of the two U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August of the same year. This prompted Al-Zarqawi to move to Afghanistan, where he created his own training camp in the Herat region, at the Afghan-Iranian border. He soon came to be viewed as a leader of the Jihadist fighters from Jordan, Palestine, and the Levant area, and was able to weave an extensive network of relations with various groups associated with Al-Qaeda and Arab training camps there.[7]

Shortly after, a group affiliated with Al-Qaeda attacked the United States on September 11th 2001, prompting the U.S. to invade Afghanistan in 2002 through an international coalition aimed to eliminate the regime Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Quickly, Al-Zarqawi arranged for his and his followers' exit from Afghanistan and into Iran, then to Iraq.

During that time, Al-Zarqawi began to weave a more "global" Jihadist network, establishing bases in Syria, and recruiting large numbers of Syrians, Lebanese, and Palestinians. His strategies were already in place; he had activated his network in Iraq, particularly in the Kurdistan region, and began to receive support from Jihadist networks

---

[7] By the year 2000, there were around 80 members, along with their families, at the Herat Military Training Camp, established and run by Al-Zarqawi. These members formed the first nucleus for Al-Zarqawi's network of Arab and foreign fighters. The most prominent of these were the Jordanian Khalid al-'Arouri (Abu al-Qassam), Abd al-Hadi Daghlas (Abu 'Obaida), Ra'ed Khreisat (Abu 'Abdal-Rahman al-Shami), 'Azmi al-Jayyousi, Nidal 'Arabiyat, Mu'ammar al-Jaghbeer, and hailing from Syria, Sulaiman Khalid Darwish (Abu al- Ghadiya), and Abu Mohammad al-Lubnani (the Lebanese). In Iraq, Al-Zarqawi was in charge of several training camps in the Serghat area of Kurdistan, Iraq. According to the testimony of Abu Muhammad al-Rayati, who was captured by the Americans in Kurdistan, Iraq and handed over to Jordanian authorities, Al-Zarqawi, from as early as 1999, encouraged Jordanians and others to enlist in training camps in Afghanistan, then in Kurdistan – that was how a multi-national group was formed in Kurdistan made up of Jordanians, Iraqis, Afghanis and Chechens, amongst others. [Reference: "*Al-Urdun Yakshif 'an Jama'at Ansar al-Islam al- Murtabita bi al-Qa'eda*) (Lit. "Jordan Exposes the Ansar al-Islam Group, which is Tied to Al- Qaeda"); al-Ra'i Jordanian daily Newspaper, September 13, 2003.]

in Europe. Al-Zarqawi had formed an alliance with Islamist groups in Kurdistan, beginning in 1999, when he was urging Jihadi fighters to leave Jordan to "safe havens," and enroll in training camps in Afghanistan and Kurdistan.[8]

Al-Zarqawi was active in expanding his network in various regions, and managed to establish many cells in Europe. In March 2002, German police dismantled a sleeper cell called "*Al-Tawhid*" (Oneness of God), which was affiliated with Al-Zarqawi's network.[9] The exposure of the cell proved the credibility of reports that his network had expanded well into Europe, and further exposed other cells in Italy, Spain, and Britain. Indeed, during that time, several European countries announced discovering cells affiliated with Al-Zarqawi that worked to recruit new members to be

---

[8] Al-Zarqawi had made of Kurdistan a stepping stone for his operations in Iraq. In August 2001, he held a meeting with his close aides, Khalid al-'Arouri and Abd al-Hadi Daghlas, to establish training camps for them in Kurdistan to recruit more Arab-Afghans (Arab fighters who had previously fought in Afghanistan) and Jordanians. He had already solidified relations with Raya Saleh Abdullah (Abu Abdullah al-Shafi'i), who had established a group by the name of "*Jund al-Islam*" (The Soldiers of Islam). The group had made an alliance with Mullah Krekar (who joined the Islamist movement in Kurdistan and became its military leader). The alliance thus developed into the organization known as "*Ansar al-Islam*" (Supporters of Islam). The new organization clashed with Kurdish parties, and soon after Mullah Krekar left for Norway where he sought asylum after Arab-Afghans, particularly Al-Zarqawi's followers, took control of the group of *Jund al-Islam.* The first Jordanian group in Kurdistan was led by Ra'ed Khreisat (Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Shami), along with Mahmoud Nsour, Mu'tasem Daradkeh, and Ibrahim Khreisat, all of whom had left Afghanistan's Herat camp early and settled in Kurdistan. These individuals helped establish *Jund al-Islam,* which later became *Ansar al-Islam*. A dispute between Al-Shami and Al-Zarqawi prompted the latter to bring Abd al-Hadi Daghlas (one of his confidants) from Afghanistan to Kurdistan to directly oversee the training camps there.

[9] The "Tawhid" cell included several nationalities, including Yasser Hassan (Abu Ali) and Zaydan 'Imad Abd al-Hadi (both Iraqis), Osama Ahmad (Kuwaiti), Ashraf al-Doghma, Shadi Abdullah, Muhammad Abu Deys, Isma'il Shalabi, and Jamal Mustafa (Jordanians). According to the German police report, Abu Ali had discussed with Al-Zarqawi carrying out several operations in Europe.

sent to fight in Iraq, raise funds, and expand logistical networks for the group.[10]

2. The Occupation of Iraq: The Establishment of the "*Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*" Group

When U.S. forces invaded Iraq on April 9th, 2003, and overthrew the regime of Saddam Hussein, Al-Zarqawi settled his resolve on the ideological choice to face the U.S. occupation forces, despite not yet having officially joined Al-Qaeda.

The key paradox here is that the "identity policies" that became the American strategy for influence and control over Iraq contributed largely, in and of themselves, to shaping the identity of Al-Zarqawi and his network on politically doctrinal and sectarian bases.[11]   Al-Zarqawi's "sectarian"

---

[10] See Jean Charles Brisard, "*Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi: Al-Wajh al-Akhar li Tanthim Al-Qaeda*" (Lit., Abu Musab al-Zarqawi: The Other Face of Al-Qaeda), translated by Hala Salah al-Din Lulu, Al-Dar al-'Arabiya li al-'Ulum, Beirut, and Dar al-Shuruq, Ramallah, 1st ed., 2006, pp. 125-130. The original is available in English, See: Jean Charles Brisard (collaboration with Damien Martinez), "*Zarqawi: The New Face of Al-Qaeda*", Other Press, 1st ed., 2005.

[11] The United States intended and succeeded in building the Iraqi political process on dual sectarian basis through affirming Iraqi ethnic identities, mainly its division into Arab and Kurds, and ingraining the religious and sectarian identity differences, mainly between Sunnis and Shiites. While the U.S. enabled the Kurds to administer a semi-independent region, it worked to marginalize Sunnis in a collective punishment manner for their engagement in the former regime and for their opposition of the occupation. The Shiites, on the other hand, were rewarded and empowered in governance after their religious referential authorities supported the occupation. These policies paved the way for a new phase in Iraq's modern history, and a new phase with a very different ruling political elite in the midst of a

ideology began to crystalize and take shape within the context of Shiite domination of the political process in Iraq, and was bolstered by the U.S. occupation and the rise of Iranian influence in Iraq, in particular, and in the region, in general.[12]

In the beginning, Al-Zarqawi surrounded himself with a group of his most loyal followers, for he did bestow his trust easily.[13] In terms of ideological, intellectual, and religious

---

deepening transformation in the balance of political and military powers in Iraq. For more detail on U.S.' "mistaken" policies in dealing with the Iraqi situation, see: Thomas Pickering, James R. Schlesinger, and Eric Shwartz, "*Iraq: The Day After*," The Council of Foreign Relations Press, Task Force Report No. 43, March 2003. Also See: William R. Polk, "*American Options in Iraq*," November 2004, original English version available at:

http://www.williampolk.com/pdf/2004/Options%20for%20Iraq.pdf; Also Adam Roberts, "*The End of Occupation: Iraq 2004*," The International and Comparative Law Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 1, Cambridge University Press, (Jan 2005), pp. 27-48.; Anthony Cordesman, "*Iraq: What is to Be Done*," Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington DC, May 5, 2004, original English version available at: http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/iraq_whatdone.pdf; Phyllis Bennis (and IPS Iraq Task Force), "*A Failed "Transition": The Mounting Costs of the Iraq War*," Institute for Policy Studies and Foreign Policy in Focus, September 2004; and The International Crisis Group, "*What Can the U.S. Do in Iraq*?" Middle East Report No. 34, December 22, 2004. Original English version available at http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq/034-what-can-the-us-do-in-iraq.aspx

[12] The irony is that, in the context of preparing to invade Iraq under the pretext of Iraq's regime having weapons of mass destruction, and its support for terrorism (both of which were later proved to be untrue), the then U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell speaking before the U.N. Security Council presented on February 15, 2003 (a month before the invasion) the name of Al-Zarqawi as one of the leaders of Al-Qaeda that works in cooperation with the Iraqi regime. However, the information Powell presented were imprecise and untrue. Powell presented Al-Zarqawi as Jordanian of Palestinian descent, whereas he is Jordanian hailing from a well-known trans-Jordanian tribe, belonging to the Bani Hassan clan. Various books and studies have been published exposing the lies that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction or that it harbored or supported terrorism. See a sample of these writings in, Bob Woodward, "*Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq*," Simon & Schuster publishers, 2004.

[13] The most prominent figures he trusted included Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, (an Egyptian who succeeded in control after Al-Zarqawi's death), Abu Anas al-Shami,

jurisprudential edicts (*Fatawa*), he relied on the reference of his Sheikh Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir,[14] who had a direct impact in emboldening Al-Zarqawi's warfare doctrine and his jurisprudential approach, especially with regard to the issue of prioritizing fighting the "near enemy" (represented by the "apostate" Arab and Muslim governing regimes), and the issue of collective *Takfir* (disavowing others as unbelievers)

(a Jordanian who was the first religious official in the organization), Nidal Muhammad Arabiyat (A Jordanian from the city of Salt who was an explosives expert, and is responsible for the majority of car bombings for which the organization claimed responsibility, he was killed in 2003), Mustafa Ramadan Darwish (Abu Muhammad al-Lubnani, a Lebanese national), Awras Abu Omar al-Kurdi, Thamer al-Atrouz al-Rishawi (a former Iraqi military officer), Abdullah al-Jubouri (Abu Azzam, an Iraqi), Omar Hadid (Abu Khattab, Iraqi), Muhammad Jassim al-'Issawi (Abu al-Harith, also Iraqi), Abu Nasser al-Libi, and Abu Osama al-Tunisi. All of the above were killed in 2003, except Abu Azzam, who was killed in 2005. Among the Jordanians that Al-Zarqawi trusted are Muwaffaq 'Adwan, Jamal al-'Otaibi, Salah al-Din al-'Otaibi, Muhammad al-Safadi, Mu'ath al-Nsour, Shehadeh al-Kilani, Muhammad Qteishat, Munthir Sheeha, Munthir al-Tamouni, and 'Omar al-'Otaibi.

[14] Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir: His name is Abd al-Rahman al-'Ali, an Egyptian national, he enjoys respect and reverence from Jihadi Salafists around the world. He received his Islamic education in Pakistan, where he met with Al-Zarqawi. He graduated from the Islamic University of Islamabad, then settled in Afghanistan, where he established a scholarly and *Da'wa* center in Khaldan camp. He taught at an Arabic language center in Kandahar, then in the Mujahideen camps in Kabul. He led the education operations at Al-Zarqawi's Herat camp, and was nominated to head Al-Qaeda's Religious and Scholarly committee. According to Al-Qaeda in Iraq spokesman, Maysara al-Gharib, Al-Muhajir was imprisoned in Iran, and had returned to Egypt months after the revolution took place. He has written several books, most prominent of which is "*Masa'il fi Fiqh al-Jihad*" (Issues in the Jurisprudence of Jihad), known in Jihadi circles as "*Fiqh al-Dimaa*" (Lit., The Jurisprudence of Blood). He also authored "*A'laam al-Sunnah al-Manshoora fi Ma'alim al-Ta'ifa al-Mansoura*" (Lit., The Pioneers of Spreading the Sunnah in the Hallmarks of the Victorious Sect). He is considered Al-Zarqawi group's *Mufti* (religious figure who issues religious edicts or *Fatawa*). See: "*Bayan Haqiqat 'Alaqat al-Baghdadi bi Amirina Al-Zarqawi*" (Lit., Manifesting the Truth of the Relationship of Al-Baghdadi with our Emir, Al-Zarqawi), available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.sunnti.com/vb/showthread.php?t=15452

of Shiites. Al-Muhajir also had a strong influence on Al-Zarqawi's extremist choices related to suicide bombings, kidnapping, assassinations, beheadings, and tactics of vicious violence and terrorizing, and the question of "*Tatarrus*" (the 'barricading' principle in certain Islamic religious interpretations where the death of civilians is exonerated if they happen to be present at a legitimate target (i.e. legitimizing civilian collateral damage).

It is important here to highlight the extent to which Al-Zarqawi's choices were shaped by Al-Muhajir's discourse, particularly by the latter's book popularly known as "*Fiqh al-Dimaa'*" (The Jurisprudence of Blood). Al-Muhajir also influenced the overall approach of the organization itself, and its view of Shiites and other factions, and later shaped the dynamics of the conflict in the Iraqi scene. The media spokesman of Al-Zarqawi's group, Maysara al-Gharib, reveals an important aspect of this influence; he states: "Our Sheikh Al-Zarqawi, May God have mercy on his soul, used to love our Sheikh "Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir" – May Allah unshackle his captivity – and revered and commended him, and had hoped that Al-Muhajir would come to Iraq. It was evident that if the latter would have come, [Al-Zarqawi] would have entrusted him with the responsibility of heading the Religious Committee. Our Sheikh used to urge me to teach the students the book of Al-Muhajir "*A'laam al-Sunnah al-Manshoora fi Ma'alim al-Ta'ifa al-Mansoura* (The Pioneers of Spreading the Sunnah in the Hallmarks of the Victorious Sect). We had photocopied the book, and began teaching it to the brothers. This is in addition to the book "*Fiqh al-Dimaa'*" (The Jurisprudence of Blood), for which we had eagerly awaited its arrival to Fallujah at the time, but it did not arrive until the beginning of the second Fallujah battle. The Sheikh [Al-Zarqawi] had mentioned to me that he

studied it with "Al-Muhajir" for four years, if I remember correctly… Then the days went by, and the book came into Iraq after the second Fallujah events, when many copies of the book were printed, under the title "*Masa'il fi Fiqh al-Jihad*" (Issues in the Jurisprudence of Jihad). It is a good and strong book, worthy of being quoted and taught to the Mujahideen brothers."[15]

Indeed, the book, "Issues in the Jurisprudence of Jihad,"[16]epitomizes the endorsed and adopted religious bases and the working "guidebook" for Al-Zarqawi and his group. The book is considered today one of the most significant among the literature that founded the ideological and jurisprudential frames of reference of the Islamic State organization. And; perhaps, we may find in its folds an explanation for the behavior and practices of the organization, as will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters.[17]

Al-Zarqawi also worked to develop his warfare, sectarian, and doctrinal approaches within the context of the "social incubator" he found in the Sunni community in Iraq, where his thoughts, discourse, and action gained growing momentum, in addition to gaining more robust military and security capabilities by engaging former officers of the deposed Iraqi military, coupled with the experience of Arab volunteers in the battlefield.

---

[15] Maysara al-Gharib, "*Min Khafaya al-Tarikh: Al-Zarqawi Kama 'Ariftuhou,*" (Lit., From the Hidden History: Al-Zarqawi as I knew Him), Al-Furqan Institute for Media Production, part 2, p. 3.

[16] Which is the same book as the one popularly known among Jihadists as "*The Jurisprudence of Blood*" mentioned earlier by Maysara al-Gharib. The book is available in Arabic on the following link:
http://ia601203.us.archive.org/19/items/kotobjehad/masael.pdf

[17] Abu Abdullah Al-Muhajir, "*Issues in the Jurisprudence of Jihad,*" op. cit., Table of Contents, pp. 569-573.

During a short period of time, Al-Zarqawi's network witnessed a remarkable development and attracted large numbers of Arab volunteers who came to participate in the fight during the Iraq war in 2003, in addition to Iraqi Sunnis, who were growing wary of American policies, which they perceived as siding with the Shiite forces against the Sunnis. Adding fuel to this growing concern, and transforming it into an existential anxiety, is the mounting Iranian influence and the takeover of pro-Tehran forces of the new political system in Iraq, in addition to controlling the military and security forces.

Initially, Al-Zarqawi did not give his group any particular name. According to Abu Anas al-Shami, Al-Zarqawi was waiting for an Iraqi group to announce itself, expecting to then work with, and through it. However, Al-Shami suggested forming a structure for the group, under the name "*Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*" (Oneness of God, and Jihad). Al-Zarqawi hesitated for a while, since he was working through a *Shura* (Consultation) Council of his network consisting of individuals close to him. He was later convinced, and as of September 2003, all statements and publications, both written and audio-visual content, were issued under the banner of "*Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*" organization.

Later, a specific structure for the organization was devised, headed by Al-Zarqawi and a *Shura* Council, but it did not include any deputies for Al-Zarqawi. Several organizational committees were formed, most important of which are the military, media and communications, security, finances, and the religious/scholarly committees. Abu Anas al-Shami headed the religious committee, and was the first religious official for the organization (towards the end of September 2003). With this strict hierarchical structure, the

pace of armed operations began to increase around this time, and the organization's warfare capabilities began to improve.

In the same context, "*Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*" was working to recruit large numbers from inside Iraq who were working in various governmental and public sectors, even in the police and the army, in an effort to infiltrate them. It was able to gain large popular support and backing in Sunni regions, particularly with the rise of Shiite sectarian practices against the Sunnis.

Al-Zarqawi's strategy in Iraq was built upon a process of shuffling cards and manipulating the "identity" complex. His strategy began to succeed in the quest for inciting a sectarian war between Sunnis and Shiites, with the aim of thrusting the Iraqi Sunnis into the midst of war and muster an active nucleus to form an "Islamic army."[18]

Effectively, and in a short period of time, Al-Zarqawi was able to strongly impose his network inside the Iraqi Sunni communities. His network's capabilities and strength were bolstered following the first Fallujah battle, amidst American political and military tactical errors. The failed U.S. combat strategies, which depended on massive and indiscriminate shelling during the battle, backfired and only helped attract more followers to the organization from inside and outside Iraq. This failure was coupled with apparent sectarian practices used by Shiite groups and death squads. All of these factors worked together to swell the ranks and strengthen support for Al-Zarqawi's network.

Despite some differences between Al-Zarqawi's approach and that of Al-Qaeda's leader Osama Bin Laden, yet the

---

[18] Abu Anas al-Shami, "*Yawmiyat Mujahid*" (Lit., Diaries of a Jihadi), available [in Arabic] at the Islamic al-Safinat network forum at www.al-saf.net

common interests, particularly targeting the United States, resulted in Al-Zarqawi pledging allegiance to Bin Laden on October 8th, 2004, and culminated with the announcement of forming "*Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn*" (Organization of Jihad's Base in Mesopotamia, or Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).

3. Merging with Al-Qaeda's Central Network: The Grounds of an Ambiguous Relationship

The discussions to merge Al-Zarqawi's new organization in Iraq to the central Al-Qaeda leadership were not immune to the main dispute between the two, which centers on the strategic priorities of the Jihadi Salafist ideology.[19]

---

[19] Jihadi Salafism embodies the ideological basis in common between Al-Zarqawi and Bin Laden. However, the key point of contention between the two consisted of the applications of Jihadi Salafist principles that are based on the policy of priorities and balances in dealing with the objective reality. Where Al-Zarqawi stressed the priority of fighting the "near enemy," locally; represented by the Arab and Muslim ruling regimes that he viewed as apostates and infidels, Bin Laden and his successor, Al-Zawahiri, on the other hand, were convinced of the strategy of fighting the "distant enemy," globally; represented by the Jews and "Crusades," led by the United States of America, which itself supports and buttresses the "near enemy."

And although Jihadi Salafism emerged locally, during the 1980s and 1990s (after the Cold War), some of its currents, such as Al-Qaeda, tended to lean towards globalizing their mission, particularly later in the era of globalization. Since 2011, as the Arab World experienced the era of revolutions, a new Al-Qaeda and Jihadi Salafist approach emerged; this time, however, challenging the West and the United States in indirect ways, through regional Jihadi groupings and networks that resettled in the Arab region. The new approach depended on the integration of both the global and the local dimensions, which came to constitute a new phenomenon that marked the third "birth" of Al-Qaeda and its wide Salafism ideological realm. The first of such axiomatic births was distinguished by fighting

In practice, and despite this essential difference, Al-Zarqawi ultimately forced Al-Qaeda's central command not only to recognize him, but also to submit to his strategy of focusing on Iraq. Al-Zarqawi had indeed emerged as an exceptional commander in the field. He was able to steal the limelight with his strict ideology and terrifying tactics, as well as through his extensive network of relations with other Jihadists from all over the world, which he interwove with meticulousness and with the help of key mentors of the movement such as Al-Maqdisi, Abu Qutada, in addition to his Sheikh Abu Abdullah Al-Muhajir. Al-Zarqawi's status was also further elevated by the death and capture of many of the leading field commanders of Al-Qaeda, the mother organization, during the extensive campaign led by the United States' "War on Terror," including Abu Hafs al-Masri, who was killed by an American missile attack, and the capture of Abu Zubaida, Ramzi ibn al-Shaibah and Khalid Shaikh Muhammad. As a result of this elevated status, hundreds of new volunteers from around the Arab and Muslim world flooded to enlist with Al-Zarqawi's organization.

In the meantime, the U.S. authorities released an important document that reveals the magnitude of the contention between Al-Zarqawi's organization and the central Al-Qaeda. Al-Zarqawi reportedly sent a letter to the leaders of

---

the near, local enemy. The second was to fight the distant, global enemy. The third "birth" worked on integrating the clash with both the near and the distant. For more on this discussion, see Hassan Abu Hanieh, *"Al-Qaeda wa Indimaj al-Ab'aad: Waliada Thalitha wa Nash'a Mustanafa,"* (Lit., Al-Qaeda and the Integration of Dimensions: A Third Birth and a Resumed Emergence), available [In Arabic], on the following link:

http://www.aljazeera.net/knowledgegate/opinions/2013/8/24/%D8%A7%D9%84
%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%A9-
%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AC-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AF-
%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A9-
%D8%AB%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D8%A9-
%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%A3%D8%A9-
%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A3%D9%86%D9%81%D8%A9

Al-Qaeda in Pakistan in January 2004, aimed to reach common ground between the two organizations and convergence of views and strategic visions of the conflict. The letter also included a request for assistance in launching an extensive war on all parties of the Iraqi political process that were working with the occupation, whether Sunni or Shiite, and to capitalize on, and exploit the "identity policies" to ignite a "sectarian war in Iraq."[20]

This document is indeed fundamental to understanding Al-Zarqawi's strategy and vision of the priority of fighting the "near enemy." In it, he undermines Al-Qaeda leadership's approach towards the "distant enemy," and stresses that there are two battles; the first being on an apparent covert level "against an hostile enemy, and a clear infidel" (that is, the United States as a distant enemy and a genuine infidel, being Al-Qaeda's first and prime enemy). The second battle is a fierce and difficult one, against a "cunning enemy dressed as

---

[20] The letter was first published in the New York Times, and then was republished by Al-Hayat newspaper on February 12, 2004. The authenticity of the letter, attributed to Al-Zarqawi, came into question, yet the content of the letter was found to be reproduced and repeated later in Al-Zarqawi's letters and speeches, such as the series of "*Din al-Rafidha*" (Lit., The Religion of the Rejecters), and "*Wa 'Aada Ahfad Ibn al-'Alqami*" (Lit., And the Grandsons of Ibn al-'Alqami Return). Furthermore, Al-Zarqawi's organization confirmed the authenticity of the letter, and published it on February 15, 2004 among Al-Zarqawi's letters under the title "*Risala min Abi Mus'ab al-Zarqawi ila al-Shaykh Osama bin Laden Hafithahu Allah*" (Lit., A Letter from Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi to Sheikh Osama bin Laden (May God Protect Him). See: *Archived Collection of Al-Zarqawi's Letters*, op. cit., p. 56. Also, Maysara al-Gharib confirmed the authenticity of the letter in his own letter entitled "Fighting the Shiites in Iraq: The Ruling and the Wisdom," op. cit., part I, Al-Furqan for Media Production. Abu Anas al-Shami, head of the Religious Committee, also confirmed the letter in a thesis entitled "*Al-Rad 'ala Shubuhat Hawla al-Jihad fi al-Iraq*" (Lit., The Response to Doubts about Jihad in Iraq), in which he says: "The letter reported in the news and the whole world spoke of, and the one that baffled everyone, is a true document in terms of being attributed to the leader and brother Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, May God protect him. However, it has been marred by some distortion and falsification."

a friend." This enemy, according to Al-Zarqawi, is one "which appears in agreement and calls for harmony, but harbors evil, spinning in the peaks, which is the legacy of the *Batini* (esoteric) factions that have passed in Islamic history, leaving in its face scars that the days could not erase." This second battle is against who Al-Zarqawi considers the near enemy, the "apostate infidels," whether Sunni or Shiite, for "it is this enemy represented by the *Rafidha* (the Shiite rejecters), inoculated by agents – among the Sunnis –, those are the real danger we face."[21]

According to Al-Zarqawi, "our fight with the Americans is a simple matter; the enemy is visible and its back is exposed, ignorant of the land and ignorant of the reality of the Mujahideen, because of the weakness of its intelligence information. And, we know with certainty that these Crusader forces will dissipate tomorrow or the day after."[22] As for the Shiites, Al-Zarqawi adds: "*Al-Rafidha* (the rejecters), the challenging obstacle, the lurking snake, cunning scorpion, the malicious and creeping enemy and drenching poison."[23] He considers their danger to be ongoing and their ambition extensive, and adds: "With the passing of days, their hopes grow greater to establish the state of "*Rafdh*" (rejection), which would span from Iran, passing through Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, and extend into the cardboard-ish Gulf kingdoms."[24]

---

[21] Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, "*Riasala min Abi Mus'ab al-Zarqawi ila al-Shaikh Osama bin Laden (Hafithahu Allah)*" (Lit., Letter from Abu Musab al-Zarqawi to Sheikh Osama bin Laden, May God Protect Him), [In Arabic], dated February 15, 2004. See, "*Majmou' Rasa'il al-Zarqawi*" (Lit., A Collection of Al-Zarqawi's letters), op. cit., pg. 59.

[22] Ibid., pg. 61.

[23] Ibid., pg. 59.

[24] Ibid., pg. 62.

Al-Zarqawi does not hesitate in asserting the correctness of his approach in prioritizing the "near enemy," represented by the Shiites first and foremost. In explaining his action plan, he says: "They – the *Rafidha* – declared an esoteric war on the people of Islam. They are the near and dangerous enemy of the Sunnis. Although the Americans are also a major enemy, but the *Rafidha* are a greater menace, and their harm is more brutal and damaging to the Ummah than that of the Americans, (towards whom you find near consensus on fighting them, since they are an aggressive and genuine enemy)… Our fight against the *Rafidha* is the path to mobilizing and empowering the mettle of the Ummah for battle."[25]

Shortly after founding his group in 2003, the process of combating the Shiites came to represent a crucial pillar in Al-Zarqawi's scheme and direction. He persisted on it, clearly and blatantly, in his negotiations with Al-Qaeda. The "sectarian" question began to gradually transform from the political strategic framework to the depth of his religious convictions. According to Al-Zarqawi, "The pace of operations increased, particularly in the Sunni triangle – if it may be called that – which compelled the Americans to strike a deal with the *Rafidha*, the dissipating evil. The deal was made whereby the *Rafidha* would get two thirds of the spoils of battle in return for standing with the Crusaders in the face of the Mujahideen."[26]

---

[25] Ibid., pg. 71.

[26] Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, "*Risala ila Bin Laden wa al-Thawahiri*," (Lit., A Letter to Bin Laden and Zawahiri), this text, and the following, are from the original letter published by the United States, whereas the text published by Al-Zarqawi's organization had some missing parts, explained by the organization as caused by lack of clarity. See the text of the letter [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.shiaweb.org/News/al-nawaseb/zarqawi_al-

Al-Zarqawi ultimately issues a general ruling that considers all Shiites to be unbelieving infidels; he states: "*Tashayyu'* (The Shiite sect) is a religion that does not meet with Islam, except as the Jews meet with the Christians under the banner of People of the Book."[27]

He concludes his letter to the Al-Qaeda leadership by stressing that he will proceed with his approach, which consists of prioritizing fighting the near enemy, targeting Shiites, combating the Iranian expansionist project in the region, and *Takfir* (declaring as unbelieving infidels) of Shiites. This approach and its tactics, according to Al-Zarqawi, are unnegotiable conditions to joining Al-Qaeda and representing it regionally. He concludes his letter by stating: "This is our vision, and we have explained it, and this is our path, and we have revealed it. If you agree with us about it, and accept it as a method and a path for us, and are convinced of the idea of fighting the apostate factions, then we are your prepared soldiers, working under your banner, and obeying your command, furthermore, we pledge our allegiance to you openly and in public."[28]

Al-Qaeda's response to Al-Zarqawi's strategy was clear, echoed in the words of Ayman al-Zawahiri, who responded in a letter asserting in it Al-Qaeda's political approach related to the priority of combating the "distant enemy" represented by the United States and its allies; the Jews and apostate regimes. He considers that the Muslim masses "… will only be mobilized and evoked by a foreign occupying enemy, especially if this enemy is Jewish, in the first degree, and American, in the second degree ... As for the sectarian and

---

[27] Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, "*Letter to Bin Laden and Zawahiri*," op. cit.

[28] Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, "Letter from Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi to Sheikh Osama bin Laden," op. cit., pp. 72-73.

partisan element [the Shiites], it is secondary in importance and much weaker in comparison to the external invasion."[29]

The dispute between Al-Zarqawi and Al-Qaeda's leadership began to deepen. It was a dispute between a sectarian position, governed by the fixation on identity, and a political position, demanded by interest. Al-Qaeda had interests, considering that the relationship between Al-Qaeda and Iran became more manifest after the American attack on Afghanistan following the September 11th, 2001 attacks. Indeed, Iran became a safe refuge for more than 500 Al-Qaeda members and their families, including Saif al-'Adl, Sa'ad bin Laden, Abu Hafs al-Mouritani, Sulaiman Abu al-Ghayth, and Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir. Nonetheless, the relationship between Al-Qaeda and Iran was always tense; mainly because of the different sectarian background, but the common interests, represented by animosity towards the United States and Israel, brought them together despite the ideological disharmony between the two.[30]

The notion of the doctrinal ruling against the Shiites continued to evolve inside Al-Zarqawi's network, and emerged as one of the main theoretical preoccupation that needed to be determined in order to proceed to the practical

---

[29] Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Risala ila Al-Zarqawi*" (Lit., Letter to Al-Zarqawi), dated July 16, 2005, available [in Arabic] at the following link:
http://www.muslm.org/vb/showthread.php?407450-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A9-
%D9%84%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%AE-
%D8%A3%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B8%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%B1%D9%8A-
%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D8%B1%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%8A-
%D8%B1%D8%AD%D9%85%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87

[30] Hassan Abu Hanieh, "*Al-Qaeda wa Iran: Intahat al-Mut'a wa al-Talaq Ba'in*" (Lit., Al-Qaeda and Iran: The Joy Marriage is Over and the Divorce is Irrevocable), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://arabi21.starware.net/Story/714567

strategy of dealing with the complex Iraqi situation. The question of the ruling was taken up by Abu Anas al-Shami, the first religious official of the "*Tawhid wa al-Jihad*" group, who dedicated a book entitled "*Al-Shi'a*" (The Shiites), that remained much in line with Al-Zarqawi's discourse. After reviewing the path of evolution of Shiism historically and up to the current era, Al-Shami expresses his conclusion by saying: "Would a sane person doubt, after all this, that the religion of the Shiites is a scheme aimed to demolish Islam?!"[31]

Also, a member of the organization's Religious Committee, Abu Hamza al-Baghdadi, issued a book even more pronounced in explaining the organization's approach to declaring the Shiites as unbelieving, and to prioritizing fighting the near enemy, represented by the Shiite and Sunni apostates. In it, he asserts the *Kufr* (disbelief) and *Ridda* (apostasy) of all Shiites; he states: "We believe that the *Rafidha* (rejecter Shiites) are a sect of disbelief and apostasy, because it combines the Greater and the Lesser *Shirk* (associating other deities with God), the doctrinal disbelief, and the practical disbelief, and the Greater and Lesser hypocrisy (*Nifaq*).[32]

Despite the obvious difference in the positions towards the priorities of the conflict, the sectarian card, and the Iranian question, yet the communications between *Al-Tawhid wa al-*

---

[31] Abu Anas Al-Shami, *"Al-Shi'a"* (Lit., The Shiites), Available [in Arabic] on the Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad site on the following link:
http://www.tawhed.ws/f?text=%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B9%D8%A9&in=title&author=&category=&submit=%D8%A8%D8%AF%D8%A1+%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%AD%D8%AB

[32] Abu Hamza al-Baghdadi, *"Limatha Nuqatil? Wa man Nuqatil?"* (Lit., Why do We Fight? And who do We Fight?), available [in Arabic] on the Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad website on the following link:
http://www.tawhed.ws/r1?i=4342&x=juzn3cys

Jihad, headed by Al-Zarqawi, and the central Al-Qaeda organization, headed by Bin Laden, were ongoing in an effort to bridge the gap between the two different visions regarding the nature of the struggle and the priorities of action. Each side held steadfast to its position and asserted its correctness. Yet, Al-Zarqawi's position outweighed its counterpart mainly because of Al-Qaeda's failure in establishing and solidifying its branch in the "Arabian Peninsula," after a series of armed operations in Saudi Arabia beginning in May 2003, aimed to destabilize American confidence in its ally, and force it to enter into Saudi Arabia. The operation backfired and had disastrous results on Al-Qaeda, especially because of the success of Saudi Arabian security forces in thwarting the organization, the lack of an adequate social incubator, and the death of the most prominent Saudi Al-Qaeda branch leaders such as Yusuf al-'Ayyiri, Saleh al-'Oufi, 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Migrin, and others. Members within the Saudi Al-Qaeda branch began to be further convinced of the success of Al-Zarqawi strategy in Iraq, which appeared to be more effective and competent. A number of "Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula" leaders began siding with Al-Zarqawi and his network, declaring their support via audio, visual, and written messages. Saleh al-'Oufi, before his death, issued several messages supporting Al-Zarqawi's operations in Iraq, and a number of members from the Saudi Al-Qaeda branch joined Al-Zarqawi's ranks, most notably, Abdullah al-Rashoud.[33]

---

[33] Sheikh Abdullah al-Rashoud is considered one of the prominent leaders of the Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula branch, and was among a list of 26 wanted individuals in Saudi Arabia. He joined Al-Zarqawi along with a number of other Al-Qaeda members, particularly after Saleh al-'Oufi's message welcoming the allegiance to Al-Zarqawi and asking members and supporters of the organization to support him with funds and volunteers. Al-Rashoud was killed in an American airstrike near the Saudi city of Al-Qa'im in May 2005. Al-Qaeda had issued an audio recording of Al-Zarqawi eulogizing Al-Rashoud.

The central Al-Qaeda organization began to appear at its weakest, particularly after losing its safe havens, and losing a large number of its leaders, such as Abu Hafs al-Masri (who was killed in a U.S. raid), and after the arrest of Abu Zubayda, Ramzi bin Al-Shaiba, Khalid Shaikh Muhammad, and others, in the campaign waged by the United States against Al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan within the context of the "War on Terror."

In culmination, and after eight months of communications, the central Al-Qaeda organization reluctantly submitted to Al-Zarqawi's conditions. Without compromising on his strategy or methods, Al-Zarqawi announced an oath of allegiance to Osama bin Laden on October 8, 2004. At this point, Al-Zarqawi's group's name was finally changed from *"Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad,"* to *"Tanthim Qa'edat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn"* (The Organization of Al-Qaeda's Jihad in Mesopotamia, (came to be commonly known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq, or AQI).

The statement of the allegiance and joining the mother Al-Qaeda organization reveals the latter's submission to the terms of Al-Zarqawi's branch. It brazenly stated: "There were communications between Shaikh Abu Mus'ab [Al-Zarqawi] (May God protect him) with the brothers in Al-Qaeda since eight months. Points of view were exchanged, and a fateful disconnect occurred, but God soon blessed us with the return of communications, whereby our noble brothers in "Al-Qaeda" came to understand the strategy of the *"Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad"* group in the land of Mesopotamia, the land of the Caliphs, and their hearts were open to our approach there."[34]

---

[34] The text of the statement of the allegiance of the *Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad* group to Al-Qaeda organization is available [in Arabic] on Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad website at the following link: http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=dwww5009

After the announcement of establishing the Iraq branch of Al-Qaeda, and with the escalation of confrontations with the United States and its allies, in particular the Shiite political forces that pervaded all aspects of Iraq's governance, the paths of sectarian "identity" positions of Al-Zarqawi's organization took a clear and sharp turning point, especially with the beginning of the second Battle of Fallujah. In 2005, Al-Zarqawi's discourse began to develop, substantially and distinctively, on the issue of sectarian identity. In a speech with a clear indication in its title[35] "*Wa 'Aada Ahfadu Ibn al-'Alqami*" (And the Grandsons of Ibn Al-'Alqami Return), Al-Zarqawi states: "What has befell the fortune of the Sunnis in Iraq, and what they continue to endure at the hands of those *Rafidha* [rejecter Shiites], the descendants of Ibn al-'Alqami, is more dreadful and appalling than what they suffered at the hands of the American enemy. I swear by God that the spiteful rejecter Shiites are more brutal against us than our Crusader enemies."[36]

In the context of escalating activities by Shiite militias, Al-Zarqawi announced the establishment of the "Omar Brigade" to confront the Shiite "Badr Brigade." He says: "We, in Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia, announce forming a military brigade under the title of the "Omar Brigade," inspired by Al-Farouq ibn al-Khattab [The second Caliph Omar ibn al-Khattab]..., We form this brigade to eradicate a

---

[35] Al-Zarqawi entitles his speech in a reference intended to be derogatory towards Shiites, describing them as the "Grandsons of Ibn Al-'Alqami." Mu'ayyid al-Din Ibn Al-'Alqami is a historic Shiite Abbasid minister who reportedly conspired to destroy the Sunni caliphate and establish a Shiite state, and allied with the Mongol Hulagu Khan to siege Baghdad in 1258 CE. [Translator's note]

[36] Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, "*Wa 'Aada Ahfad Ibn al-'Alqami*" (Lit., And the Grandsons of Ibn al-'Alqami Return), dated May 18, 2005, a series of lectures, the Archived Collection of Statements and Speeches of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, The Islamic Al-Buraq network, pg. 254.

harmful ulcer and uproot the symbols, leaders, and cadres of the "Treacherous Brigade" – the Badr Brigade – it suffices us to be engaged in fighting this treacherous brigade, in order to resolve ourselves to confronting the Crusaders and the rest of their apostate allies."[37]

The nature of the conflict in Iraq, and the priorities of AQI, began to become more manifest in 2006 with the escalation of the Shiite sectarian discourse, the control of Shiites over all aspects of the Iraqi state, and the growing influence of Iran. By then, Al-Zarqawi had come to the conviction that Shiites do not belong to Islam, and that they are unbelieving infidels. He says in a series of lectures entitled "*Hal Ataka Hadithu al-Rafidha*" (Has the Discourse of the Shiite Rejecters Reached You?): "The *Rafdh* [Shiite Rejection] is a religion that is completely different from the Islam brought by the Prophet, May God have peace upon him, and cannot meet with Islam in many of the fundamentals and the secondaries [religious doctrines]."[38]

At this stage, Al-Zarqawi began to direct his speeches to the Sunnis and worked to rally them to wage a war against the Shiites, with complete disregard any charges of sectarianism. In addressing the Sunnis, he states: "Prepare to challenge the poison of the *Rafidha* Shiite snakes, which used to bite you and poison you with the greatest of torment since the occupation of Iraq and until this day. Stop it with the claims of disregarding sectarianism and national unity, which is being used as a weapon to tame and discourage you, wanting

---

[37] Ibid., p. 309.

[38] Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, "*Hal Ataka Hadithu al-Rafidha*" (Lit., Has the Discourse of the Rafidha [The Shiite "Rejecters"] Reached You?), Lecture series, June 1st, 2006, from the Archived Collection of Statements and Speeches of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, The Islamic Al-Buraq network, part 1, pg. 514.

your surrender, and kissing you on the cheeks while you face the schemes and baseness of those who were first to ally and make peace with the occupier, and sought to destroy and loot the country's resources."[39]

Ultimately, Al-Zarqawi became resolute on the ruling against contemporary Shiites, he affirmed his doctrine – endorsed by the organization – that Shiites, in all their factions and schools of thought known today are infidels (contrary to the beliefs of the central Al-Qaeda organization). AQI's doctrine determines that "For us, the *Rafidha* is a sect of *Shirk* (associating other deities with God) and *Ridda* (apostasy)."[40] The commentator of an AQI manifesto explains the doctrine in detail of the historical disputes regarding the ruling against the Shiites, and asserts the disbelief of contemporary Shiites. He states: "Regarding what is narrated about the disagreement of imams on ruling on the *Kufr* of Shiites, it is a historical disagreement between a people who have nothing in common with *Rafidha* Shiites except the name and the claim to love the *Aal al-Bayt* [the family of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him]."[41]

The commentator proceeds in responding to Sunnis who disagree on the issue of disavowing Shiites as infidels, he says: "As for those who say that the differences between us and them is a matter of secondary [religious doctrines], this is

---

[39] Ibid., part 3, pg. 604.

[40] "*Hathihi 'Aqidatuna wa Manhajuna*" (Lit., This is Our Creed and Our Method), Al-Qaeda in Iraq Organization, the Religious Committee, available [in Arabic] on the Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad, on the following link:

http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=ygz0yz64

[41] Abu Mariah al-Qurashi, "*Nour al-Yaqin: Sharh 'Aqidat Tanthim al-Qaeda fi Bilad al-Rafidayn*" (Lit., The Light of Certainty: An Explanation of the Creed of Al-Qaeda in Iraq Organization), pg. 26, available [in Arabic] on the Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad, on the following link: http://up1430.com/central-guide/pencil/gimf/dar/old/Nor-ALyaqen/index.html

a grave error that indicates great ignorance. The differences are in the fundamentals, and a difference of *Kufr* (disbelief) and *Iman* (belief), and between Islam and *Shirk* (association of deities), except for the *Zaydiyya* [The Zaydi sect of Shiism], for there are more details about them as we have mentioned."[42]

It can be said that the AQI during the Al-Zarqawi era was the most active, most deadly, and most widespread, not only at the local Iraqi level, but at the regional and international levels as well. The activities of the organization, from 2003 and until the beginning of 2006, expanded noticeably and its operations reverberated widely and effectively, both regionally and internationally. This rise led to a complete transformation of the overall regional security climate, whereby AQI came to be viewed as more dangerous, more skilled, more sophisticated, and the most capable of influencing the security conditions in numerous places. Al-Zarqawi emerged as a field commander esteemed in the ranks of global Jihadism, and to many Jihadists, even surpassed in importance Al-Qaeda's founder, Osama bin Laden.[43]

Around mid-2005, with the growth of capabilities of the Iraqi branch of Al-Qaeda, its expansion, and the increase of its sphere of influence, it began to consider establishing a "Sunni emirate," and attracting armed Sunni groups there. In December 2005, AQI announced forming a "Mujahideen *Shura* [Consultative] Council," whereby Al-Zarqawi yielded

---

[42] Ibid., pg. 26.

[43] Ely Karmon, "*Al-Qa'ida and the War on Terror: After the War in Iraq*," Middle East Review of International Affairs, Vol. 10, No. 1 (March 2006). An Arabic translation by the Jerusalem Center for Political Studies is available on the following link:
http://www.alqudscenter.org/arabic/pages.php?local_type=128&local_details=2&id1=663&menu_id=10&cat_id=10

his leadership to Abdullah Rashid al-Baghdadi, ostensibly, and Al-Qaeda became a member of the Council, like all other members under the banner of the new Council. Initially, six groups joined the Council, then the number increased to eight, and a later staged reached twelve groups.[44]

In the meantime, Al-Zarqawi began to depend more and more on local Iraqis, and enlisted more armed insurgency Sunni groups. But Al-Qaeda in Iraq was scheming for much more than just uniting the Mujahideen; Al-Zarqawi was on the verge of announcing the establishment of a "Sunni emirate," and on July 5th, 2005, Abu Sa'eed al-Karkhi proposed to him declaring the Anbar Province (western Iraq) as an Islamic Emirate under occupation.[45]

Later, Al-Zarqawi appeared in a rare video recording that was leaked on April 25, 2006, which included a dialogue with some of his followers discussing the possibility of announcing

---

[44] They are: *Jaysh al-Ta'ifa al-Mansoura* (The Army of the Victorious Sect), *Jaysh Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaa'ah* (The Army of the People of the Sunnah and the Community), *Jama'at Jund al-Sahaba* (The Soldiers of the Companions [of the Prophet] Group), *Saraya al-Jihad al-Islami* (The Islamic Jihad Legions), *Saraya Fursan al-Tawhid* (The Knights of Oneness of God Legions), *Saraya Millat Ibrahim* (The People of Abraham Legions), *Kata'ib Kurdistan* (The Kurdistan Battalions), *Kata'ib al-Murabiteen* (The steadfast Battalions), *Kata'ib Ansar al-Tawhid* (The Supporters of Tawhid Battalions), *Kata'ib al-Tawhid wa al-Sunnah* (The Tawhid and the Sunnah Battalions), *Kata'ib al-Ahwal* (The Atrocious Battalions), *Kata'ib al-Ghurabaa'* (The Strangers Battalions), in addition to a number of battalions from *Jaysh al-Fatiheen* (The Conquests Army), and some factions of the Islamic Army, *Ansar al-Sunnah*, and some battalions of *Jaysh al-Mujahideen* (The Mujahideen Army), *Kata'ib Thawrat al-'Ishreen* (The 1920 Revolution Brigade), and some units from the *'Asa'ib al-Iraq al-Jihadiyyah* (The Iraqi Jihadi Squads).

[45] For more details on the plan to establish an Islamic Emirate in Al-Anbar, and to see the text of the proposed project, see: Walid al-Rawi, "*Dawlat al-'Iraq al-Islamiyah,*" (Lit., The Islamic State of Iraq), Amman, Jordan: Dar Aminah for Publishing and Distribution, 2012, pp. 134-146.

an Islamic emirate within three months.[46]   However, Al-Zarqawi was killed less than two months later, on June 7th, 2006, which prevented the announcement, but his successors held steadfast to the decision and soon declared the creation of "The Islamic State of Iraq" (ISI).

4. Proclaiming "The Islamic State of Iraq"

Al-Zarqawi left for his successors a coherent, strong, and influential organization, and their fixation on the Sunni identity-complex continued to take a more clear and rigid trajectory. Followers of Al-Zarqawi became more determined on establishing an Islamic state on the basis of the Sunni identity, and in a short period of time (on October 12, 2006), announced forming "*Hilf al-Mutayibeen*" (The Pact of the Perfumed Ones), a coalition of movements, organizations, and groups that fall under the framework of the "Mujahideen *Shura* Council," in addition to a number of Sunni tribal leaders.[47]   Less than three days later, the followers declared the establishment of "The Islamic State of Iraq," (ISI) on October 15, 2006, which spans, in theory, a number of Iraqi Sunni provinces, including Al-Anbar, Kirkuk, Nineveh, Diyala, Salahuddin, Babil, and Wasit. The organization

---

[46] See: Abu Musʿab Al-Zarqawi heralds the establishment of an Islamic Emirate in Iraq, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93oHYWxxi_Q
[47] See the announcement of *"Hilf al-Mutayibeen,"* (The Pact of the Perfumed Ones); in which a number of masked men, said to be tribal leaders and members of the Shura Council, appear to pledge to govern by Shariah and to support Jihad and the Mujahideen in Iraq, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60mgEeNc7Z8

imposed its control over wide areas in these provinces. The statement declaring the creation of ISI stated: "And we announce the establishment of this state, relying on the Sunnah of the Prophet, Peace be Upon Him, when he left Mecca to Medina and established in it the state of Islam… Today, we call on all the Jihadists, Iraqi scholars, tribal leaders, and all of the Sunni community to pledge allegiance to the Emir of believers, the honorable Sheikh Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, to obey and hear his command in ease and in hardship, and to work diligently to strengthen the foundations of this State."[48]

Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, whose real name is Hamid Dawoud al-Zawi, became the commander, Emir of the Believers, of the Islamic State of Iraq. He had been previously nominated to Osama bin Laden by Al-Zarqawi, and later by Abu Hamza al-Muhajir (who led the command of AQI after Al-Zarqawi, and became Minister of War with the announcement of the creation of ISI). A survey of the names announced in the formation of the first cabinet of the state

---

[48] The declaration of establishing the Islamic State of Iraq, announced by Muharib al-Jabouri, Spokesman of ISI and Minister of Media, was reflective of the changes happening on the Iraqi scene, particularly the marginalization of the Sunni component of Iraqi society. The statement describes the situation as follows: "The Kurds have sidelined themselves in the northern state, and the *Rawafidh* Shiites were given a federalism of the middle and southern parts, with the support of the Jews in the north and the Safavids in the south, protected by armed militias of dark thought, heart, and action who have charged against our Sunni people, viciously spoiled their blood and honor in the most gruesome images of killing, torture, and forced displacement, until the Sunnis became as orphans. In these conditions, it has become incumbent upon us the honorable and free Sunnis, the Mujahideen, scholars, and dignitaries, to present something to our brothers, children, and especially their honors, in light of this meager theatrical called (the state of Al-Maliki), who unfortunately some of the Sunni traitors have collaborated with, intentionally squandering the rights of their people. See the text [in Arabic] of the statement on the following link:
https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=536

reveals a clear dominance of the Iraqi component on all aspects of the state, and an absence of Arab and foreign Jihadists, with the exception of Abu Hamza al-Muhajir.[49]

By 2006, the security situation in Iraq had deteriorated with the escalation of insurgent attacks, prompting the United States to consider tough choices. General David Petraeus emerged as a savior, and introduced a new strategy of "counterinsurgency" that relies on a policy of a surge in the number of troops, deploying over 30,000 U.S. soldiers to troubled regions to help prevent further deterioration in the security conditions. By then, the number of U.S. troops topped 160,000, in conjunction with the support of Sunni movements and factions willing to fight ISI, a phenomenon that came to be dubbed as "*Al-Sahawat*" (The Awakenings).[50]

---

[49] The government of the Islamic State of Iraq consisted of a number of ministries, including: First Minister Sheikh Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Falahi, Minister of War Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, Minister of Religious Commissions Sheikh Abu Othman al-Tamimi, Minister of Public Relations Mr. Abu Bakr al-Jabouri, Minister of Public security Mr. Abu Abd al-Jabbar al-Janabi, Minister of Media Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Mashhadani, Minister of Martyr and Prisoner Affairs Mr. Abu Abd al-Qadir al-'Issawi, Minister of Oil Engineer Abu Ahmad al-Janabi, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Mr. Mustafa al-A'raji, Minister of Health Dr. Abu Abdullah al-Zaydi. See: The First Cabinet Formation of the Islamic State of Iraq, April 19, 2007, from the book of Collective Archives of Speeches of Leaders of the Islamic State of Iraq, 1st Ed., 2010.

[50] The term "*Sahwa*" (pl. *Sahawat,* Lit. awakening) refers to an armed Sunni reaction against the fighters of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, and operated under the supervision of U.S. and Iraqi forces. They were paramilitary forces, and were responsible for social and intelligence functions in times of peace, and security and military operations in times of war… Most of its leadership lacked experience in managing their troops, and were weak in training, operations, intelligence, military supplies and preparedness. The unregulated financial spending on the *Sahawat* witnessed remarkable corruption from its beginnings and until today… The formations of the *Sahawat* is divided in accordance to their first founders: First, sons of tribes "The Old *Sahwa* Awakening tribes; they were united in Al-Anbar Province under the command of Abd al-Sattar Al-Bourisha under the name of "*Majlis Sahawat al-Anbar*" (The Council of the Anbar Awakening). They were funded by the Americans, and were integrated into the state apparatus; they then

Although President George W. Bush had announced that the troops' "surge" strategy would begin on January 10th, 2007, with the deployment of 20,000 additional soldiers, however, the increase in the number of troops unofficially began in December 2006. The U.S. Army issued the "Field Guide to Counterinsurgency 3-24,"[51] in which Gen. Petraeus and others explained the details of the upcoming surge in troops. The strategy reflected a new understanding within the U.S. Administration that deploying large numbers of troops in the region will achieve victory; one way or another. [52]

This new strategy caused significant predicaments for the Islamic State of Iraq, which had to cope with the influx of U.S. troops, and confront the Iraqi government troops, which

---

turned to political work by forming "*Mu'tamar Sahawat al-Iraq*" (The Iraq Awakening Conference). Second, The sons of tribes of "The New *Sahwa* Tribes," consisting of various U.S.-funded groupings as contractors, most important of which were in Eastern Anbar, led by Wissam al-Hardan, in Western Fallujah, led by Muhammad al-Hayess, and in Western Ramadi, led by Na'im al-Ka'oud. This formation was expanded and included the entire "Baghdad beltway" area under the leadership of Thamer Al-Tamimi (Abu 'Azzam). The third formation was the *Sahawat* Awakenings of the Salafists, Brotherhood, and Ba'athist factions such as the Islamic Party, the Islamic Army, and the 1920 Revolution Brigade. For more details, see: Hisham al-Hashimi, *"Sahawat al-Fasa'il al-Sunniyya"* (The Awakenings of the Sunni Factions) [In Arabic], available at the following link: http://www.ynewsiq.com/?aa=news&id22=3155&iraq=%D5%CD%E6%C7%CA%25

[51] The American counterinsurgency targeted the "very high" level of social relations; it deeply tears apart the strong social relations between people (which are rarely ever re-woven), and destroys their ability to cooperate. It also tears apart the fabric of solidarity and co-existence, in other words, it tears apart the bonds that form a society. Conventional warfare seeks to control the land and destroy the army of the enemy, whereas counterinsurgency seeks to control the society. See: Oliver Belcher, "*The Best-Laid Schemes: Postcolonialism, Military Social Science, and the Making of US Counterinsurgency Doctrine, 1947-2009*," Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Antipode, Vol. 44, Issue 1, 2012, pp. 258-263.

[52] Steve Dobransky, "*Why the U.S. Failed in Iraq: Baghdad at the Crossroads,*" The Middle East Quarterly, Vol. 21, No. 1, Winter 2014. Available on the following link: http://www.meforum.org/3680/iraq-us-failure

were reinforced by Shiite militias and death squads. In the meantime, it also had to deal with the Sunni *Sahawat*, and simultaneously engage in battles with other armed Sunni factions that had refused to pledge allegiance and submit to ISI, such as the brigades of *Thawrat al-'Ishreen* (The 1920 Revolution Brigade) and *Al-Jaysh al-Islami* (The Islamic Army).

On the other hand, the organization was engaged in a subtle and undeclared battle with the central Al-Qaeda command related, first and foremost, to the announcement of establishing the "State," and justifying its violent behavior and its method of imposing its religious convictions. Al-Furqan Institute, AQI's media outlet, which later came under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Commissions in the new Islamic State of Iraq, published a book in which it justifies, from a religious jurisprudential perspective, its decision to announce the establishment of the state. The book, entitled "*'I'lam al-Anaam bi Milaad Dawlat al-Islam*" (Informing All of Creation of the Birth of the Islamic State), written by the Head of the Religious Commission Othman bin Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi, presents a number of religious proofs that necessitate the establishment of the State.

The author states: "The project of the Islamic State of Iraq comes as a practical application of an important obligation necessitated by Islamic *Shari'ah* (Law). According to the sons of Jihad [Mujahideen], the conditions have brought about wide space [for the establishment of the state], and the reality on the ground became appropriate and prepared for the subject and program of the State to take their place. The Mujahideen's launch in declaring their state was a compounded combination of religious facts derived from the

Qur'an and the Sunnah, and realistic and political perspectives that emerged from tough experience. [53]

The Declaration of State, however, became a new source of controversy and dispute between the central Al-Qaeda organization and the Iraqi branch. In response to those who were clinging to the name "Al-Qaeda in Iraq," the new state issued a statement on February 13th, 2007, stressing that "The Islamic State of Iraq has demonstrated, on more than one occasion, that the brothers in the former "Al-Qaeda in Iraq" organization have become part and parcel of the "Army of the

---

[53] Othman bin Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi, "*'I'lam al-Anaam bi Milaad Dawlat al-Islam*" (Lit., Informing All of Creation of the Birth of the Islamic State), Al-Furqan for Media Production, pg. 10, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.jihadica.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/ilam-al-anam.pdf

The book is based on the historical heritage of *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyah* (The Imperial Rule, Medieval Principles of Governance. It determines that *Ahl al-Hal wa al-'Aqd* (Those Who Loose and Bind [Historic Islamic Religious ruling authority] in the previous entities of the state, starting with Al-Qaeda, then the Mujahideen Shura Council, then the *Hilf al-Mutayibeen* [The Alliance of the Perfumed Ones], gave their oath of allegiance to Abu Omar al-Baghdadi as Emir of the State. Henceforth, all the previous entities were dismantled and integrated in the state apparatuses, including Al-Qaeda in Iraq, and its commander Al-Muhajir, who became Minister of Defense. Al-Muhajir announced in an audio recording, entitled "*Inna al-Hukm Illa Lillah*" (Governance is to Allah Only), that all formations have been dissolved and merged under the authority of the Islamic State of Iraq. Al-Muhajir pledges in the recording: "I say to the honorable Sheikh, and fierce hero, whose lineage is to the Hashemite, Qurashi, Hussaini clan, the Emir of Believers Abu Omar al-Baghdadi: "I pledge allegiance to you, I obey and hear your command in ease and in hardship, in that which is desired and that which is hated, and we put you before us, and we shall not dispute matters with their rightful owners, and to speak the truth wherever we may be, and we do not fear in God the blame of anyone. We announce dissolving all the formations we established including the Mujahideen Shura Council. And, on behalf of my brothers in the Council, we are under the authority of the Islamic State of Iraq. I put under your direct command and control twelve thousand fighters, they are the army of Al-Qaeda. All of them have pledged allegiance to die in the way of Allah." See also, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, an audio recording entitled ""*Inna al-Hukm Illa Lillah*" (Lit., Governance is to Allah Alone), available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=511.

State," which also includes dozens of brigades and thousands of fighters from the rest of the Jihadi factions.[54]

What is problematic in the new framework of the relationship is that the Al-Qaeda in Iraq organization has become "part" of the Islamic State of Iraq, causing a new conflictive issue, albeit undeclared, to arise between Al-Zarqawi's allegiance to Bin Laden and this new version. The commander of the new ISI, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi blatantly affirms this in an audio recording entitled "*Wa Qul Ja'a al-Haqqu wa Zahaqa al-Batil*" (And Tell that the Truth has Come and the Falsehood has been Destroyed), in which he states: "Al-Qaeda is but a category of the various categories of the Islamic State."[55] Al-Baghdadi reasserts this important transformation in the development of events in a later audio recording, entitled "*Fa Amma al-Zabad fa Yathhab Jafaa'*" (As for the Foam, it Vanishes, Cast off as Useless), in which he asserts: "The Emir of Al-Qaeda [Abu Hamza] Al-Muhajir announced, publicly, his allegiance and obedience to this poor servant [referring to himself], and the organization was officially dissolved in favor of the State of Islam; the Islamic State of Iraq."[56]

Hence; the issue of the declaration of the State became a focal point of contention within the Jihadi Salafist movement

---

[54] See the text of the statement, available [In Arabic] on the following link: http://the-islamic-state.blogspot.com/2013/12/blog-post_1305.html

[55] Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, "*Wa Qul Ja'a al-Haqqu wa Zahaqa al-Batil*" (Lit., And Tell that the Truth has Come and the Falsehood has been Destroyed), a transcribed audio file, dated December 22, 2006, available [In Arabic] at the following link:
 https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=493

[56] Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, "*Fa Amma al-Zabad fa Yathhab Jafaa'*" (Lit., As for the Foam, it Vanishes, Cast off as Useless), a transcribed audio file, dated December 4, 2007, available [In Arabic] on the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=479

in general, and between ISI and the central Al-Qaeda organization in particular. This contention will come to instigate a wider dispute, years later, between Al-Zawahiri and the Iraqi branch, dating back to this point which remained subdued and undeclared, despite causing bitter dispute between the two parties, but nonetheless did not receive much media attention at that time until it manifested more clearly years later. An important letter sent from the Grand Judge of the Islamic State, Abu Sulaiman al-'Otaibi, to the central Al-Qaeda command, reflects clearly this dispute. In it, he objects to the declaration of establishing the state, and stresses that the declaration has resulted in the decline of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. [57] Unsurprisingly, the letter prompted ISI to sack Al-'Otaibi him from his position.

Although information (that has recently emerged) confirms that the central Al-Qaeda leadership, headed by Bin Laden, was displeased with the declaration of the State and of the path that the Iraqi branch of taking; this discontent nonetheless did not amount to a complete rupture and confrontation between the two parties. Relations remained intact, despite a level of apathy and lack of coordination. In December 2006, Attiyatullah al-Libi (Jamal Ibrahim al-Misrati), Al-Qaeda's third in command, published a critical essay of the "Islamic State," focused on two issues that constituted the focal point of contention. The first issue expressed reservation on the naming of the "State," suggesting instead calling it an "Emirate." The second issue called for avoiding bestowing the description of "*Amir al-*

---

[57] The judge of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, who became a Grand Judge of the Islamic State, Abu Sulaiman al-'Otaibi (of Saudi Arabian origin) was sacked from his position after he sent the letter to the central Al-Qaeda command. He was replaced by Abu Ishaq al-Jabouri, an Iraqi judge. See the text of the letter [in Arabic], on the following link: http://justpaste.it/dolq

Mu'mineen" (Emir or Commander of the Believers) on the new leadership, and just using the title of "Emir" instead. The latter point aimed to remove any confusion or illusion that the commander is the Grand Imam, to whom obedience is obligatory to all Muslims, especially if the lineage of Quraysh [the Prophet's clan] is added to the equation.[58]

Although both parties attempted to overcome the disputes between them, such disputes nonetheless came to constitute a significant point of transformation in the path of Al-Qaeda's Iraqi branch. With the establishment the Islamic State of Iraq, the organization began to exhibit more autonomy from the central Al-Qaeda command, considering that the balances of power inside the Iraqi branch shifted and became clearly dominated by Iraqis amid a decline in influence and control of Arab and foreign members.

The declaration of ISI resulted in the organization's attempt to impose control and hegemony over the Sunni areas and bring them under its rule. However, these strategies backfired and resulted in the rebellion and defiance of its Sunni social incubator, aided by the successful results of U.S. General Petraeus' strategy. A marked shift in the position of

---

[58] It is noteworthy in this context that the statement announcing the establishment of the State did not indicate that Abu Omar al-Baghdadi is of Quraysh lineage, but the Iraqi branch rectified that a few weeks later (on November 10, 2006) in the speech of the allegiance of Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, commander of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, to Abu Omar al-Baghdadi. Al-Muhajir described Al-Baghdadi as "that Qurayshi Hashemi, grandson of Al-Hussein, Emir of the Believers Abu Omar al-Baghdadi." It was the first time that Al-Baghdadi's lineage was referenced. The book, "'*Ilam al-Anam*" (Informing All of Creation), did not mention the lineage of the new leader, considering that the book is based on the jurisprudential principles of "*Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyah*" (Imperial Rule) which drops the condition of having a Qurayshi lineage in the Emirate of Conquest. See, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, an audio recording entitled ""*Inna al-Hukm Illa Lillah*" (Lit., Governance is to Allah Alone), op. cit.

Sunni tribes and insurgency factions emerged, represented by Sunni Tribal Support Councils, *Sahawat* forces, and a general shift in the Sunni community's position from supporting armed Jihadists to cooperating with U.S. forces. The United States, in this context, diligently armed and funded the *Sahawat* forces, which numbered over 100,000 armed members.[59]

Despite the lethal effects of the U.S.' new strategy against ISI, this strategy nonetheless did not lead to empowering Sunni participation in the administration of the Iraqi government. On the contrary, the years between 2008 and 2014 witnessed a steady growth in Shiite influence and control over all Iraqi state apparatuses. Furthermore, efforts to integrate the *Sahawat* into the government's security and military forces failed, effectively adding to the fuel of Sunni feelings of marginalization and exclusion. *Sahawat* leaders, on their part, repeatedly warned of the possibility of a rapid deterioration in security conditions and a return to the 2006-2007 conditions if the process of integrating *Sahawat* forces into Iraqi military and security forces doesn't go through, or if the *Sahawat* arms licenses are withdrawn.[60]

During this phase, the organization (now under the banner of the Islamic State of Iraq), entered a phase of retreat and decline, yet did not completely dissipate. The flames of sectarianism continued to ignite in various forms, and the Sunnis' feelings of marginalization and exclusion continued to increase amid rising targeting operations and Shiite-led

---

[59] See: Hisham al-Hashimi, "*Sahawat al-Fasa'il al-Sunniya*" (Lit., The Awakenings of the Sunni Factions), op. cit.

[60] Omar Ashour, "*Al-Qaeda in Iraq: Eliminating Leaders Will Not Necessarily Cut Lifelines*," The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 30, 2010, available on the following link: http://carnegieendowment.org/2010/06/30/al-qaeda-in-iraq-eliminating-leaders-will-not-necessarily-cut-lifelines/gboy

death squads, and as Iraqi government prisons became overcrowded with Sunni detainees.[61]

By 2009, ISI witnessed significant decline, and suffered from a state of isolation, weakness, and degeneration. It began to lose the ideological appeal necessary to mobilize, recruit, and reinforce its ranks, and lacked human and financial resources needed to survive; essentially depriving it of the strategic territorial depth necessary to enable it to endure the war of attrition against it.

However, the U.S. assessment was deceptive; it was used for political purposes to pave the way for withdrawal of troops and for an exit strategy with minimal losses. Until the beginning of 2009, the "Security of Baghdad" plan helped in keeping American soldiers away from coming face to face with Jihadist groups, relying instead on Iraqi government forces and affiliated militias. Accordingly, the human death toll among U.S. troops dropped significantly, especially as they remained confined to their strongholds and bases. The death toll, however, increased significantly among the *Sahawat* and the government security forces that engaged directly with Jihadist groups as proxies to the Americans.[62]

---

[61] Reinforcing this conclusion is an academic study that noted that just prior to the surge, "there was a massive ethnic cleansing that took place within Iraq, and so by the time the surge began, noted one researcher, "many of the targets of conflict had either been killed or fled the country," and that, "violence has declined in Baghdad because of inter-communal violence that reached a climax as the surge was beginning." See: Andrew Gavin Marshall, "*Empire Under Obama, Part 4: Counterinsurgency, Death Squads, and the Population as a Target*," The Hampton Institute, October 31st, 2013, available on the following link:
http://www.hamptoninstitution.org/empireunderobamapartfour.html#.VPmvfPnF-So

[62] A study conducted by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point Academy concluded that: "Al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI) is a shadow of its former self... Al-Qa`ida in Iraq squandered a tremendous opportunity to build a safe-haven in Iraq, but the organization is unlikely to be completely destroyed. Political tension

It is true that the new "infiltration" (decline of military operations, Jihadists' retreat, and Sunni eagerness to participate in the political process during that period) affected the Sunni social incubator and led to a significant increase in *Sahawat*, the new strategy however did not effectively debilitate ISI as it did to other insurgency groups, and ISI fighters remained the most effective on the battlefield.

Nonetheless, ISI realized that the new developments impose upon it the need to reprioritize and recalibrate the compass of the conflict, and to restructure the patterns of its operations. It turned towards a strategy of security action, focused on fighting the *Sahawat* leaderships, retreating from public display, and temporarily abandoning the dream of territorial expansion. Instead, it focused more on its political discourse, aimed at exposing the failure of the Iraqi political process in achieving the demands of the Sunnis, and denouncing the Shiite dominance in controlling all aspects of the Iraqi government, rhetoric that was expressed in an audio recording of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi entitled "*Hassad al-Khair*" (The Good Harvest).[63]

---

between Sunni and Shi'a, Arab and Kurd, will continue and is likely to create social space for radicals like al-Qa`ida. AQI will likely remain capable of intermittent terrorist attacks and could strengthen in the future if Iraq's tribal Sunnis remain politically marginalized." See: Brian Fishman, "*Dysfunction and Decline: Lessons Learned from Inside Al-Qa'ida in Iraq*," Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, March 16, 2009, p. 1, available on the following link: https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/dysfunction-and-decline-lessons-learned-from-inside-al-qaida-in-iraq

[63] See: Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, audio recording entitled *"Hassad al-Khair"* (Lit., The Good Harvest), dated March 11, 2009, available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=1245.

In it, Al-Baghdadi addresses the newly elected U.S. President Barack Obama, saying: "Oh you leader of the Crusader state and ally of the Jews, our wounds are still bleeding, for the butcher of the children of the Sunnis, Baqer Solagh, remains at the heart of this government, headed by the criminal leader of the *Da'wa* party, who is a *Rafidha* (rejecter) Magian who hates religion, accompanied by the Badr

Consequently, the organization abandoned its land-based control, and returned to the strategy of Al-Zarqawi, which focused on launching deadly suicide attacks using car bombs and suicide bombers. Although the attacks did not occur in the same magnitude as during the first years of the occupation, they, nonetheless, constituted a grave danger to the Iraqi government, especially because they targeted government institutions and buildings. As part of the new plan "*Hassad al-Khair*" (The Good Harvest), ISI entitled its new attack campaign "*Ghazwat al-Aseer*,"[64] which first

---

Brigade, in all its criminal institutions and bodies, in addition to the Kurdish collaborators and the butchers of the Kurdish intelligence. These are the ones that you want to strengthen their state and solidify their pillars, for them the local elections in Baghdad were rigged – despite the fact that we consider this process essentially unbelieving [*Kufr*] – whereby the *Rafidha* [Shiites] won nearly 80 percent of the seats of the Local Council, and they did not want for the Sunnis to be more than doormen and cleaners after the Magian *Rafidha* [the Shiites]. This will not be so, with God's help."

Al-Baghdadi stresses the approach of his organization. He states: "God, who commanded us to fight the occupying infidel, it is He who commanded us to fight those who collaborate with the occupiers, and it is He who instigated us to fight our unbelieving [*Kafir*] "near enemy" more than fighting our "distant enemy." Al-Baghdadi concludes with an announcement of the beginning a new plan, saying: "And finally, the *"Khittat al-Karama"* (The Plan of Dignity), with the help of God, achieved its objectives, which centered on stopping the vicious onslaught on Jihad and Jihadists, militarily, socially, economically, and in the media. The victories of this plan were crowned with the announcement of the lions of Washington of a timeline for troop withdrawal, and their implicit acknowledgement of defeat, and changing the method of their operations in the land of Mesopotamia [Iraq]. Accordingly, we announce the end of the Plan of Dignity and launching a new plan, entitled *"Hassad al-Khair"* (The Good Harvest) of which objectives and themes were devised carefully to suit the conditions and circumstances of the current and the coming phases.

[64] The Islamic State of Iraq issued a series of 5 videos, produced by its Al-Furqan media outlet. The videos focus on American practices that enabled Iranian influence over Iraq, and sectarian policies that empowered the Shiites to control the political process and marginalize the Sunnis. The videos also document major military operations. See: "*Ghazwat al-Aseer 1*" (The Battle of the Captive 1), on the following link: https://archive.org/details/Aseer_0_0_1

targeted the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finance in August 2009, followed by two waves of attacks in October and December of the same year.

Over time, the Islamic State of Iraq slowly began to recover, and began to re-impose its control and influence while simultaneously working to confront the attempts eradicate and eliminate it. In September 2009, it announced the formation of the State's second ministerial cabinet, under the command of the Emir of Believers Abu Omar al-Baghdadi.[65]

And "*Ghazwat al-Aseer 2*" (The Battle of the Captive 2), on the following link: https://archive.org/details/gaseer-2

And "*Ghazwat al-Aseer 3*" (The Battle of the Captive 3), on the following link: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xepk29_%D8%A5%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8 %A7%D8%B1-%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B9- %D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9- %D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85- %D8%BA%D8%B2%D9%88%D8%A9- %D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B1_news

And "*Ghazwat al-Aseer 4*" (The Battle of the Captive 4), on the following link: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xepk2w_%D8%A5%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8 %A7%D8%B1-%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B9- %D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9- %D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85- %D8%BA%D8%B2%D9%88%D8%A9- %D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B1_news

And "*Ghazwat al-Aseer 5*" (The Battle of the Captive 5), on the following link: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xepk32_%D8%A5%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8 %A7%D8%B1-%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B9- %D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9- %D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85- %D8%BA%D8%B2%D9%88%D8%A9- %D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B1_news

[65] The second cabinet formation of the Islamic State of Iraq was announced in September 2009, and it consisted of: First Minister and Minister of War Abu Hamza al-Muhajir (Abd al-Mun'im al-Badawi), Minister of Religious Commissions Abd al-Wahhab al-Mashhadani, Minister of Public Relations Muhammad al-Dulaimi, Minister of Public security Abd al-Razzaq al-Shammari, Minister of Media Ahmad al-Taa'i, Minister of Martyr and Prisoner Affairs

On April 19th, 2010, ISI announced that Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, and his Minister of War, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, were killed. Although the organization had lost influence in the majority of the areas it previously controlled, it nonetheless began to recover and was able to maintain the cohesion of its central structure. In the successive era of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the organization entered into a highly secretive and apprehensive security and military organized framework, where its combat strategy began to adopt more ruthless tactics against its near social surroundings, particularly with the lessons it had learned from the experiences of the Counterinsurgency strategy and the *Sahawat*.

With the new leadership, the decision-making center of the organization came to be dominated by a group of militants with a more solid religious commitment to Jihadi Salafism, and more resilient and cunning on the strategic level. ISI quickly took to replacing its top commanders, declaring in a statement by the Mujahideen Shura Council on May 16th, 2010 that "Two are gone, and three have come… After the incident in which God willed for the two honorable Sheikhs, the Emir of the Believers Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and his First Minister, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, were killed.. The Islamic State's Shura Council immediately convened to determine the issue of leadership of the State." The Statement added that the Council remained convened throughout the period that followed the death of its two leaders, and that "A consensus was reached to pledge allegiance to the Mujahid Sheikh Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi al-Hussaini al-Qurashi as Emir of the

---

Hassan al-Jabouri, Minister of Oil Osama al-Lahibi, Minister of Health Abdullah al-Qaisi, and Minister of Finance, Yunis al-Hamadani. The announcement is available [in Arabic] at the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=552

Believers of the Islamic State of Iraq, and the appointment of Sheikh Abu Abdullah Al-Hussaini Al-Qurashi as First Minister and Deputy to the Emir." The statement also announced appointing Al-Nassir li-Din Allah Abu Sulaiman as Minister of War, succeeding Al-Muhajir.

5. Priorities of the Struggle: The Mission of Defending "Sunni Identity"

The issue of declaring the Islamic State of Iraq was not the only focal point of contention between the central Al-Qaeda leadership and the organization in Iraq. In fact, dating back to Al-Zarqawi's rhetoric, coupled with his brutal operations and strategy regarding the Sunni situation in Iraq, as mentioned before, constituted the main instigator of the dispute and difference between the two organizations, and indeed became the central focus of the negotiations between the two before the Iraqi group joined the central Al-Qaeda organization.

Although various statements reflect that Al-Zarqawi imposed upon the central Al-Qaeda leadership acceptance of the specificity of the Iraqi situation, which was deeply immersed in sectarianism, and to overcome the differences of priorities between the two parties, it remains that Al-Qaeda's acceptance was made out of necessity rather than conviction. The dispute between the two continued, even after the merge, especially with Al-Zarqawi's increasing fixation on the sectarian war and excessive indulgence in it, until it became the most important ideological pillar to his organization. He continued to develop and embolden his anti-Shiite position

until he reached the point of disavowing all Shiites as unbelieving infidels. This position was in contrast to the positions of the mother Al-Qaeda organization and the religious leaders of Jihadi Salafism, who are careful against adopting Al-Zarqawi's overall *Takfiri* attitude towards Shiites, collectively.

It is noteworthy to mention that Al-Zarqawi's position towards the Shiites and his adoption of the principle of defending Sunni identity interacted, principally, with the dynamism of transformations witnessed in Iraq following the American occupation, and with the logic of the political process that was dominated by Shiite political forces amid growing sense of marginalization and exclusion among the Sunni component of Iraqi society. Al-Zarqawi's organization became a key factor in ingraining and deepening the sectarian Shiite-Sunni divide and in evoking religious rhetoric into the ongoing conflict. The organization was both effective and affected by the atmosphere and temperament that post-occupation Iraq exhibited. This role was reflected in the organization's ingraining and infusing of the rhetoric of the Sunni cause, so to speak, into its doctrine, literature, speeches, and operations, and even into its strategic vision that later extended to include the Sunnis in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, particularly after the recent developments in the era of Arab democratic revolutions.

Because the difference between Al-Zarqawi and the central Al-Qaeda organization regarding Shiites reflected on the perspective of each towards the priorities of the struggle and on their ideological makeup (witnessed more manifestly in recent years), it is important to discuss the development of this aspect in the perspectives of Al-Zarqawi and his successors, especially because they reveal a fundamental

disagreement between the two parties that is still ongoing today and continues to play a role in the dynamics between the two organizations.

An important point in this issue is that Al-Zarqawi's strategy, in the beginning, was not of a clear and candid sectarian nature. His early objectives appeared to be clearly political in nature, encompassing targeting the United States as an occupying power, and all its allies (of all religious, sectarian, and ethnic components).[66] Al-Zarqawi's strategy, however, began to take a more sectarian dimension amid Shiite dominance over the Iraqi government and with the integration of Shiite militias into the state apparatus.

In the meantime, Al-Zarqawi's objectives and tactics began to gradually turn from the political sphere to the sectarian dimension. On August 19th, 2003, he commissioned the bombing of the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad, killing 22 people, including the U.N. representative in Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello. The United States promptly announced a five million dollar reward for information that would lead to Al-Zarqawi's capture.

Despite that, Al-Zarqawi's mixed political-identity orientations emerged early, without particularly reaching a critical ideological and political stage. On August 29th, 2003, the organization carried out a car bombing that targeted the Mosque of Imam Ali in the Shiite holy city of Al-Najaf, killing the head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic

---

[66] A statement by the organization (then named Al-Qaeda in Iraq), led by Al-Zarqawi, issued on September 20, 2005, and distributed to a number of Baghdad mosques, excluded the Sadr movement, Al-Khalisi movement, and the movement of the religious authority of Ahmad al-Hasani al-Baghdadi from being targeted by the organization by virtue of their anti-American positions and resistance against the occupation and against the government of then-Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, which was allied with the U.S. occupation.

Revolution in Iraq, Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, and 83 others. Al-Zarqawi claimed responsibility for the operation in a speech entitled "*Ummati al-Ghaliyah*" (My Precious Ummah).[67]

On December 27th, 2003, the city of Karbala was struck by a series of car bombings that killed 19, including 7 Coalition soldiers, and left more than 200 wounded. On March 2nd, 2004, another wave of simultaneous suicide attacks targeting Shiites in a mosque in Karbala on the day of Ashura killed 170, and wounded over 550.

Following other attacks in Al-Kadhimiya, on February 2nd, 2004, the U.S. authorities in Iraq announced doubling the reward for information leading to the capture of Al-Zarqawi, now reaching 10 million dollars.

Among other attacks commission by Al-Zarqawi, on May 7th, 2004, the President of the Interim Governing Council, Abd al-Zahraa' Othman Muhammad (known as 'Izzuddin Salim) a Shiite, was killed in a car bomb attack in Baghdad.[68]

The gradual changes in Al-Zarqawi's position towards Shiites was noted by one his close confidants. Abu Maysara Al-Gharib stresses that Al-Zarqawi's position regarding targeting Shiites, particularly prior to 2005, were not necessarily influenced purely by sectarian identity factors. According to Al-Gharib, Al-Zarqawi resolved his choices regarding targeting Shiites, in general, and modifying the priorities of the conflict to make Shiites a key component of

---

[67] See Al-Zarqawi's speech entitled "*Ummati al-Ghaliyah*" (Lit., My Precious Ummah), the Collection of Al-Zarqawi's letters, op. cit., in it, Al-Zarqawi acknowledges the responsibility of his network for the assassination of Al-Hakim.

[68] For more details on the operations carried out by Al-Zarqawi, See: Jean Charles Brisard (collaboration with Damien Martinez), "*Zarqawi: The New Face of Al-Qaeda*", Other Press, 1st ed., 2005.

the conflict, along with the Americans, and his reliance on the writings of Abu Abdullah Al-Muhajir, came after the first Battle of Fallujah, in April 2004, and before the second Fallujah Battle in November of the same year. Al-Gharib adds: "In the period that followed the first epic battle of the sons of Islam in the Fallujah of honor, the clash with the *Rawafidh* [Shiite rejecters] grandsons of Ibn al-'Alqami had not yet began."[69]

The integration of the sectarian conflict into the heart of the ideological and political visions of the organization became clearly evident in 2006,[70] when the scenario developed towards an all-out civil war between Sunnis and Shiites. Al-Zarqawi, then, announced that the scope of targets includes American forces and forces allied with it, and all who cooperate with the United States such as the Iraqi government, the Governing Council, the army, police, and Shiites, especially those who are affiliated with the occupation forces, in accordance with the jurisprudential principle of "*Al-Walaa' wa al-Baraa'*" (Loyalty towards Muslims and Disavowal towards Unbelievers). Al-Zarqawi declared: "there is no difference between a foreign enemy; that is an original *Kafir* [infidel], or an internal enemy; as an apostate infidel. There is no difference between an American and Iraqi, whether a Kurd or an Arab, Sunni or Shiite.[71]

---

[69] Maysara al-Gharib, "*Muqatalat al-Shi'a fi al-'Iraq: al-Hukm wa al-Hikma,*" (Lit., Fighting the Shiites in Iraq: the [Religious] Ruling and the Wisdom Behind It), Al-Furqan for Media Productions, episode 4.

[70] See "*The Next Iraqi War? Sectarianism and Civil Conflict,*" The International Crisis Group, Middle East Report No. 52, February 27, 2006, available on the following link: http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq/052-the-next-iraqi-war-sectarianism-and-civil-conflict.aspx

[71] See: Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, "*Ayanqus al-Deen wa Ana Hay?*" (Lit., Does the Religion Lack While I am Alive?), found on the "Minbar al-Jihad wa al-

With the consolidation of these perspectives in the positions of Al-Zarqawi's organization, the policies of "identity" began to evolve. The sectarian complex (and all the subsequent related matters such as the disavowal (*Takfir*) of Shiites, and targeting them in killings, kidnappings, and suicide bombings) emerged to become one of the most problematic issues in the biography of Al-Zarqawi. At the time that the global Jihadist current was focusing on the political aspect of confronting the United States and its allies within the context of globalization, Al-Zarqawi, on the other hand, diverted far away from this prevailing approach.

Despite this difference, the seeds of sectarianism and *Takfir* of Shiites were nonetheless latent in the thought and discourse of Salafism in general, and Jihadi Salafism in particular.[72] However, what Al-Zarqawi accomplished, in practice, is to develop upon what he had learned from his two close mentors, particularly Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi,[73] and

---

Tawhid" website, available [In Arabic] on the following site: http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=g4e8hfmy , and "*Ibn Ahl al-Muru'at*" (Lit., The Son of the People of Virility), found on the "Minbar al-Jihad wa al-Tawhid" website, available [in Arabic] at http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=58sjkxbg. Both documents are from the collection of Al-Zarqawi's letters, published by Al-Qaeda in Iraq organization.

[72] For more details, see Guido Steinberg, "*Jihadi-Salafism and the Shi'is: Remark about the Intellectual Roots of Anti-Shi'ism,*" in Roel Meijer, (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, London, Hurst, 2009, pp. 107-125. [in English]

[73] 'Issam Bin Mohammad Taher al-Barqawi's alias (or nom de guerre) is Abu Muhammad, and known as al-Maqdisi, with his lineage going back to 'Otaiba. He was born in the outskirts of Nablus in Palestine in 1959. His family left to Kuwait when he was three or four years old. In Kuwait, he finished his high school studies and then moved on to the University of Mosul in Northern Iraq to study sciences. He had ties with various Islamist movements and groups and, in particular, the "Srouriya Salafists," who follow the teachings and traditions of Sheikh Mohammad Srour, the "Juhaiman" group and a number of Qutbian Sheikhs (followers of Sayyid Qutb). After university, he traveled between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia where he became learned in "Wahhabi Salafism" and where he

Abu Qutada al-Filastini,[74] particularly in terms of the fundamental bases of Jihadi Salafism related to the issues of

---

studied the traditions of the Najdian (of the area of Najd in central Saudi Arabia) imams of the "*da'wa.*"

His Jihadi Salafist tendencies began to appear during his numerous travels to Pakistan and Afghanistan. During this period, he wrote his first and most famous book, "*Millat Ibrahim*" (Abraham's Creed). In 1992 and after the Second Gulf War, he and his family settled in Jordan, where he began to actively call and recruit others to Jihadi Salafism. His position and stances were clearly articulated in another book he wrote during that time entitled, "*Al-Dimuqratiya Din*" (Lit., Democracy is a Religion). In this book, al-Maqdisi declares and disavows democracy as *kufr*. Simultaneously, he entered into an open, public debate with the followers of the "Traditional Salafist" school of thought and actively worked to spread his Jihadi Salafist word throughout Jordan.

He was arrested, along with Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, in 1993 for being affiliated with the "*Bay'at al-Imam*" (Pledging Allegiance to the Imam) group. Like al-Zarqawi, Al-Maqdisi was sentenced to 15 years but released in 1999 by a royal pardon. However, he was arrested several times after his release on charges of being affiliated to various movements, and only recently was released from his last arrest.

His writings are a reference for Jihadi Salafism not only in Jordan but all over the world; his essays, letters and "*fatwas*" (opinions of a religious scholar) are numerous and include: "*Millat Ibrahim*" (Abraham's Creed), "*Al-Kawashif al-Jaliya fi Kufr al-Dawla al-Sa'udia* (Lit., Clear Evidence of the Blasphemy of the Saudi State)", amongst many others, and has a website called *Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*.

[74] Abu Qutada al-Filastini's real name is Omar Mahmoud Othman Abu Omar. He was born in 1961 and is a Jordanian of Palestinian descent. He originally comes from the village of Dair al-Shaikh, in the outskirts of Jerusalem. He studied at the *Sharia* (Islamic Law) College at the University of Jordan, and received a bachelor's degree in Islamic Law in 1984. He began his career in the *da'wa* with the "*Jama'at al-Da'wa wa al-Tabligh*" before he moved to the ranks of the Jihadi Salafists. He worked for four years as a religious guide (preacher) in the Jordanian army and worked to establish a reformist Salafist group, which was known as "*Harakat Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*" (The Movement of the Followers of the Way of the Prophet"). In the early 1990s, after the Second Gulf War, he left to Malaysia and continued on to Pakistan where his affiliation to the Jihadi Salafist movement developed. In 1994, he settled in Great Britain as a political refugee. In London, he emerged as a leading thinker in the Jihadi Salafist movement, and began to issue the "al-Ansar" publication, which particularly supports the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria. He also contributed to the "al-Fajr" publication, which supports the Fighting Muslims Group in Libya. Thereafter, he published another

Al-Walaa' wa al-Baraa' (Loyalty and Disavowal), and the priority of fighting the "near enemy."[75] Al-Zarqawi, who

___

magazine entitled "al-Manhaj," which specializes in spreading the traditions and word of Global Jihadi Salafism.

In 1998, in Jordan, he was charged with being affiliated to an organization known as "*Al-Islah wa al-Tahaddi*" (the "Reform and Challenge" group) and was sentenced to 15 years in absentia. He, along with al-Maqdisi, was also charged in connection with al-Qaeda in Jordan. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, he was arrested under a new law enacted against terrorism, but was released due to a lack of evidence linking him to the attacks. He is known worldwide as the spiritual leader of al-Qaeda in Europe and in North Africa.

He was arrested again in 2005, with Jordan demanding his extradition from Great Britain; however, Abu Qutada won a court battle against the extradition and the British authorities were obliged to release him recently (June 16, 2008), but under strict conditions restricting his activities. Britain eventually extradited Abu Qutada to Jordan in July 2013. Abu Qutada has written numerous publications theorizing on Jihadi Salafism, amongst them, "*Al-Jihad wa al-Ijtihad: Ta'amulat fi al-Manhaj*" (Jihad and Ijtihad: Contemplations on the Prospectus), "*Ma'alim al-Ta'ifa al-Mansoura*" (Signs of the Victorious Sect), "*Limatha al-Jihad*" (Why Jihad), "*Al-'Awlama*" (Globalization), "*Sarayaa al-Jihad*" (The Troops of the Jihad) and "*Al-Islam wa Amreeka*" (Islam and America), as well as dozens of other essays and articles.

[75] It is important to note that the principle of "*al-Walaa' wa al-Baraa'*" (Loyalty towards Muslims and Disavowal towards Unbelievers) represents an ingrained concept for the followers of Jihadi Salafist discourse. Indeed, the importance and centrality of this concept in the Jihadi Salafist discourse is evident in a book written and published by al-Maqdisi dedicated entirely to a meticulously detailed explanation of this concept. The book, entitled, "*Millat Ibrahim wa Da'wat al-Anbiyaa' wa al-Mursalin, wa Asaleeb al-Tughaa fi Tamyee'iha*" (Abraham's Creed: and the Ways in which the Oppressors Dilute It) begins with al-Maqdisi saying, "Disavow the Oppressors and false deities of every time and of every place… these Oppressors – rulers, emirs, caesars, chieftains, pharaohs, and kings – and their injudicious counselors and misguiding scholars, their guardians, their armies, their police, their bodyguards, and their intelligence and security apparatuses. Say to all of them, at once and for all, 'We are innocent of you' (we disavow you) and all your ungodly worship and all that you follow without God'… Say, 'We disavow and am innocent of all your laws, your paradigms and methods, your constitutions, your petty principles… your governments, your courts, your slogans and your rotten flags'. Say, 'We disavow you as unbelieving and the confrontation and loathing between you and us has begun and will forever continue until you believe in God alone'." In this book and all his other writings, Al-Maqdisi clearly depends on the Wahhabi Salafist frame of reference. See, Abu

belongs to the sphere of Jihadi Salafism, did not find any difficulty in adopting an "identity-oriented" approach that depends upon affirming and asserting one's "identity," especially that contemporary Salafism, across its different doctrinal and jurisprudential trends, is based fundamentally upon unequivocal identity foundations.[76]

Throughout these years, the two sides, the central Al-Qaeda and Al-Zarqawi, remained careful not let the development of the dispute between them become publicly

---

Muhammad al-Maqdisi, "*Millat Ibrahim: wa Da'wat al-Anbiyaa' wa al-Mursalin, wa Asaleeb al-Tughaa fi Tamyee'iha*" (Abraham's Creed: And the Calling of Prophets and Messengers, and the Ways in which the Oppressors Dilute It), p. 1, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.tawhed.ws/f.

On his part, Abu Qutada also places much emphasis on the principle of "*al-Walaa' wa al-Baraa'*" and its importance in distinguishing between a Muslim and a *kafir* – a distinction which is inherent in the principle, in its requirements and in its provisions; he says, "Of the requirements inherent in the doctrine of *al-Walaa' wa al-Baraa'* is the Muslim's obligation to confront as an enemy all *kuffar* and hypocrites (*munafiqin*), no matter their nationality, race or language. For, in this matter there are only two camps: The first camp is of the faithful and the community of '*Muwahhidin*' (believers in the one God), no matter their race, color or language – whether they be Arab or non-Arab –; and the other camp is of the *kuffar* and hypocrites, no matter their race, color or language – whether they be Arab or Jew or Christian or of a sect deviant from the righteous path, or followers of the misguided, such as '*al-Rafida*' (a term used for those who follow the Shiite sect), and other modern unbelieving sects such as the Arab Nationalists and the Baathists." See: Abu Qutada al-Falastini, "Declaration of a group of scholars entitled, "*Bayan Munasara li al-Mujahidin al-Murabitin fi Aknaf Bayt al-Maqdis*" (The Declaration of Support for the Mujahidin in the Folds of the Holy House (i.e. Jerusalem)"; p. 3 (no publisher or publishing date).

[76] The question related to "identity" and the relationship between the "I" and the "other" became a hallmark in the paths of modern and contemporary Salafist identity makeup, where the revivalist approach dominated over all the activities, events, factions, and orientations of traditional, reformist, and Jihadi Salafism, mainly through bestowing religious basis upon the issue of "identity," and considering policies of "acknowledgement and recognition" as mere innovations. For more details, see: Mohammad Abu Rumman, "*I Am Salafi: A Study of the Actual and Imagined Identities of Salafis,*" [Available in English], Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Amman, Jordan, 2014, pp. 151-156.

known. Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi, Al-Zarqawi's mentor, however, exposed the dispute in a surprising letter to Al-Zarqawi entitled "*Al-Zarqawi: Munasara wa Munasaha, Aamaal wa Aalaam*" (Al-Zarqawi: Advocacy and Advice, Hopes and Pains), in which he expresses reservations regarding the use of suicide missions, *Takfir* of Shiites, and targeting of civilians. His reservations were even sharper against Al-Zarqawi's escalation of his methods in Iraq and exporting them to other countries. In the letter, Al-Maqdisi states: "Beware of leniency in what we are commonly stern about regarding the sanctity of Muslim blood, livelihood, and honor, even if they are blatant sinners, for the blood of the infallible is a quandary of the quandaries of the Day of Judgement … I say this and stress it as I hear and follow the widespread chaos taking place today in Iraq, which is meant to distort Jihad and its bright image through car bombings, roadside bombs, and throwing mortars and the like on public streets and markets, etc. … Beware of being dragged behind targeting all of the Shiites, in general, and of diverting the battle away from the occupier and its cronies, and redirecting it towards the mosques of Shiites and the likes." [77]

Al-Maqdisi and Jihadi Salafist ideologues, who were close to Al-Qaeda, took notice of Al-Zarqawi's unprecedented escalation in the use of suicide bombings, relying in his doctrinal justification on the concept of "*Tatarrus*" (barricading), which legitimizes and exonerates civilian deaths as collateral damage if they happen to be present at a legitimate target. This practice became more

---

[77] Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi, the text of the letter written by al-Maqdisi to Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, entitled, "*Al-Zarqawi: Munasara wa Munasaha, Aamaal wa Aalaam*", (Lit., Al-Zarqawi: Advocacy and Advice, Hopes and Pains), pp. 9-12, published on the "Minbar al-Jihad wa al-Tawhid" website, available [in Arabic] on the following link: www.tawhed.ws/r?u=dtwiam56

pronounced with Al-Zarqawi's announcement that death targets include U.S. forces and all forces allied with them, and all who cooperate with the United States such as the Iraqi government, the Governing Council, the army, police, and Shiites, especially those who are affiliated with the occupation forces, in accordance with the principle of "*Al-Walaa' wa al-Baraa'*" (Loyalty and Disavowal), and the priority of fighting the "near enemy." According to Al-Zarqawi, as mentioned before, "There is no difference between a foreign enemy; that is an original *Kafir* [infidel], or an internal enemy; as an apostate infidel.. There is no difference between an American and Iraqi, whether a Kurd or an Arab, Sunni or Shiite.[78]

Al-Maqdisi's criticism did not dissuade Al-Zarqawi or result in any retreat in his approach; on the contrary, Al-Zarqawi appeared more persistent in implementing his strategy and violent tactics against Shiites. In reaction to his mentor's letter, Al-Zarqawi responded with a letter not void of threat and accusations, in which he says: "Seek your refuge in God so as to not follow the steps of Satan, thereby you perish. Beware, Oh our esteemed Sheikh, from the deceit of the enemies of God, and be careful not to be lured to cause a rift in the ranks of Mujahideen."[79]

While the majority of Jihadi Salafist theorists and ideologues consider the Shiite sect to be more akin to blasphemy and unbelief than to Islam, yet the religious rulings on dealing with them varies from one Jihadist

---

[78] See: Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, "*Ayanqus al-Deen wa Ana Hay?*" (Lit., Does the Religion Lack While I am Alive?), op. cit., and "*Ibn Ahl al-Muru'at*" (Lit., The Son of the People of Virility), op. cit.

[79] Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, "*A Statement and Clarification of what Sheikh Al-Maqdisi Stirred in his interview with Al-Jazeera Channel,*" dated July 12, 2005, pg. 322, from the Archived Collection of Statements and Speeches by Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, The Islamic Al-Buraq Network.

reference to another. While Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi considers that the general public of the Twelver Shiites are akin to the general public of the Sunnis, and are not to be targeted on the basis of their affiliation to the Shiite sect, Al-Zarqawi, on the other hand, was unyielding in his response to his Sheikh Al-Maqdisi, stating: "Our Sheikh has expressed reservations towards the *Rafidha* [Shiite rejecters], and considers that the general masses of the *Rafidha* are akin to the general masses of the Sunnis. To this I say: Regarding our fight against the *Rafidha*, as we have stated repeatedly. We did not initiate the conflict with them, and did not direct our arrows at them. It is they who began to eliminate the Sunni cadres, displace them, ravish their mosques and homes, for the crimes of the Badr Brigade is too evident to us. This is aside from their hiding in pagan police and national guard uniforms, and above all, their loyalty to the Crusaders. So after all this, does it really merit that we avoid fighting them?"[80]

Al-Zarqawi adds: "As for the argument that the general masses of *Rafidha* are akin to the general masses of the Sunnis, this, I swear, is unfair to the masses of the Sunnis, for are those in which *Tawhid* [belief in the oneness of God] is a genuine pillar equal to those whose genuine religious pillar is to seek refuge in Al-Hussein [grandson of the Prophet] and Aal al-Bayt [the family of the Prophet]? Their practices in Karbala and other places are no longer hidden to those who have eyes, coupled with their belief in the infallibility of their Imams, and attributing to them knowledge of the unknown and deliberate action in the universe, along with other *Shirk* [associating deities] practices about which no one is excused of being ignorant.. Those who are informed of [Shiite] affairs in Iraq know for certain that they are no longer "general

---

[80] Ibid., p. 325.

masses" in the sense that you refer to; they have become soldiers of the occupying infidel, and spying eyes over the true Mujahideen. Have not Al-Jaafari [then Prime Minister] and Al-Hakim and others among the *Rafidha* reached the top positions of power except with the votes of those masses?! It is unfair to recall a *Fatwa* [religious edict] of Ibn Taymiyyah from his own time [13th century] and consider it applicable to the reality of the Shiites today (without considering the differences between the two eras). Furthermore, there are scholars who consider the *Rafidha* to be unbelievers, such as Sheikh Hmoud al-'Oqalaa (May Allah rest his soul), Sheikh Sulaiman Al-'Alwan and Sheikh Ali al-Khudhair (May Allah release them from their shackles), Sheikh Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir, and Sheikh Al-Rashoud (May Allah rest their souls), and others."[81]

The death of Al-Zarqawi, in mid-2006, did not alleviate the disputes between his successors and the central Al-Qaeda leadership, on the contrary, the process of "Iraqization" of the leadership of the Iraqi organization contributed in buttressing the sectarian dimension and in incorporating the Sunni cause into the organization's strategy. During the era of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, and around the time of declaring the establishment of the "Islamic State of Iraq," the frame of reference of the "State" was asserted on the basis of the Sunni sect, and the position towards the Shiites was no longer a matter of debate or consideration. In a speech entitled "*Inni 'ala Bayinatin min Rabbi*" (And I am with Evidence from my Lord), Abu Omar al-Baghdadi asserts that "The *Rafidha* [rejecter Shiites] is a sect of *Shirk* [association of deities] and

---

[81] Ibid.

Ridda [apostasy], and accordingly, they refuse to implement many of Islam's explicit rituals."[82]

In a later speech entitled "*Wa in Tantahu fa Huwa Khairun Lakum*" (And if You Desist from Wrong, It will be Best for You), Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi addresses the Shiites, saying: "What have you gained after four years? First: on the doctrinal and religious aspect, you have increased in disbelief and divergence from religion by siding with the infidel occupier, until the Arabs who are descendants of authentic Arab tribes became tools in the hands of Persians."[83] Al-Baghdadi threatens Iran with a fierce war, and calls for mobilizing the Sunni ranks against Iran and the Shiites in the context of exploiting the severe sectarian climate. He explains in detail what he considers to be Shiite crimes against Sunnis, including death, torture, and assault, and includes in his speech an implicit criticism of Al-Qaeda's relationship with Iran. He states: "We give the Persians, in general, and Iran, in particular, an ultimatum of two months to withdraw all kinds of support from Iraq and to halt all direct and indirect interference in the affairs of the Islamic State… Otherwise, await a fierce war that will annihilate you and keep nothing of you. We have prepared for this war for over four years, and all that remains is to issue orders to launch the campaign. We will not leave a spot in Magian Persia, not in Iran or any other in the region." [84]

---

[82] Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, "*Inni 'ala Bayinatin min Rabbi*" (Lit., And I am with Evidence from my Lord), dated March 13, 2007, from a collection of statements by leaders of the Islamic State of Iraq, Al-Furqan for Media Production, 1st ed., 2010.

[83] Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, "*Wa in Tantahu fa Huwa Khairun Lakum*" (Lit., And if You Desist From Wrong, It will be Best for You), from a collection of statements by leaders of the Islamic State of Iraq, Al-Furqan for Media Production, 1st ed., 2010.

[84] Ibid.

Throughout his term in command of ISI, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi's speeches focused on mobilization and sectarian-oriented rallying, and were never void of instigation against Shiites in general, and Iran in particular. In a speech entitled "*'Umalaa' Kathaboun*" (Lying Collaborators), Al-Baghdadi addresses the Sunnis, saying: "Oh People of the Sunnah: The *Rafidha* [Shiites] are your enemies, their history and their present is full of deceit and scheming against you. Do not trust them, and beware of being deceived by their sweet words, for behind it is cunning deceit that is grim and black as night."[85]

Even Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, who succeeded Al-Zarqawi in the leadership of the Iraqi branch of Al-Qaeda, and later became the Minister of War of the Islamic State of Iraq, did not divert from the organization's position towards the Shiites. He exhibited full conformity with the approach of Al-Zarqawi and the rhetoric of Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi. In a speech entitled "*Sa yuhzamu al-Jam'u wa Yuwaloun al-Dubar*" (Their Multitude will be Defeated, and They Will Turn their Backs), Al-Muhajir escalates the sectarian rhetoric and threatens with a war of attrition. He states: "As for you, Magian collaborators. Your day of punishment has come, and the hour of your judgment has arrived. I swear by God that you are more despicable than having your banner raised, or for you to have any objective fulfilled. For, the Baghdad of Al-Rashid will not be dominated except by the descendants of Sa'ad and Ibn al-Walid. Here are your masters at the gates of escape [referring to U.S. troop withdrawal], and will rely on traitor collaborators. Your fate is the fate of your Magian

---

[85] Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, "*'Umalaa' Kathaboun*" (Lit., Lying Collaborators), dated May 13, 2009, from a collection of statements by leaders of the Islamic State of Iraq, Al-Furqan for Media Production, 1st ed., 2010.

Rafidha [Rejecter Shiite] ancestors such as Al-Tousi and Ibn Al-'Alqami and the likes who sold Baghdad to the Tatars. But know, Ye Magians; that you being guided to the truth, and your return to righteousness, and your repentance to God from the wrong of your rejection and from your support of the occupiers is much more beloved to us than this whole world and what is in it. If you refuse and desire only the sword, then await from us what is to come, and know that what is to come is more fierce and bitter." [86]

The era of the Islamic State of Iraq, led by Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, was the most violent and most brazen on both the political and sectarian levels. In the context of imposing its influence and its agenda, and with the "Iraqization" of the organization and the weakening influence of Arab and foreign fighters, a new generation emerged that was particularly more vicious, and engaged in bloody conflicts with ISI's social surroundings, using violent tactics that even targeted other insurgent groups that had previously held close relations with the Islamic State, such as the "Islamic Army."[87]

The incorporation of – and fixation on – the Sunni cause in the organization's agenda and ideology reached its peak in the era of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and was significantly heightened by the escalation of events in neighboring Syria, especially with the entry of the Iranian-backed Hezbollah to

---

[86] Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, A Speech entitled "*Sa yuhzamu al-Jam'u wa Yuwaloun al-Dubar*" (Lit., Their Multitudes will be Defeated, and They Will Turn their Backs), dated June 13, 2006, available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=1284

[87] See: "*Iraq after the Surge I: The New Sunni Landscape.*" The International Crisis Group, Middle East Report No. 74, April 30, 2008, available in English on the following link: http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq/074-iraq-after-the-surge-i-the-new-sunni-landscape.aspx

the line of conflict there, and the Iranian support for former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and the regime of Bashar al-Assad, creating of the "identity dimension" a core and fundamental element in the organization's ideology, strategy, tactics, and perspective on the priorities of the conflict. This revitalized identity dimension further deepened the rift with the central Al-Qaeda organization, which became more manifest with the emergence of dispute between the two organization after the Commander of Al-Nusra Front in Syria, Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, refused to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as will be discussed in the upcoming chapter.

Conclusion

There are important notions, or rather clues, that the previous pages attempted to capture in an effort to dissect and analyze the reasons behind the differences between the Islamic State and Al-Nusra Front, and the factors behind the rise – and decline – of the Islamic State in both Iraq and Syria, particularly in regard to its dynamic relations with the Sunni society, and finally to examine the Iraqi organization's ideological structure, all of which will be addressed in the coming chapters. Hence, it is worthwhile here to summarize some of the conclusions and results that give us seven main clues useful in tracking the subsequent developments in the path of the organization.

The First Clue: The declaration of the Islamic Caliphate (in June 2014) was the outcome of a fluctuating path, rising at times and declining at others, of the organization first named *Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*, established and led by Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi on the eve American occupation of Iraq in 2003. The organization was later named "Al-Qaeda in Iraq" (in 2004) following Al-Zarqawi's allegiance to Al-Qaeda's central leader, Osama bin Laden. Before his death, Al-Zarqawi contemplated establishing an emirate in Iraq, a matter that was actualized at the hands of his followers, who declared the "Islamic State of Iraq" (in 2006). Thus, it is clear that the organization followed successive and strategic steps before it announced the Caliphate in 2014.

The Second Clue: Although Al-Zarqawi officially pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden, yet the relationship between the two remained ambiguous, and even tense. The main reason is due to the difference in perspective between the two parties regarding the priorities and structure of the conflict. Al-Qaeda, on its part, focuses on the "global" dimension and on confrontation with the United States (the distant enemy), particularly after it brought about a major transformation in its ideological vision (which emanated from Jihadi Salafism), in 1998, with the establishment of the "Global Front to Fight the Crusaders and the Jews," after it had previously focused on fighting the Arab regimes (the near enemy). Al-Zarqawi's organization in Iraq, on the other hand, developed a vision of the conflict that emanated from a very different dimensions; one that is founded upon fighting the Shiites as an enemy that is more dangerous than the American threat (the distant enemy). Al-Zarqawi, hence, effectively combined the conflict, fighting both the Americans and the Shiites all at once.

The Third Clue: The integration and pairing between Al-Zarqawi's organization and the Sunni cause in Iraq resulted in a number of consequences that were evident in the ideological discourse and the doctrinal frame of reference, organization, and behavior of the organization. The Islamic State conceptualized its position towards Shiites in the years between 2003 and 2005, and gradually developed it until it reached the conviction that all Shiites are infidels, and therefore, not only was fighting and killing them sanctioned, but it was also prioritized. An important and fundamental document (discovered and later published by the U.S. administration), which was the letter from Al-Zarqawi to the central Al-Qaeda leadership, exposed the strategic hallmarks of the Iraqi organization's perspective. In it, Al-Zarqawi

stresses that targeting Shiites and igniting an intense climate of sectarianism in Iraq constituted an important factor in accomplishing the objectives of mobilizing the Sunni segment of society and rallying its support for his organization. The perspective espoused in the letter was not accepted by Al-Qaeda's leadership. Nonetheless, the Sunni "identity" dimension continued to be indoctrinated in the discourse and strategy of the organization, particularly in 2006, amid a sharp escalation of religious and sectarian conflict in Iraq.

The Fourth Clue: Although Al-Zarqawi was influenced by Al-Maqdisi and his writings on the principles of *Al-Hakimiyya*[88] and *Al-Taghout*,[89] yet the fundamental doctrinal and

---

[88] *Al-Hakimiyya* is the notion that divine governance and sovereignty of God alone is the ideal form of governance versus the contemporary state of ignorance, which the Salafists call "*al-Jahilyya.*" "*Al-Hakimiyya*" dictates that God alone has the right to legislate – an act forbidden to human beings. And according to this belief, the true "*Tawhid*" and Islam, in its proper and pure form, requires its followers to adhere to none but the laws of Islam (*Shariah*); and therefore, they disavow as unbelieving ("*takfir*") all those who do not rule by "that which was decreed by God" in terms of law and legislation. [Reference: Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh, *"The Jihadi Salafist Movement in Jordan after Zarqawi: Identity, Leadership Crisis and Obscured Vision*," published by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Amman, 2009]. [Translator's note]

[89] The concept of "*al-Taghout*," which means the rule of impure tyrants, or anything worshipped other than God, i.e. all false deities, is one of the fundamental and governing principles in the discourse of Jihadi Salafism. It is the concept most used and employed by the movement to justify the disavowal of contemporary Islamic regimes as unbelieving or apostate. "*Al-Taghout*" covers the entire scope of legislations, systems, laws, and institutions that are not governed by Islamic law (*Sharia*). Indeed, the concept of "*al-Taghout*" encompasses the ruler, the constitution, the laws, democracy, legislative assembles, and all relative ideologies such as nationalism, pan-Arabism, socialism, capitalism, and extends to all those individuals who do not govern by Islamic law (*Sharia*). According to the Jihadi Salafist interpretation, the principle of "*al-Kufr bi al-Taghout*" (disavowing as the unbelieving of tyrants and of False Deities) is one of the tenets inherent in "*al-Tawhid*". [Reference: Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh, *"The Islamic Solution in Jordan: Islamists, the State, and the Ventures of*

intellectual frames of reference upon which Al-Zarqawi built the ideology of his organization relied heavily on the thought of Abu Abdullah Al-Muhajir, particularly his book "*Masa'il fi Fiqh al-Jihad*" (Issues in the Jurisprudence of Jihad), which presents a clear explanation of a large part of the organization's behavior and methodology from its inception and until today, including the religious edicts (*Fatawa*) upon which it relied, and its excessive exploitation of the concept of *Tatarrus* (barricading/ legitimizing civilian collateral damage), suicide missions, and targeting and killing all those who oppose its ideology, as will be discussed in later chapters.

The Fifth Clue: The declaration of the Islamic State constituted a highly contentious issue between the Iraqi organization and the central Al-Qaeda organization, and effectively led to an escalation of the crisis between them, particularly from two main angles:

The first angle is that the declaration of the "Islamic State" violates the vision of Al-Qaeda towards the concept of the conflict and its priorities. Al-Qaeda, essentially, sets its efforts within the context of confronting the American project, a strategy that does not necessitate conquest of lands or establishment of a political authority. On the other hand, the Iraqi organization seeks to establish a political umbrella for the Sunni community under its own banner in confrontation of the new Iraqi political order.

The second angle is that the declaration created an atmosphere of confusion and uncertainty in the relation between the central Al-Qaeda organization and the Iraqi

---

Democracy and Security," Published by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Amman, 2013, pg. 383] [Translator's note]

branch. From this declaration, a new framework emerged, whereby the Al-Qaeda in Iraq became merely a "part" of the new organization; that is, it must pledge allegiance to the commander of this new State, who, on his part, did not pledge allegiance to Osama bin Laden. Instead, the new Emir of Believers (Abu Omar al-Baghdadi) extended his lineage to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him), which means, implicitly but also effectively, that he is the legitimate commander of the organization, which includes in its folds, Al-Qaeda in Iraq. And, AQI remained partly subsidiary of the central Al-Qaeda organization; it nonetheless and practically began to exhibit a wider degree of organizational, administrative, and political autonomy from the center. This problematic dimension became a focal point of contention between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in later stages, particularly after the disputes between them became public, and was pivotal in determining responsibility (of who betrayed who, and who abandoned who), and all that resulted in terms of religious and doctrinal rulings, as will be discussed in later chapters.

The Sixth Clue: A key substantive transformation occurred during Al-Zarqawi's era, which extended well into later stages, consisting of the "Iraqization" of the organization. With time, Iraqis came to dominate the upper echelons of the organization's leadership, compared to earlier stages when Arab and foreign fighters had constituted the major weight in the leadership ranks. During the post-Al Zarqawi era and with the declaration of the Islamic State, Iraqi members ascended and took hold of the reins of leadership, a phenomenon that became entirely ingrained after the death of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamza al-Muhajir. In the reign of the current leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Iraqi leadership consists of a conglomeration of the ideological apparatus,

represented by Al-Baghdadi and his group, and a security and military apparatus, controlled mainly by a group of former Iraqi army officers.

The "Iraqization" process reinforced the Sunni Iraqi orientation of the organization and its fixation on, and immersion in, the Iraqi Sunni cause, a matter that further widened the gap between the Islamic State and the central Al-Qaeda organization.

The Seventh Clue: There are a number of factors that explain the current fundamental differences between the Islamic State and the central Al-Qaeda organization, which aid in analyzing the rift that emerged between them. The first factor consists of the legacy of Al-Zarqawi and his ideological personality, which conflicted with the relatively pragmatic and realistic inclinations of the central Al-Qaeda organization, particularly the Egyptian wing that dominates the leadership, including the current leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. The second factor consists of the doctrinal and jurisprudential frame of reference of the organization. The influence of Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir on Al-Zarqawi was evident, particularly on the position towards the Shiites, suicide missions, the principle of *Tatarrus* (barricading), the relationship with the "other," perspective on killing, *Ridda* (apostasy), and other issues. The Third factor consists of the trajectory towards "Iraqization," the dominance of Iraqi members over the leadership and ranks of the organization, and the predominance of the Iraqi Sunni cause at the expense of a more global perspective on the conflict, which remains prevalent in the ideology of the mother Al-Qaeda organization until today ∎

Chapter Two

Al-Nusra Front:
Its Founding, Rise, and Crisis

Introduction

Before the start of the Syrian Revolution in mid-March 2011, Al-Qaeda had no real physical or effective presence in Syria, in fact, the influence of Jihadi Salafism there, in general, was very minimal. Unlike in many Arab and Muslim countries, Jihadi Salafism did not flourish in the Syrian environment, whereas the *Sufi* (mysticism) and mainstream trends of religiosity were more dominant among the Muslim population there. Reformist, scholarly, and nationalist streams of Salafism had also witnessed a sharp decline in Syria. Furthermore, Political Islamism, represented by the Muslim Brotherhood movement, had suffered marginalization if not complete eradication after engaging in bloody armed confrontations with the Syrian regime towards the end of the 1970s and early 1980s.[90]

The paradox here is that the paths of notable Syrian Jihadi Salafism took shape in the 'diaspora,' after the Syrian regime ensured the complete eradication of its organizational and activist components inside the country. Survivors remaining from the *Al-Tali'a Al-Muqatila* (The Fighting Vanguard)[91]

---

[90] See: Mohammad Abu Rumman, "*Islamists, Religion, and the Revolution in Syria*". Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Amman, Jordan, 1st ed., 2013, pp. 29-38.

[91] The roots of Syrian Jihadism date back to Marwan Hadid, one of the prominent figures of the Qutbian current within the Muslim Brotherhood movement. Hadid engaged in confrontation with the Syrian regime in the city of Hama in 1964, a year after the Baathist coup that took power on March 8, 1963. The Jihadi Salafism of Hadid took a more systematic and organizational framework, particularly with the escalation of confrontations in 1974, and then in

movement worked to integrate themselves into global Jihadi Salafism. Among them, Abu Musʿab al-Suri emerged as a global Jihadist exponent, Abu Baseer al-Tartusi became a renowned jurist and a *Daʿiya* (religious figure who practices *Daʿwa* or call to and propagation of Islam), and a number of other Syrians engaged in the Al-Qaeda global Jihadist movement, and later in the Iraqi branch led by Abu Musʿab al-Zarqawi.

With the eruption of the Syrian revolution, the Syrian regime, on its part, contributed and facilitated by various means to the establishment of an Al-Qaeda branch in Syria, in an attempt to reformulate the image of its legitimacy, regionally and internationally, by appearing to take part in the "War on Terror." The enormous support the regime received from Iran indeed helped in creating a suitable and attractive environment for Al-Qaeda, particularly as Lebanon's Shiite Hezbollah forces entered into the conflict, in addition to the influx of volunteers from Iraqi Shiite militias. The conflict quickly turned sectarian in nature, in light of increasing Syrian Sunni apprehensions of being targeted, similar to the Iraqi case. In this context, the Syrian *Jabhat al-Nusra* (Al-Nusra Front) emerged, backed by the Iraqi branch of Al-Qaeda.

Initially, Al-Nusra Front did not declare its Al-Qaeda identity, even after the United States labeled it as a terrorist organization. However, its affiliation was revealed when the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), Abu Bakr al-

---

1976, with his organization "*Al-Taliʿa al-Muqatila*" (The Fighting Vanguard). Hadid officially left the Muslim Brotherhood and maintained independence from the movement until the Genocide of Hama on February 17, 1982. See: Raphael Lefevre, "*The Syrian Brotherhood's Armed Struggle*," The Carnegie Middle East Center, December 14, 2012, available [in English] on the following link:
  http://carnegie-mec.org/2012/12/14/syrian-brotherhood-s-armed-struggle/exfu

Baghdadi, announced merging the Front with his Iraqi branch, bringing about the "Islamic State in Iraq and Al-Sham (Levant)", that came to be known as ISIS or ISIL (and commonly referred to in Arab media as, *Da'esh*.[92] However, Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, leader of Al-Nusra Front, rejected the merger, and instead declared his allegiance to the central mother organization, Al-Qaeda, headed by Ayman Al-Zawahiri. Al-Zawahiri attempted to contain the dispute between the two organizations, but the results came counterproductive, instigating instead a public display of the long-muffled and unspoken disputes between the central organization and the Iraqi branch, and in turn exacerbating the situation into an all-out crisis.

As a result, the central Al-Qaeda organization suffered a major schism, with the Iraqi branch officially splitting away from the center, followed by ideological, political, and even armed confrontations between the two sides in Syria, culminating in an exchange of accusations, sharp disputes, vicious battles, and *Takfir* (with each group disavowing the other as unbelieving infidels).

This chapter tracks the roots of Al-Nusra Front and its rise in the Syrian scene, and the exposure of disputes between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, on the backdrop of Al-Nusra's refusal to merge with the Iraqi organization. The following pages will examine the ambiguous ideological and 'identity' background of Al-Nusra Front, which not only led

---

[92] The announcement ushered the establishment of *Al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham,*" (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) denoted by the acronym ISIS, or the Levant (ISIL), the Levant being in reference to the area of Greater Syria, known as Al-Sham. In Arab mediums, colloquially and in Arab media outlets, the organization came to be known as *Da'esh*, denoting its Arabic acronyms. [Translator's note]

to a clash with the Islamic State, but also generated an internal strife and divisions within the Front itself.

1. The Roots: The Syrian Regime's Contribution to Providing a Climate for Al-Qaeda

The 2003 U.S. invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq contributed to revitalizing the Syrian Jihadi Salafist movement, whereby the Syrian territories became a main Jihadist transit point into Iraqi, and an active environment for mobilization and recruitment. The Syrian regime adopted, albeit unofficially, a policy of facilitating and backing Jihadi fighters and enabling them to infiltrate into Iraq. This strategy was motivated by two main reasons; first: to essentially get rid of thousands of local Jihadi-inclined Salafists and thrusting them into an external war from which the majority will never return back to trouble the secular Syrian regime; and second, to destabilize the American occupation of Iraq and thwart George W. Bush's desire to overthrow dictatorial regimes in the region (including the Syrian one).

Following the occupation of Iraq, Syria became a major hub for volunteer Jihadists hopeful of joining the insurgency in Iraq. The intelligence apparatus of President Bashar al-Assad put its Syrian Salafist 'agents' into action, the most famous of these being Dr. Mahmoud Qola Aghasi (who went by the alias is Abu al-Qaʿqaaʿ), the Salafist Sheikh from Aleppo. Following the invasion of Iraq, his group became the base that supplied Al-Zarqawi's organization with Syrian fighters.

The efforts of Abu al-Qaʿqaaʿ succeeded to the extent that Syrians came to constitute the largest percentage of foreign fighters in the early days of the armed resistance in Iraq. Four years later, however, the political calculations shifted, prompting the Syrian regime to limit and restrain the movement of fighters. Abu al-Qaʿqaaʿ was eventually killed by a bullet to his head in mysterious circumstances, but not before he facilitated the entry of nearly 85-90 percent of foreign fighters into Iraq via the Syrian borders. The Syrian Jihadi network, nonetheless, became an indispensable extension to the Iraqi network, and began to work without any direct support from Al-Assad's regime, albeit with its knowledge.[93]

In the years before the Syrian uprising in 2011, President Al-Assad and his intelligence held the conviction that "Jihad" can be sponsored, manipulated, and exploited for the benefit of the regime. It was during this time that foreign fighters entered into Syria and contributed to building Jihadist arrangements, networks, and supply lines that are today, ironically, used to fight the Syrian regime itself. Until then, Al-Assad's regime was a partner in effectively creating the enemy it fights today. When the current crisis exploded in Syria, it was no surprise that the Jihadist arrangements first appeared in the eastern parts, which had previously constituted the points of Jihadist transit into Iraq.[94]

---

[93] See Mohammad Habash, *"Abu al-Qaʿqaaʿ.. Thikrayat.. Al-Tariq ila Daʿesh"* (Abu Al-Qaʿqaaʿ, Memories, and the Path to ISIS), *Judran* blog, October 17, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.judran.net/?p=2831

[94] Peter Neumann, "*Suspects into Collaborators: Peter Neumann Argues that Assad has Himself to Blame*," London review of Books, Vol. 36, No. 7, April 3, 2014, pp. 19-21, available on the following link:

\http://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n07/peter-neumann/suspects-into-collaborators

In the subsequent phase, and during the initial days of peaceful protests in Syria, the regime also contributed to generating Al-Qaeda and other Jihadist activism in the country. Indirectly, its oppressive policies to thwart the protests, by killing, arresting, and torturing peaceful protesters, prompted substantial numbers to defect from the Syrian military, and instead began to form the Free Syrian Army (FSA) aimed to protect the demonstrators and civilians.[95]

As the Syrian revolution began to become militarized (three months into the uprising, by the second half of 2011), the term "Jihad" became the trending topic in local circles, and Jihadi Salafists groups began to announce their presence. Among the notable groups that emerged is *Kata'ib Abdullah Azzam* (The Abdullah Azzam Brigades), which emerged as one of the militant arms of Al-Qaeda in the Levant (which was formed by Saleh Abdullah al-Qar'awi under the orders of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi in 2004), and the group *Fatih al-Islam* (The Islam Conquest), which announced its formation in a statement on November 2006, led by Shaker al-'Absi, and waged confrontations with the Lebanese army in the Nahr al-Barid refugee camp in Lebanon. The confrontations effectively led to its elimination, the death of large numbers of its followers, arrest of its leaders, and Al-'Absi's escape from Lebanon.[96] In addition to these groups, the *Jaysh al-*

---

[95] *Tentative Jihad: Syria's Fundamentalist Opposition*," The International Crisis Group, Middle East Report No. 131, October 12, 2012, available on the following link:
http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Syria/131-tentative-jihad-syrias-fundamentalist-opposition.pdf

[96] For details on the confrontation of Nahr al-Barid and the *Fatih al-Islam* group, see the report "*Al-Jaysh al-Lubnani Yunhi Muwajahat Nahr al-Barid bi Tadmir Mawaqi' Fatih al-Islam*" (Lit. The Lebanese Army Concludes the Nahr al-Barid Confrontations by Destroying the Strongholds of the Fatih al-Islam group),

Sahaaba fi Bilad al-Sham (The Army of the Companions of the Prophet in the Lands of the Levant) and *Kata'ib Ahrar al-Sham* (The Free Levant Brigades) also announced their presence inside Syria.[97]

From the onset of protests in Syria, Al-Assad's regime worked to propagate the discourse of "fear" and "interest," locally, regionally, and internationally, by portraying the peaceful activist movement in Syria as "terrorist" and "sectarian." The terms "sectarianism" and "terrorism" have indeed become keywords in distorting and manipulating the nature and characteristics of the conflict, and became effective tools used by the regime to achieve ideological and political objectives. The regime juxtaposed its discourse with that of international policies that became prevalent in the post-Cold War era, most prominently the policies of the "War on Terror," the principles of "humanitarian intervention," and "protection of minorities." The regime exploited these principles in its rhetoric in an effort to rehabilitate its eroding legitimacy, and as tools for authoritarian control, domination, and subjugation of the uprising.

The Syrian regime's approach was not limited to the level of political and media discourse, it also worked to build a practical strategy through a series of practices. In mid-2011, amid an escalation in peaceful popular protest activism, the regime issued a presidential pardon on May 31st, 2011, releasing detainees from the Sidnaya prison, one of the most

---

Al-Arabiya Net, June 21, 2007, available [In Arabic] on the following link: http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2007/06/21/35734.html

[97] For more details on the rise of Jihadi Salafist groups in Syria by mid-2011 and beginning of 2012, see: Akram Hijazi, *Al-Thawra al-Suriyya wa Masarat al-Tadweel (6), Kharitat al-Quwaa al-Musalaha*" (Lit. The Syrian Revolution and the Paths of Internationalization (6), A Map of Armed Groups), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.almoraqeb.net/main/articles-action-show-id-350.htm

notorious Syrian prisons housing Islamist inmates. The prison's function was to detain Arab volunteers who crossed into Syria to fight U.S. forces in Iraq, and included also local Jihadist and Salafists groups, detainees from various Kurdish parties, and smaller less-known Islamist groupings. It also imprisoned a number of religious and independent figures who had openly declared their support for Jihad and armed struggle.[98]

Upon their release, the released inmates of Sidnaya prison quickly became the backbone of the armed Islamist opposition. Three main figures led the most prominent factions: Zahran Alloush (founder and commander of *Liwaa' al-Islam* (The Islam Brigade) which later became *Jaysh al-Islam*, Hassan Abboud (known as Abu Abdullah al-Hamawi, who emerged as the commander of *Ahrar al-Sham*), and Issa al-Sheikh (became the commander of *Liwaa' Suqour al-Islam* "The Hawks of Islam Brigade). All three figures had been arrested and detained at Sidnaya since 2004.[99]

---

[98] For more details on the historicity and function of Sidnaya Prison, See: Haytham Manaa', *"Sijn Sidnaya: Bayna al-Haqiqa wa al-Tawtheef,"* (Lit., The Sidnaya Prison: Between the Reality and the Function), on Al Jazeera net, July 17, 2008, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.aljazeera.net/knowledgegate/opinions/2008/7/17/%D8%B3%D8%AC %D9%86-%D8%B5%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A7- %D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86- %D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%A9- %D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B8%D9%8A%D9%81

[99] See: Basil al-Junaydi, *"Qissat Asdiqaa Sidnaya: Aqwaa Thalathat Rijal fi Suriyya al-Yawm!"* (Lit., The Story of "the Sidnaya Friends:" The Strongest Three Men in Syria Today,) October 16, 2013, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://aljumhuriya.net/19328. Several reports spoke of Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, commander of Al-Nusra Front, being detained in Sidnaya Prison. However, it is more likely, according to a number of trusted sources, that Al-Jolani, along with seven of his companions, including a few Syrians, a Saudi Arabian, and a Jordanian, infiltrated through the Iraqi borders into Syria in the summer of 2011. They were received there by a few individuals who were released from Sidnaya. Al-Jolani had been previously detained by U.S. forces in Iraq at Camp Bucca.

Towards the beginning of 2012, militant action began to spread, and armed factions rapidly emerged, reaching more than 500 factions. The identity of armed groups varied between nationalist orientations, such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA), and Islamist affiliations, which began to dominate the scene with the emergence of *Jabhat Thuwar Suriya* (The Revolutionaries of Syria Front), which included a number of Islamist factions, most notably *Kata'ib Ahrar al-Sham* (The Free Levant/Syria Brigades) in Idlib and *Kata'ib Ahfad al-Umawiyeen* (The Grandsons of the Umayyads Brigades) in Damascus and its countryside. The latter soon dissolved and from within it emerged *Jabhat Tahrir Suriya al-Islamiya* (The Islamic Syrian Liberation Front "ISLF") announced on September 12th, 2012. It was planned that ISLF would include in its folds the largest and most important Jihadist groups, including the *Suqour al-Sham* Brigades, *Al-Farouq* Legions, the *Ansar al-Islam* grouping, *Al-Fatih* Brigades, *Al-Iman* Brigades, and the Dair Al-Zor Revolutionaries Council, among other smaller militant brigades and units. Later in January 2013, the *Tawhid* Brigade announced merging into ISLF, while the *Ansar al-Islam* group withdrew from the larger assembly.

Ten days before the end of 2012, a second Islamist Front was formed under the name *Al-Jabha Al-Islamiya al-Suriya* (The Syrian Islamic Front SIF). The new front included a number of Islamist groups, including *Ahrar al-Sham* Brigades, *Al-Fajr al-Islamiya* (The Islamic Dawn Movement), *Al-Tali'a al-Islamiya* (The Islamic Vanguard) group, *Kata'ib al-Iman al-Muqatila* (The Faith Fighting Brigades), *Ansar al-Sham* Brigades, *Al-Haq* Battalion, and the *Jaysh al-Tawhid* Army forces, among other smaller brigades and units. The *Iman* Brigade in Hama soon withdrew from ISLF and joined SIF two months after it was formed. The

First four movements mentioned above were later merged into a new entity under the name *Harakat Ahrar al-Sham*, which became the backbone and main forces of the Syrian Islamic Front.

During the second half of 2013, great efforts were made to unite ISLF and SIF into one entity, which culminated in the merging of all their main groups into a new front, announced on Friday November 22nd, 2013 under the name *Al-Jabha al-Islamiya* (the Islamic Front). The Islamic Front included the largest militant groups engaged in the battlefield, they are: *Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiya* movement, *Jaysh al-Islam*, *Suqour al-Sham* Brigades, *Al-Tawhid* Brigade, *Al-Haq* Battalion, *Ansar al-Sham* Brigades, and the Kurdish Islamic Front. With the establishment of the new front, the two old fronts were effectively dissolved.[100]

The assiduous Jihadi activism in Syria was closely monitored by Al-Qaeda and its branch in neighboring Iraq. Since July 2011, Syrian jihadists, particularly in the Iraqi battlefields, began communicating with the central Al-Qaeda organization. In result, Al-Qaeda's leader, Al-Zawahiri, appeared in a video recorded speech entitled "*Ezz al-Sharq Awaluhu Dimashq*" (The Glory of the East begins with Damascus) essentially blessing the Jihadist activities in Syria.[101]

---

[100] See: Mujahid Diraniya, "*Khara'it Mutaharika: Al-Quwaa al-'Askariya fi al-Thawra al-Surriya,*" (Lit., Moving Maps: The Militant Forces in the Syrian Revolution), Al-Jazeera Center for Studies, December 23, 2013, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://studies.aljazeera.net/reports/2013/12/20131223111212549392.htm
[101] Ayman al-Zawahiri, an video recording of a speech entitled "*Ezz al-Sharq Awaluhu Dimashq*" (Lit., The Glory of the East begins with Damascus), July 28, 2011, Mu'asasat al-Sahaab, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.shabakataljahad.info/vb/showthread.php?t=8431

2. The Rise of Al-Nusra Front: The Paths of an Ambiguous Beginning

Al-Qaeda invested in the emergence of Jihadist activities in Syria[102] and worked to establish a branch in *Bilad al-Sham* (the Levant). Jihadist militants began to flow into Syria in coordination with the central Al-Qaeda organization and under direct supervision of the Iraqi branch, without reference to any affiliation to the center or to the Iraqi branch, in an effort to avoid the pitfalls that the organization witnessed in Iraq, and to conceal the efforts from intelligence agencies. These undeclared efforts worked to also facilitate cooperation with other armed factions in accordance with the *Al-Ansar* (the supporters) approach.[103] Al-Zawahiri elaborates on this 'covert' approach and on Al-Qaeda's strategy, which earlier

---

[102] The Gulf States, led by Saudi Arabia, initially dealt with the Syrian crisis as a Jihad against the occupation, which must be supported to confront and halt Iranian influence in the region, and worked to reinforce the sectarian identity-conflict on both a political and religious level. According to Brian Fishman, "The fight in Syria has narrowed the rhetorical gap between jihadists and Arab regimes that want to see al-Assad deposed, especially in Saudi Arabia... On February 25, 2012, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal called the al-Assad regime an "occupying force." The argument was widely reported in Arab media, welcomed heartily by the FSA, and subsequently referenced in jihadist geopolitical analysis. Two weeks later, the Saudi Mufti `Abd al-`Aziz al-Shaykh said that "it is the duty of every Muslim to assist the Syrian people, according to his abilities…Anyone who can do so must wage jihad against [the Alawites] with his soul [or] with money, and those who cannot, must at least support [the Syrians] with words…"
See Brian Fishman, "*The Evidence of Jihadist Activity in Syria*," Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, May 22, 2012, available on the following link: https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-evidence-of-jihadist-activity-in-syria

[103] Al-Qaeda's strategy with the Arab revolutions shifted to accommodate more local support, and worked to achieve their objectives through local *Ansar* (Supporters) proxy groups. This phenomenon was first witnessed in Yemen, and later duplicated in a number of Arab countries, including Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, and in Egypt. It focuses on fighting the local "near enemy," as will be described in the upcoming pages. [Translator's note]

weaved networks through understandings about Jihadist activity in Syria between the central Al-Qaeda organization and ISI. He states: "The directives from the Central Command [of Al-Qaeda] was that we must not announce any public presence for Al-Qaeda in the Levant. This was agreed upon even with the brothers in Iraq."[104]

The genesis of Al-Nusra Front was indeed ambiguous in terms of both identity and ideology. It maintained two different frames of reference and approaches, one affiliated with the political approach of the central Al-Qaeda organization and its ideological adaptations following the Arab Spring revolutions, which rely on the approach of *Al-Ansar* (local supporters) wars, and the other is the Iraqi branch's "identity-driven" approach, which enjoys relative autonomy and is focused on the sectarian nature of its conflicts.

The ambiguity and confusion regarding the new group's identity appeared since the official announcement of establishing *Jabhat al-Nusra li Ahl al-Sham* (The Front for Supporting the People of the Levant/Syria) in Syria led by Abu Muhammad al-Jolani.[105] The announcement came through a video recording entitled "*Sham al-Jihad*" (The Levant of Jihad) in January 2012 (despite the organization's presence and activities as early as July 2011, albeit under no

---

[104] Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Al-Waqi' bayna al-Alam wa al-Amal*" (Lit, Reality between Pain and Hope), a transcribed audio interview conducted by Mu'asasat al-Sahaab, in May 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=4630

[105] Abu Muhammad Al-Jolani's true identity remains unconfirmed. Iraqi intelligence sources believe his name is Adnan al-Hajj Ali, but Syrian intelligence sources say he is Osama al-Hadawi, from the town of Shahail, near Dair al-Zor. See Appendix II, Brief Profiles of Al-Nusra Front Leading Figures available at the conclusion of this book. [Translator's note]

particular name). The *Al-Manara al-Baydhaa'* (The White Minaret), which became the Al-Nusra Front's media arm, introduced Al-Jolani as the "General Official" of the Front, with the nom de guerre "*Al-Fatih* Abu Muhammad Al-Jolani" (The Conqueror), a move that indicated similarity to the Iraqi branch, which uses aliases rather than real names, as opposed to the central Al-Qaeda organization and its closer branches whose members declare and use their real names. The confusion is also evident in the fact that Al-Jolani was introduced as an "official" rather than an "emir." The publishing of the video recording on the Jihadist website of "*Shabakat al-Shumoukh al-Jihadiya*," before it spread to other websites, is indicative of Al-Jolani's affiliation with, and nomination by, both Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq.

Al-Nusra Front, according to Al-Jolani's recorded announcement, emerged in "an effort to restore God's sovereignty on Earth," which is a rhetorical theme that both Al-Qaeda and the Iraqi branch have in common. Also, "Palestine" and its cause were present through a picture of Al-Aqsa Mosque used as a background in the video recording. However, the ambiguity and confusion became manifest in the identification of the prime enemies. The new Front "refuses to resort to the help of the Western enemy to rid of the Baathist enemy, for that would be an aberrant and outlandish call, a grave crime, and a great calamity that God would not forgive and history would not be merciful on its perpetrators until the end of time." The announcement was clear that it also rejects resorting to, or relying on any partnered powers, such as Turkey or the Arab League, which are considered collaborators and allies of the United States and the West. Hence, according to Al-Jolani, "There is no wisdom in change if the change is going to be from one

injustice to another and from one destruction to the next, for this is the essence of corruption in all its forms."[106]

The terminology of the sectarian and identity-driven discourse of the Iraqi branch's approach were clearly present in Al-Nusra's announcement, particularly in anti-Iranian rhetoric and declared resistance against the *Safawiya* "Safavids," a term favored by ISI in describing the Shiite scheme in the region and its opposition to Sunni identity. Al-Jolani effectively links the relationship between Iran and Syria on a religious-sectarian basis, related directly to the notion of 'identity.' He states: "For years, Iran has relentlessly pursued with this [Syrian] regime to plant the roots of *Safawiya* in this blessed land in order restore the Persian Empire."[107]

The relationship between Al-Nusra Front and the central Al-Qaeda organization were clear, despite efforts to camouflage and conceal the affiliation. A month after announcing the establishment of Al-Nusra, Al-Qaeda's leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri appeared in a video recording entitled "*Ila al-Amaam ya Usoud al-Sham*," (March Forward Oh Lions of the Levant (Syria), published by Al-Sahaab Productions on February 12th, 2012, practically reiterating the contents of Al-Jolani' speech, and nearly uses the same words and terminology. In it, Al-Zawahiri says: "Oh our people in Syria: do not depend on the West, America, or the Arab governments or Turkey, for you know well what they are plotting for you. Our people in Syria: do not depend on the Arab League and its corrupt dependent governments, for 'he

---

[106] See: Abu Muhammad Al-Jolani's Announcement of the Establishment of Al-Nusra Front, by Al-Manara al-Baydaa for Media Production, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fuh1cI9vlR0

[107] Ibid.

who does not possess the thing cannot give it to others.' Do not depend on the West and Turkey who have dealt with, came to agreements with, and partnered with this [Syrian] regime for decades, but to only abandon it when they saw it reeling. Depend solely on God, then on your sacrifices, steadfastness, and perseverance."[108]

Despite the fact that Al-Zawahiri integrated in his speech between the political and the 'identity' dimensions in describing the Syrian regime, he nonetheless remained faithful to Al-Qaeda's political approach in confronting the United States, its allies, and Israel. He also avoided escalating the rhetoric to found the entire conflict upon sectarian-identity basis, as is the case with the discourse of the Iraqi organization.

Al-Jolani's rhetoric was similar in nature, for despite speaking of the 'Safavid' Persian-Iranian scheme, he nonetheless remained within the sphere of discourse of the central Al-Qaeda leadership in describing the nature of the Syrian conflict.[109] However, it becomes clear that Al-Jolani and Al-Nusra Front's hesitancy and duality – between the discourse of the central Al-Qaeda organization and that of the Islamic State of Iraq – constitute the crux of the foundational problem and ambiguity that troubled the Syrian organization on the ideological, administrative, and strategic levels from the onset.

---

[108] Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Ila al-Amaam ya Usoud al-Sham*," (Lit., "March Forward Oh Lions of the Levant (Syria)"), a video recording by Mu'asasat al-Sahaab, dated February 12, 2012, available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=2429

[109] See Al-Jolani's Announcement of the Establishment of Al-Nusra Front, Op. cit.

3. The Essence of the Dispute with the Iraqi Organization

Perhaps the initial naming of Al-Nusra Front which appeared in the official announcement itself reflects the ambiguity in the identity and affiliation of the Syrian organization, and its meandering between Al-Qaeda's center and its Iraqi branch. It chose the name "*Jabhat al-Nusra li Ahl al-Sham: Min Mujahidii al-Sham ila Sahaat al-Jihad*" (The Front for the Support of the People of Syria/Levant: From the Mujahideen of the Levant to the Battlefields of Jihad), and maintained this long title in its successive statements. It seems that, initially, the organization wanted to attract jihadists particularly from the Levant area, which became evident in the Front's recruitment of volunteers from the countries of the Levant, which include Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine.

The Levantine (Syrian, Jordanian, Lebanese, and Palestinian) elements constituted the main membership and ranks during the nascent stages (yet with clear dominance of the Syrian element), especially among those who had previous Jihadist experience in Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Iraq, among other Jihadist fronts. However, the Al-Nusra began to expand its circle of recruitment, especially with the influx of Arab and foreign fighters, and the organization's rise amid an escalation of confrontation with the Syrian regime. The official announcement of the establishment of Al-Nusra Front included images of fighters in the battlefields in a number of Syrian regions, including Damascus, Aleppo, al-Mayadin, Idlib, Al-Bokamal, Dar'aa, and Dair al-Zor; reflecting that the organization has been operational since July 2011.

It is not difficult to track the ambiguous beginnings of Al-Nusra Front. The ambiguity was evident from the start; Al-Jolani presented Iraq's Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi with an action plan consisting of 40 pages to begin Jihadi militant operations in Syria. It is noted that Al-Jolani later referenced this same action plan in his audio recorded speech, in which he categorically rejected Al-Baghdadi's declaration of merging Al-Nusra to the Islamic State. Al-Baghdadi had approved the basic premises of Al-Jolani's action plan, upon which the Front's Shura Council was established, including in its membership both Al-Jolani and Al-Baghdadi.

During the first period of Al-Nusra's operation, Al-Jolani attempted to incorporate and combine the two different approaches; Al-Qaeda's political approach and the Iraqi branch's identity-sectarian driven approach. However, with time, Al-Jolani's pragmatic inclination began to lean closer to Al-Qaeda and its leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and gradually became distant from ISI's approach. The naming of the organization – in itself – bears proximity to Al-Qaeda's new vision, developed in light of the Arab revolutions. The central Al-Qaeda organization began to adopt a strategy that is adaptive to the new climate brought about by the Arab revolutions, thus heralding the adoption of a new approach to dealing with the substantial ongoing transformations in the Arab world.[110] This new strategy was embodied by the phenomenon of *Ansar al-Shari'ah*, whereby the concept of *Ansar* (supporters) depended on attracting local populations to the ideology of Al-Qaeda by "transforming the demands for instituting Shari'ah law from elitist activism to popular

---

[110] See: Mohammad Abu Rumman, "*Qiraa'a fi Ab'aad al-Khilaf bayna al-Zawahiri wa al-Baghdadi*," (Lit., A Reading of the Dimensions of Conflict between Al-Zawahiri and Al-Baghdadi), Al-Jazeera Net, May 22, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.aljazeera.net/home/print/6c87b8ad-70ec-47d5-b7c4-3aa56fb899e2/3bb731af-a559-441d-8d56-c76d09bed3a4

activism," effectively blending and integrating the civil with the military dimension, and the local with the global level.[111]

While the Iraqi branch was not interested in Al-Qaeda's new approach, coupled with their old dispute, Al-Nusra Front, on the other hand, appeared to waver, especially in the beginning, between Al-Jolani's affiliation with the Iraqi branch (of which he was a member, and fought alongside with for years), and Al-Qaeda's new approach, which echoes more closely the developments in the Jihadist scene in Syria and the orientation of the majority of its Jihadi Salafist factions.[112]

---

[111] This phenomenon was first witnessed in Yemen, through the Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula branch. The experience was soon duplicated, and spread to Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Libya, and Mauritania, and also expanded into Mali (with the group "*Ansar al-Din*" (the Supporters of the Religion), and into Nigeria (with the group "*Ansar al-Muslimeen fi Bilad al-Sudan*" (The Supporters of Muslims in the Lands of the Sudan). The phenomenon reflects a new dynamism in the Jihadi Salafist sphere and its various subsidiaries. It reformulates the strategies of change to their initial experience in the era of the 1980s and the mechanisms of dealing with local regimes, labelled as "the near enemy," before the emergence and crystallization of the "Global Front to Fight the Crusaders and the Jews" in 1998, in accordance with the theory of prioritizing confronting the "distant enemy." Between the two eras, and after that, the Jihadist debate regarding the priority of *Da'wa* (The propagation and call to Islam) vs. Fighting, or the combination of both, never dissipated. The new development, however, eliminates the gaps and the historical disputes. For now, Al-Qaeda, as a central elitist organization, armed with a globalized agenda, is prone to dissolve, and be replaced by local populist networks under the title of "Ansar al-Shari'ah" to pave the way for building a united regional system that would rise up to local governance, and confront Western hegemony. This new regional system would combine the military and the civil dimensions. Hence, Al-Qaeda's approach in the post-Arab revolutions era is based on a strategy of "combining dimensions," that is: the elitist with the populist, the civil with the military, and the local with the global.

See: Hassan Abu Hanieh, *"Thahirat Ansar al-Shari'ah,"* (Lit., The Phenomenon of Ansar al-Shariah), Al-Islamion website, March 2nd, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://islamion.com/kotap/13407/sec.php?sec=9

[112] For more details on the early beginnings of Al-Nusra Front, key aspects of the group, prominent figures, and the efforts of Al-Jolani, see the narrative of Abu Mariah al-Qahtani, who became the first religious official (cleric) of Al-Nusra Front, and the military commander of the Eastern region. It is noteworthy in his

Al-Nusra's strategy to integrate into the local society bore fruit, and the organization began to achieve significant successes and attract local and foreign fighters. It enjoyed a wide range of support from the global Jihadist movement,[113] and up until December 2012, was able to carry out significant militant operations, declaring its responsibility for over 500 attacks, including a series of suicide missions.[114]

In a short period of time, Al-Nusra Front gained widespread reputation and commendation from the most prominent Jihadi Salafist exponents in the world, who called on supporters on popular levels to help fund and/or join the organization. Indeed, large numbers of foreign fighters answered the call, and according to information published on Al-Qaeda's forums online, from among the 46 individuals to whom certificates (notifications) of "martyrdom" were issued, 20 had fought alongside Al-Nusra Front. As of October 1st, 2012, almost all of the issued notifications of martyrdom (which mention affiliation), noted that the 'martyred' fighter belonged to Al-Nusra Front.

---

narrative the neglect of the role of the Iraqi branch in the conditions of the Front's genesis and initial formation. See: Abu Mariah al-Qahtani, "*Hallaa Taraktum lana Umara'ana*," (Lit., Would you Leave for Us our Emirs), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://justpaste.it/fj1b

[113] The Al-Qaeda command, and all its regional branches, initially supported Al-Nusra Front, and the Front also enjoyed support and reinforcement from militant Jihadists around the world. This support was mainly before the dispute erupted between the Front and the Iraqi branch. Among the prominent Jihadists that supported Al-Nusra: Sheikh Hamid al-'Ali (Kuwaiti), Abu Qutada al-Filastini, Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi, Sulaiman al-'Alwan, Abu al-Munthir al-Shinqiti, Abu Humam al-Athari, and Abu Muhammad Al-Tahawi, among others.

[114] For more details on the militant operations adopted by Al-Nusra Front, since issuing Statement No. 1 on March 20, 2012 and until Statement No. 199 on January 12, 2013, See: "*Al-Kitab al-Jaami' li Jamee' Bayanat Jabhat al-Nusra li Ahl al-Sham: Min al-Bayan Raqam 1 ila al-Bayan Raqam 199*," (Lit., The Collective Book of all the Statements of Al-Nusra Front in Support of the People of Syria: From Statement No. 1 to Statement No. 199), available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://archive.org/details/all-jn-press

The United States did not tolerate for long Al-Nusra Front's attempt to conceal its identity and affiliation. On December 11th, 2012, the U.S. put the Al-Nusra Front on its list of Terrorist organization, and considered it an extension of the Iraqi Al-Qaeda branch, known as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). According to Aaron Zelin, the Obama administration attempted to stifle the rise of Al-Nusra Front while it was in its nascent stages by classifying it as a terrorist organization, before it can launch an attack against American interests or against the American homeland.[115]

However, and in a short period of time on the battlefield, Al-Nusra Front was received with great interest in Syrian local circles, because of the experience and toughness of its fighters in combating regime forces, the quality of its operations, its cooperation and coordination with all armed factions, its disciplined and positive behavior in its dealings with the local society, its numerous relief services, and its establishment of Shari'ah courts to arbitrate in day-to-day disputes and local affairs. This positive local reception was evident in the wave of anger and denouncement, witnessed across the Syrian revolutionary and oppositional civil, military, political, and popular spectrum, of the American decision to classify Al-Nusra as a 'terrorist' organization. Indeed, even the President of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, Mu'ath al-Khatib and the Muslim Brotherhood called on the United States to reconsider its decision.[116] The anger and rejection of

---

[115] Aaron Y. Zelin, "*The Rise of Al Qaeda in Syria*," Foreign Policy, The Washington Institute, December 6, 2012, available on the following link: http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-rise-of-al-qaeda-in-syria

[116] See, "*Mu'aradhat Suriya Tantaqid Wasm al-Nusra bi al-Irhaab,*" (Lit., The Syrian Opposition Criticizes Stigmatizing "Al-Nusra" as Terrorism), Al-Jazeera Net, December 13, 2012, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/2012/12/13/%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B6%D8%A9-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7-

the decision to list Al-Nusra as a terrorist organization was also evident in mass demonstrations held in support of Al-Nusra Front on December 14th, 2012, under the banner of "No to American Intervention: We Are All Al-Nusra Front."[117]

These field successes pushed Al-Nusra Front further towards pragmatism, closer to the new approach of the central Al-Qaeda organization, and further away from the approach of the Iraqi branch. According to Charles Lister, "since mid-to-late 2012, the group has demonstrated a surprising level of pragmatism in terms of moderating its behavior and limiting its immediate ideological objectives. In keeping with its allegiance to al-Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra aims, in the long term, to establish an Islamic state in Syria as a stepping stone to liberating Jerusalem and establishing an Islamic Caliphate. In the short term, however, the group is operating at a very local level while paying particular attention to maintaining healthy relations with civilians and moderate rebels. It has also banned the imposition of *hudud* punishments during 'war'…"[118]

%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%AF-%D9%88%D8%B5%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%A8

[117] For more details, see: *"Al-Malaf al-Jaami' li Jum'at Kuluna Jabhat al-Nusra,"* (Lit., The Collective File of the Friday of "We Are All Al-Nura Front"), December 21, 2012, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://shame210.wordpress.com/2012/12/21/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%84%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9-%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D9%83%D9%84%D9%86%D8%A7-%D8%AC%D8%A8%D9%87%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%B1%D8%A9%E2%96%8C/

[118] Charles Lister, "*Dynamic Stalemate: Surveying Syria's Military Landscape*," Brookings Doha Center Publications, No. 32, Policy Briefing, May 19, 2014, available on the following link: http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/05/19-syria-military-landscape-lister

4. The Front's Intellectual Frame of Reference: The Syrian Jihadi Salafist Track

The differences between Al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State of Iraq widened considerably because of the ambiguity and confusion in the Syrian branch's intellectual and practical strategic frames of reference. The Iraqi branch's frame of reference relied upon Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir, in doctrinal matters, and upon the thought and strategy of Abu Bakr al-Naji, in practical matters. Al-Jolani, on the other hand, depended on the reference of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, both theoretically and practically, as did the Al-Nusra's former religious official Abu Mariah al-Qahtani. Al-Jolani and his organization are also partial to the thought of Attiyatullah Al-Libi, whose action plan became one of the key factors behind the rift and differences between the Iraqi branch and Al-Nusra. Another point of contention, which further contributed to the ambiguity and confusion in the relationship between the two sides, is the issue of the "centralization"[119] of the organization, a notion defended by Abu Bakr al-Naji in his book "*Idarat al-Tawahhush*" (Management of Savagery), [120]versus the "decentralization" approach adopted by Abu

---

[119] For more details on Jihadist preference of centralism and decentralism, See: Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Kyle Dabruzzi, "*Is Al-Qaeda's Central Leadership Still Relevant?*," The Middle East Quarterly, Spring 2008, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 27-36. Available on the following link: http://www.meforum.org/1875/is-al-qaedas-central-leadership-still-relevant

[120] Abu Bakr Naji, *"Idarat al-Tawahhush,"* (Lit., "Management of Savagery"), undated, pg. 26, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.tawhed.ws/a?a=chr3ofzr

An English translation of the book is available under the title "*The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*," translated into English by William McCants, The John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University, May 23, 2006, available on the following

Mus'ab al-Suri in his book "*Da'wat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya al-'Aalamiya*," (The Call to Global Islamic Resistance).[121]

The similarities and occasional overlap between the ideas of Abu Muhammad al-Jolani and the thought espoused by Abu Mus'ab al-Suri led some researchers and writers to assume that they are the same person,[122] which is not true.

---

link: https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/abu-bakr-naji-the-management-of-savagery-the-most-critical-stage-through-which-the-umma-will-pass.pdf

[121] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri (Omar Abd al-Hakim), "*Da'wat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya al-'Aalamiya*," (Lit., The Call to Global Islamic Resistance), Dhul Qi'dah 1425 Hijri Edition, December 2004, pg. 896, Available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://archive.org/details/Dawaaah

A rough and incomplete English translation of the book, entitled "*The Global Islamic Resistance Call*," is available on the following link:

https://archive.org/stream/TheGlobalIslamicResistanceCall/The_Global_Islamic_Resistance_Call__Chapter_8_sections_5_to_7_LIST_OF_TARGETS#page/n0/mode/1up

[122] Hazem al-Alim adopted this opinion, followed by Yassin Suwaiha and others. It was rumored that the Syrian Authorities released him after the revolution, which is not true. Al-Amin says: "The unpublished document, upon which Al-Qaeda in Iraq commissioned Abu Muhammad al-Jolani to establish Al-Nusra Front, and then backed away when it sensed his pursuit for the independence and autonomy of his Syrian organization… It has been claimed that Al-Jolani wrote this document in early 2012, around the time that news were leaked that Abu Mus'ab al-Suri was released from Syrian regime's prisons. The situation is that there is an unavoidable similarity between the language of the document and the language of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's famous book "*Al-Mas'ala al-Suriyyah*" (The Syrian Question). It is a similarity in language, strength of expression, and encyclopedic knowledge in wars, conflicts, and the differences between them. Furthermore, there are particular linguistic errors that both claimed authors committed, for example, they both use the particle "*Al al-Ta'rif*" (Definitive article *Al* [the]) for the possessed case (*Mudaf*) instead of the possessor (*mudaf ilayh*), such as writing "*Min al-Ghayr Mu'akad*" (It is not certain) rather than "*min ghayr al-Mu'akad*" (with definitive article attached to the word "certain" rather than "not"). The document declaring the establishment of Al-Nusra Front – over which *Da'esh* (ISIS) turned against the Front – is considered the only political and military document that emerged from the conflict in Syria until the regime succeeded in militarizing the revolution. It is useful and amusing

Rather, Al-Jolani adopts, to a large extent, the thought of Al-Suri, and considers him the main reference of authority for Al-Nusra Front on the practical level. There are several reasons for this; most importantly being that Al-Jolani is convinced of the correctness of Al-Suri's approach and its suitability and relevance to the Syrian scenario, also because Al-Suri's thought fits Al-Jolani's pragmatic tendencies and his policies of adaptation with the local national affair. Furthermore, the two figures share the Syrian identity in common; at a time in which Al-Nusra Front began moving towards the "Syrianization" of the organization, in the first degree, and "Levantization," in the second degree. The global and foreign dimension, on the other hand, was beginning to weaken and diminish.

It is noteworthy to highlight Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's ideological and practical thought and vision considering the level of impact he had on Al-Jolani and Al-Nusra Front. Al-Suri is considered one of the renowned exponents and theorists of global Jihadi Salafism. He developed his personal ideology and vision based on the heritage of the Muslim Brotherhood-oriented *Harakiya* (Movement/ Organizational) Salafism, represented by figures like Sayyid Qutb, Abdullah Azzam, and Marwan Hadid. His thought is also influenced by the concept of "The War of the Flea,"[123] founded on Marxist

---

to risk claiming that the author of this document is none other than Abu Mus'ab al-Suri [the authorship of the document is attributed to Abu Muhammad al-Jolani]."

See: Hazem al-Amin, "*Wathiqa 'an "al-Harb al-Marghouba" bayna "Da'esh" wa al-Nitham*," (Lit., A Document about the "Desired War" between "ISIS" and the Regime), Al-Hayat Newspaper, November 9, 2013.

[123] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri explained one of the main books that discussed "*Harb al-Mustad'afin*" (Lit., The War of the Flea), and he has audio recordings commenting on the book. Al-Suri essentially relies on this book in the thoughts he espouses in his own book, "The Call to Global Islamic Resistance," op. cit.,

revolutionary heritage related to guerilla warfare and *Ansar* (supporter) wars, and the theories of Mao Tse-tung and Che Guevara.

Al-Suri's writings are considered the main authoritative reference for Al-Jolani and Al-Nusra Front, particularly his following books: "*Mulahathaat Hawla al-Tajruba al-Jihadiya fi Suriya*" (Notes on the Jihadi Experience in Syria), "*Ahl al-Sham fi Muwajahat al-Nusayriya wa al-Salibiya wa al-Yahoud*" (The People of Syria [Levant] in Confrontation with the Alawites, Crusaders, and the Jews), and his most important book "*Da'wat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya al-'Aalamiya*," (The Call to Global Islamic Resistance), which builds the foundations for "*Saraya al-Muqawama al-Islamiya*" (The Islamic Resistance Brigades) and the concept of "lone wolves" (individual Jihad). The latter book also calls for transforming the mission of Jihad into a collective *Ummah* project, by establishing cells and networks united in thought, doctrine, and objective without being part of an organization that depends on traditional organizational structures.

The concept of "*Saraya*" (individual brigades), according to Al-Suri, introduces a system of action and work more than being an organization in the tradition sense, and forms a network through which the overall results of Jihadi efforts are amalgamated. These "*Saraya*" must be flexible and willing to cooperate with others without imposing allegiance or affiliation. They work to recruit local activists, and maintain an objective of "warding off aggressors" through militant resistance tactics, without preoccupation or a rush to establish an Islamic state or announce the "Caliphate."

See: Robert Taber, "*The War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare*," Brassey's, Inc., Virginia, 1st ed., 2002, originally published by L. Stuart, New York, in 1965.

Al-Suri's theory of resistance is based on a number of mechanisms aimed to reach the following objectives; in his own words: "The strategic objective of resistance is to ward off attack campaigns and to unite the *Ummah* around this objective under the banner of Jihad and the method of Islam." [124] Article (1) of his strategy states that, "The Call to Global Islamic Resistance is not a limited or defined party, organization, or group. It is an open invitation, aimed to ward off belligerent imperialist, Crusader, Zionist assailant powers that are attacking Islam and Muslims. Any organization, group, or individual convinced of its method, objectives, and approach may adopt it, directly or indirectly, for it is the battle of the Muslim *Ummah* and not the conflict of the Jihadist class alone."[125]

In this context, Al-Suri calls for disregarding and avoiding preoccupation with tackling manifestations of corruption, immorality, disobedience, and innovations in society. Instead, he calls attention to three main issues:

- The sanctity of Muslim blood, even if the Muslim is a disobedient sinner, and regardless of the crime, unless it is unbelief (Kufr).

- The implementation of Hudud (punishments) and Shari'ah legal provisions against a Muslim perpetrator of a violation is the jurisdiction of a qualified Shari'ah Imam, or judge. This does not exist as of yet, and hence, the objective of the resistance after warding off aggressors is to establish this Shari'ah system.

---

[124] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, "*Da'wat al-Muqawama …,*" (Lit., The Call to Global Islamic Resistance), op. cit., pg. 982.
[125] Ibid., pg. 1022.

- The main objective now, and the prime religious obligation, is to ward off infidel assailants away from Muslim lands. 126

Furthermore, Article 20 states that, "Every Muslim who says (There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of God), regardless of the denomination or sect, is part of the general circle of Islam, which jurists call "*Ahl al-Qibla*" (The People of the Direction [towards Mecca]). The doctrinal and sectarian differences are to be referred to religious scholars and jurists for determination, and the areas of discussion in these issues are to be dialogue in what is truthful and right, elucidating with wisdom and good counsel, prohibiting strife and infighting among Muslims, calls on all Muslims of the People of the *Qibla*, in all their sects and schools of thought, collectively and individually, to cooperate in warding off aggressors and to wage Jihad against the infidel enemy that is attacking Muslim lands, and calls on everyone to renounce the causes of internal strife."[127]

The level of influence that Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's theses have on Al-Jolani is evident in the latter's resemblance in discourse and rhetoric. Al-Jolani often uses the same phrases, terminology, and expressions of Al-Suri, such as his statement: "Every individual in the Front must not limit his/her loyalty to members of the group alone, for we are not a political party. Instead, the Front is concerned with the affairs of Muslims in general, and with reclaiming the rights of oppressed peoples. Therefore, maintaining good relations with other groups, treating them well, and disregarding their

---

[126] Ibid., pp. 1030-1031.
[127] Ibid., pg. 1029.

mistakes are the foundation, unless they exchange in the contrary."[128]

The same thing appears in Al-Jolani's emphasis on the principles of the "War of the Flea" and the *Ansar* wars; he states: "Day after day, you are getting closer to people. You have entered their hearts and gained their trust. This is a result of what they saw of the sincerity of your call, the greatness of your sacrifice, the warmth of dealing with you, your trustworthiness, and good manners. This, in turn, requires from you even more kindness and care for them, as much as you possess of severity against the enemies of God; you must counter that with the equivalent in kindness and compassion towards Muslims… Beware; oh beware of being stern against them. Let your call towards them be based upon the foundations and priorities of *Da'wa*, without rigidity and fixation on secondary matters."[129]

Furthermore, we find Al-Jolani affirming the principles of the "Call for Resistance," espoused by Abu Mus'ab al-Suri. In another speech, Al-Jolani states: "We call on all combat factions on the ground, that seek to bring about the justice of Islam and support *Shari'ah* in the Levant, to promise and encourage each other to maintain the path of Jihad in the Levant from deviating away from the serious purposes of Islam, and to muster all our relentless efforts to reach the ultimate superior goal of establishing a rightly-guided Islamic governance on this blessed land. We should also pledge and encourage each other to rid our land from any Western or

---

[128] Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, *"Ahlu al-Sham Fadaynakum bi Arwahina,"* (Lit., People of Sham [Syria], We Sacrifice Our Souls for You), a transcribed audio speech, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://alplatformmedia.com/vb/showthread.php?t=17501
[129] Ibid.

Eastern oppressive dominance, to establish justice between people, to support the oppressed from the oppressor, to reclaim the rights to their owners, and to seek to let security prevail among the people of our *Ummah*. None of us ought to seek to monopolize power on the grounds that they provided and sacrificed; for Syria, and all of the Levant, has tasted from the scourge of war. We take into consideration that Syria is full of deliberately repressed cadres and energies (educational, industrial, and technical), from whom a comprehensive integrated team ought to be formed in an effort to advance and elevate the *Ummah.*"[130]

The previous texts carry great importance not only in that they reveal the profound influence of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's thought on Al-Jolani and his organization, but also because they explain, to a great extent, the difference between Al-Jolani and Al-Nusra Front's vision from that of ISI. Al-Jolani and Al-Suri stress the importance of cooperation and coordination with other factions, and warn against monopolizing power or governance (as opposed to the principles of "Management of Savagery," which constitute the frame of reference of the Iraqi branch). They also stress the need to get closer to the local community and avoid colliding with it, compared to the "intellectual reference" of the influence of Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir on the Iraqi branch, which often clashed with its surrounding environment. These principles expose the deep and significant variance between the frames of reference of each organization; which ultimately play a role in the ensuing rift between the two.

---

[130] Abu Muhammad Al-Jolani, "*Wa Qabilu al-Ayyami Khairun min Madhiha,*" (Lit., And the Coming Days are Better than the Past Ones), a transcribed audio speech, available on the following link:
  https://www.alplatformmedia.com/vb/showthread.php?t=26070

In tracking the strategic thread that connects Al-Jolani with Abu Mus'ab al-Suri; we find that the intellectual authoritative reference of Al-Nusra Front is based mainly on the thought of the *Harakiya* trend of Salafism, which emerged from the heart of the Muslim Brotherhood. This trend, in origin, follows the Jihadist school of thought, delineated by Sayyid Qutb, and adopted by Ayman al-Zawahiri, head of the Egyptian Jihad group and later Al-Qaeda. It was also adopted by Marwan Hadid, founder of the *Al-Tali'a al-Muqatila* (The Fighting Vanguard) in Syria. The principles and pillars of this stream of thought were further developed by Abdullah Azzam, the spiritual leader of the 'Afghan Arabs' in Afghanistan, and Abu Mus'ab al-Suri while in diaspora. Dr. Sami al-'Uraydi, the current religious authority in Al-Nusra Front, helps in highlighting this important thread in expounding the approach of his group. He says: "We recommend reading Sayyid Qutb's "*Ma'alim fi al-Tariq*" (commonly known as "Milestones"), and Shaikh Muhammad Qutb's book "*Laa Ilaha illa Allah Aqidatan wa Shari'atan wa Minhaju Hayat*" (There is no God but Allah as a Doctrine, Law, and a Way of Life)… and from our contemporary references, to read the literature of Shaikh Hmoud bin 'Uqalaa' al-Shu'aibi and Shaikh Abdullah Azzam, may Allah accept them."[131]

The authoritative reference of Al-Nusra Front ingrained its ideological choices with the roots of the Brotherhood-*Haraki* Salafist trend, which became evident with the personality of the former religious official of Al-Nusra, when it was first established, Abu Mariah al-Qahtani. Al-Qahtani was a member of the Iraqi branch, who left and joined Al-

---

[131] Sami al-'Uraydi, "*Manhajunaa wa 'Aqidatunaa*," (Lit., Our Method and Our Doctrine), an interview with Al-Manara al-Baydhaa' for Media Production, available [in Arabic] on the following link:

http://www.shabakataljahad.com/vb/showthread.php?p=87159

Nusra since it started. He entered into Syria early in June 2011, and worked individually until he met Al-Jolani. He soon became the General Religious Official of Al-Nusra, and the military commander of the eastern region.

In his Jihadist ideological composition, Al-Qahtani combines between diverse sources, most importantly from Abdullah Azzam and Abu Mus'ab al-Suri. However, most of his later jurisprudential choices relied upon the thought of Attiyatullah al-Libi. Al-Qahtani says: "I apologize to every Muslim we spoke about in the days when I held [Islamic State] thoughts. May Allah have mercy on the soul of Attiyatullah al-Libi, whose books and letters had a big role in my return to the truth."[132]

5. A Structural Crisis

The differences between Al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State of Iraq widened with time, especially because of the different authoritative reference of each. At the time that Al-Nusra Front was growing inclined towards political pragmatism, and adaptation with the local Syrian affairs, ISI was moving towards more ideological rigidity and fixation on the Sunni-identity complex. As efforts to contain the disputes failed, Abu Bakr al-Baghdad, Emir of ISI, announced on April 9th, 2014 merging Al-Nusra Front in Syria to his 'State,'

---

[132] Abu Mariah al-Qahtani, *"Taghridaat Jama'ahaa al-Thabaat"* (Lit., Tweets Brought Together by Perseverance), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=368821

essentially creating the "Islamic State of Iraq and Sham/Levant" (ISIS).[133]

The announcement publicly exposed the historical differences between the central Al-Qaeda organization and the Iraqi branch, which were contained under the leadership of Osama bin Laden. However, the dispute between the two organizations escalated with Al-Jolani, leader of Al-Nusra Front, giving a speech the next day (April 10th) effectively rejecting the merger, and declaring his affiliation with the central Al-Qaeda organization instead, culminating in his public oath of allegiance to Al-Zawahiri. The Syrian organization's name was changed to "*Jabhat al-Nusra – Tantheem Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Sham*" (Al-Nusra Front – The Organization of Al-Qaeda's Jihad in the Levant).[134]

The next chapter in this book will further discuss the spiraling path of differences between Al-Nusra Front and ISI, and the position and efforts of Ayman al-Zawahiri, which effectively led to a split followed by fierce fighting between the "brothers." Meanwhile, we highlight here that the attempts to bridge the gap and heal the rift backfired, in turn escalating the dispute and transforming it into a bloody confrontation that thrust Al-Nusra Front into a complex and compounded crisis.

In the days following the announcements, the winds went counter to the Islamic State's wishes of expansion in Iraq,

---

[133] See: Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, "*Wa Bashshir al-Mu'minin*," (Lit., And Bring Good Tidings to the Believers), an audio recording published by Al-Furqan for Media Production, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MuZrcxvL_w
[134] See: Abu Muhammad Al-Jolani, "*I'laan al-Bay'a li Tanthim al-Qa'ida wa Bay'at al-Thawahiri*," (Lit., The Announcement of the Pledge of Allegiance to Al-Qaeda Organization and the Allegiance to Al-Zawahiri), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_eB3AfI3hgA

taking control of the military operations in Syria, and its ability to achieve new combat victories against a number of other armed factions, including Al-Nusra Front.

The same winds carried with them the seeds of a greater crisis that afflicted Al-Nusra Front. This crisis became visible with the failure of Abu Mariah al-Qahtani's anti-ISI policies (which simultaneously sought to reconcile and maintain harmony with other Syrian revolutionary factions), and with the loss of the eastern region in battles with ISI, in addition to an internal fissure that occurred as large groups defected from Al-Nusra and joined the now so-called "Islamic State" (IS) after it announced the establishment of a Caliphate and the exposure of the crisis between the two organizations. Meanwhile, Al-Nusra Front worked to rebuild its organizational structure, reflected in dismissing Al-Qahtani from his position, and appointing Dr. Sami al-'Uraydi as the General Religious Official in his place.[135]

Al-Nusra Front's leadership attempted to escape the ideological and military crisis it faced and to solidify its internal front by searching for a more effective organizational mechanism. The leadership began contemplating establishing an "emirate," but it remained hesitant towards the move because of the internal divisions and rifts, the loss of a large number of its followers (who joined IS), and the decline of its influence and loss of control over several regions inside Syria, in addition to its ongoing "identity crisis."

---

[135] On the second day of Eid al-Fitr, on July 30, 2014, Al-Nusra Front presented Al-'Uraydi as the "General Religious Official/Cleric of Al-Nusra Front." Mu'asasat al-Basira, a media outlet of Al-Nusra Front, posted a video of an Eid Prayer and Sermon by Dr. Sami Al-'Uraydi. See: Eid Al-Fitr al-Mubarak Sermon 1435 by Dr. Sami Al-'Uraydi, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IChOHMGpOB0

Al-Nura had meant for Al-Jolani's announcement of establishing the "Islamic Emirate of al-Sham/Syria," on July 11th, 2014,[136] to appear as if it was "leaked," (since it was not published by the Al-Manarah al-Baydhaa', the official media outlet of Al-Nusra). The maneuver was, however – and in fact, deliberate in the context of emphasizing Al-Nusra's approach and commitment to *Shura* (consultation) instead of a monopoly on decision-making. The move, however, exposed the growing apprehension among Al-Nusra Front's leadership of fissures and rifts on the level of its local Syrian constituents, and of losing the support and backing of the global Jihadist movement.

Some facets of the crisis afflicting Al-Nusra Front were evident in that, at the time it worked to adapt with the local society it also avoided confrontation with other armed Islamist or nationalist factions, and sought to present an image that is categorically different than that of the Iraqi hardliner branch. Al-Nusra Front's tactics in attracting and recruiting local supporters, nonetheless, were exhausted. The prolonged conflict in Syria resulted in the Front's loss of large numbers of Jihadists coming from abroad, who diverted instead towards Al-Baghdadi's Islamic State.

The obsession with maintaining the support of the global Jihadist movement, and the struggle over representation of the Al-Qaeda organization, were evident in the "leaked" audio recording of Al-Jolani regarding establishing an "emirate" in Syria. The recording was clearly not spontaneous, but rather staged and prepared carefully, evident in Al-Jolani appearing in the midst of masses of his supporters, who repeatedly interrupted him with cheers, declaring: "We are all Al-

---

[136] See: The Commander of Al-Nusra Front, Al-Fatih Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, Bodes the Establishment of an Islamic Emirate in Syria, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASrci6pH00s

Qaeda.. We are all Osama.. We are all Al-Zawahiri.. We are all Al-Jolani." And; to crown the scene with the Front's legitimacy in representing global, and local, Jihadism and to assert the cohesion and unity in ideology, the voice of Sheikh Abu Firas al-Shami, a global jihadist and companion of the global Jihadist exponent Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, was heard addressing the crowds; saying: "Without further ado or introduction, the word now goes to our Shaikh and Emir *Al-Fatih* Abu Muhammad al-Jolani."[137]

According to reliable Al-Nusra Front sources, the speech announcing the Emirate, held in the countryside of Aleppo (during which *Suqour al-Ezz* (The Hawks of Glory) Brigade pledged allegiance to Al-Jolani), was attended by the renowned Saudi Arabian Jihadist Sheikh Abdullah al-Muhaisini and a number of local and global Jihadist figures.[138]

Despite the attempt to make the announcement appear spontaneous, Al-Jolani's speech was meticulously prepared, carefully determining the milestones of the upcoming phase. He began his speech by saying: "The time has come.. to establish an Islamic Emirate on the land of al-Sham (Syria/Levant), to apply God's *Hudud* (Shari'ah prescribed punishments), and to apply God's Shari'ah law in every sense of the word, without compromise, undermining, equivocation, or reservation out of politeness..; the law that will safeguard the rights and sanctities of Muslims."[139]

---

[137] Ibid.

[138] The authors obtained this privileged information from one of the leaders of Al-Nusra Front, who preferred not to be named in this study, via correspondences through social networking sites, July 15, 2014.

[139] The Commander of Al-Nusra Front, Al-Fatih Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, Bodes the Establishment of an Islamic Emirate in Syria, op. cit.

This announcement carried within its folds several significant indications that go beyond merely announcing the establishment of an "emirate." With Al-Baghdadi's establishment of his Caliphate in Baghdad, Al-Jolani's speech highlights the features of Al-Nusra Front's new strategy; asserts the legitimacy of the Front's mission; and embodies the organization's Al-Qaeda Jihadi Salafist identity without equivocation or reservations as was done in the past; and indeed does not appear to seek the approval of anyone, save the Jihadists.

It is clear that Al-Jolani's discourse and the path of Al-Nusra became fixated with the logic of confrontation with the "Islamic State" project, and appeared disoriented by Al-Baghdadi proclaiming himself the Caliph of Muslims. Indeed, Al-Jolani did not hesitate in expressing that: "This Caliph (Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi) is invalid, even if he announces the Caliphate a thousand times. No one should be deceived by this matter." Al-Jolani reached the point of charging accusations against its rival Iraqi organization; he states: "A Caliphate that is built upon the destruction of a Jihadi project, which the *Ummah* has been dreaming of for over 1400 years, a Caliphate that is based on those who aided the [Syrian] regime in fighting you, is a fallen Caliphate, even if they announce it a thousand times."[140]

According to the words of Al-Jolani, the emirate's strategies to spread its territorial control will enter into effect "within one week," for there will be "religious courts in the liberated areas.. there will be an army and an emirate, and the armies will be divided into brigades and units; there will be an army in Aleppo, and an army in Idlib.. Your brothers in Dar'aa will join you, and so will the situation be in the

---

[140] Ibid.

besieged Al-Ghouta." The ultimate objective consists of unifying the scattered emirates into one, culminating in forming a united army; "After that; there will be a massive army that will strike the Jews and defy everyone."[141]

The new strategy, or more precisely, the new shift in Al-Nusra's ideological perspective, came as a result of the Iraqi renegade branch's announced establishment of the "Caliphate" (as will be discussed later). Other factors that contributed to this rash announcement include: internal divisions, fragmentation, and fissures taking place within the ranks of Al-Nusra Front, the failure of lenient policies in dealing with the Islamic State organization, ineffectiveness of the policy of *Ansar* wars, decline in the effectiveness of adaptation with local society, weakness of coordination with other militant groups, and futility of the policies of uniting Jihadist movements and the impossibility of satisfying the regional and international community.

Perhaps these failures overshadow the magnitude of the structural crisis that afflicted Al-Nusra Front, considering the wavering of its political and intellectual identity between local and nationalist considerations that the Front has in common with other Syrian Islamist factions, on the one hand, and its official commitment to the ideological framework of Jihadi Salafism and the organizational framework of Al-Qaeda, on the other hand, coupled with what these commitments carry in terms of global and regional considerations that put Al-Nusra Front in confrontation with not only the Syrian regime, but also with the United States and the West, even if the organization did not adopt any attacks or operations against the interests of these nations.

---

[141] Ibid.

It is more likely that the harbingers of this shift in Al-Jolani's strategy stem from a newfound conviction that the strategy of "Syrianization" of Al-Nusra Front and its adaptation to the local society, by depending on the phenomenon of *Al-Ansar* (one of Al-Qaeda's approaches following the Arab Spring revolutions), had succeeded only in the initial stages, and have by now been exhausted. This is evident in Al-Nusra Front's suffering and decline in the face of the rise and expansion of the Islamic State.

Ultimately, the difference between the approach of Al-Jolani and that of Al-Baghdadi, and the nature of the dispute and debate between the two sides, reflect the wide gap between two conflicting approaching regarding the future of Jihadism. The discourse of Al-Jolani's team was dominated by "soft" advice-oriented rhetoric, in which it called for mending fences and prioritizing reason and rationality, and returning to the foundational bases of Jihadi Salafism and its most prominent representative, Al-Qaeda. On the other hand, the discourse of Al-Baghdadi's team was dominated by the rhetoric of hardline force, in which it called for partiality towards the 'State' and its 'Emir,' and undermined the efforts of the 'advice-oriented' discourse, dismissing it as based upon doctrinal errors and historical fallacies.

Al-Nusra Front's lack of ideological homogeneity; the shakiness of its organizational cohesion; and the level of confusion among its ranks became manifest the day after the audio recording of the announcement of an 'Emirate' came out. On July 12th, 2014, Al-Nusra Front issued a statement denying announcing the establishment of an 'Emirate,' but stressed that "Al-Nusra Front's project from the first day it was created is based upon reclaiming the sovereignty of God on Earth, and applying God's law [*Shari'ah*], and we seek to

establish an Islamic Emirate in accordance with the legitimate religious examples, and we have not announced its establishment yet. On the day that true Mujahideen and honest scholars agree with us on this matter, we will announce it, God willing."[142]

The confusion that came about as a result of the recording of the announcement of an emirate, followed by a statement of denial, exposed the fragility of the organization, and the lack of harmony and homogeneity needed to make critical decisions, a matter that will reappear in later occasions and subsequent statements.

6. Retreat and Decline: The Search for an Alternate Strategy

It became clear during the later months of 2014 that Al-Nusra Front began to suffer from the repercussions of its internal crisis and began to witness decline and retreat in the face of the Islamic State.

Al-Nusra's leadership recognized the seriousness of this crisis. Al-Jolani worked to weave new alliances to confront the dangers of Al-Baghdad's State. In response, three Jihadist organizations announced forming a joint operations command in Aleppo, under the name "The Joint Command for the People of the Levant," and included Al-Nusra Front, The

---

[142] An explanatory statement regarding what has been rumored regarding the announcement of Al-Nusra Front of establishing an Islamic Emirate, issued by Al-Manara al-Baydhaa' for Media Production, July 12, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://justpaste.it/g7bl

Islamic Front, and the Mujahideen Army. However, this effort did not succeed in thwarting the advance of the Islamic State, which began to widen its scope of control over the northeastern regions.

The operations of the Islamic State to control the eastern region, the stronghold of Al-Nusra Front in Dair al-Zor, passed through several stages beginning in February 2014. Al-Nusra's firmness at Dair al-Zor, under the command of the organization's Religious Official and commander of the eastern region Abu Mariah al-Qahtani and in the town of Shaheil (the headquarters of Al-Nusra), was not enough to repel IS attacks. By July 2014, IS strengthened its control of the eastern region amid the retreat of Al-Qahtani's troops towards Dar'aa in southern Syria (particularly after he accused Al-Nusra's leadership and other armed factions of negligence and complacency in the battlefield and failing to provide support).

The Front's loss of the northeastern regions revealed the weakness of the organization's command structure and its lack of ideological cohesion. The commander of the eastern region, Abu Mariah al-Qahtani, had been operating semi-autonomously, as were other commanders. His strategy in the eastern region depended on local clans and tribes, which had more effective and influential authority. In Dair al-Zor and Shaheil, the tribal authority was prevalent, and the coordination with other factions was stronger than in other regions, to the point that differences between various armed Islamist factions was nearly non-existent. Thus, Al-Nusra depended on joint courts it shared in common with other Islamist factions and legal entities there in administrative and judicial matters.

The loss of the northeastern regions also demonstrated that the heart of the organization's influence lies in the southern regions, where the Front was more independent and more coherent, and imposed its presence and established its own courts and judicial bodies independent of other factions. These independent courts enjoyed recognized jurisdiction, evident in its trial of a number of Free Syrian Army units, and in its arrest of the head of the Dar'aa Military Council, Colonel Ahmad Fahad al-Ni'ma, on May 3rd, 2014.

With its decline and retreat, and its cloistering itself in the southern regions, Al-Nusra Front appeared more assertive and stern in its dealings with other armed factions especially after its successive losses to the Islamic State, and the lessons learned from that. The Front arrested a number of FSA leaders, and arrested the commander of the *Al-Haramain* Legion Sharif al-Safouri in July 2014. It also stepped up its control by imposing a series of security barriers, increasing the size of its local services, and propagating and imposing its ideological perspectives through religious courses, seminars, and classes.

Dar'aa, in southern Syria, became Al-Nusra Front's new headquarters, after having been one of its main strongholds since the early days of the organization. The majority of the Front's commanders and troops resorted to Dar'aa after successive losses in northern and eastern regions. The organization appeared solid and cohesive in its new headquarters, mainly because of the nature of its constituency there, on both the structural-organizational level and the ideological-doctrinal level. Most of its members there are Syrians who belong to the surrounding local society and are in harmony with the area's social makeup. A large number of its members there are also Jordanian and Palestinians, who

enjoy strong presence and influence, and are close to the social makeup of the area. The Front's senior leadership in Dar'aa are of this component (Levantine), such as Abu Julaibib, Eyad al-Tobasi (Commander/Emir of Al-Nusra in Dar'aa), Dr. Sami al-'Uraydi (the General Religious Official of Al-Nusra in Dar'aa), and Abu Anas al-Sahaaba (Mustafa Abd al-Latif, one of the senior Emirs in the organization).

Conclusion

Despite the rapid and remarkable ascent of Al-Nusra Front in the Syrian scene, the organization nonetheless carried in its institutional roots the paradox of an ambiguous identity (an identity crisis, so-to-speak), manifested in a hesitant duality.

The first ambiguity is between the local and the global identity; first, Al-Nusra avoided declaring its affiliation with Al-Qaeda, and operated as a local Syrian faction cooperating with other Islamist factions. It did not attempt to impose its dominance or control upon other groups. However, it fell into the problematic complexity of Al-Qaeda's global conflicts, and the international position that labeled it as a terrorist organization. Indeed, the United States was quick to declare Al-Nusra Front a terrorist organization towards the end of 2012, which created a number of problems for the group. And, despite the backing of various Syrian revolutionary factions and support for Al-Nusra against the American decision, this support was nonetheless shaken with Al-Jolani's declaration of affiliation with Al-Qaeda and his allegiance to Ayman al-Zawahiri. This public declaration of affiliation put the other factions in an awkward position, especially the ones that were receiving regional and international funding and support, and did not wish to lose its Western allies over its relations with Al-Nusra Front.

Despite that, Al-Nusra remained determined to deal carefully with these delicate balances, and maintained good relations with other Islamist factions, and waged alongside them confrontations with the Islamic State. Al-Nusra continued on its strategic position of avoiding colliding with various local and Islamist factions. However, the inclusion of Al-Nusra Front as a target in the U.S. and Western airstrikes led to escalating the problematic relationship between the 'local' and the 'global' dimensions of its ideological and political identity, which factored in later as Al-Nusra entered into armed confrontation with a number of local factions.

The second ambiguity, which had the most effect on the Front, consists of the organization's position in the crisis between the central Al-Qaeda organization and the Iraqi-based Islamic State. Despite the fact that Al-Nusra Front was formed under the supervision of the Iraqi branch, and with its support and backing, yet its leader Al-Jolani was quick to reject Al-Baghdadi's decision (in April 2014) to merge the Iraqi and Syrian organizations into one, under his command. Al-Jolani instead announced his allegiance to the central Al-Qaeda organization. And, despite Al-Zawahiri's attempts to resolve the dispute between the two sides, he instead became a part of it, leaning against Al-Baghdadi's organization. The situation culminated in Al-Qaeda's schism, and the emergence of a climate charged by polarization among followers of the Jihadi Salafist movement throughout the world, between those who support Al-Qaeda and Al-Nusra on the one hand, and those who support the Islamic State on the other.

The disputes between the Islamic State and Al-Nusra Front did not stop at level of the latter's ideological leaning

towards Al-Qaeda's center (earning it the support of prominent global Jihadi Salafist theorists and exponents such as Abu Qutada al-Filastini, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, and others), but extended to expose that Al-Nusra had its own ideological roots and influences that distanced it from IS, represented by its leadership being heavily influenced by the thought of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and the premises of Syrian Jihadi Salafism. This 'Syrian' brand of Jihadi Salafism finds its roots in the Qutbian-Muslim Brotherhood movement of *Al-Tali'a al-Muqatila* (The Fighting Vanguard), and in the *Harakiya* Salafist school of thought in Syria.

And, as ISI had went through a process of "Iraqization," evident in the Iraqi successors of Al-Zarqawi and focus on the Iraqi Sunni 'identity' in its sectarian confrontations with Shiite political forces, Al-Nusra Front, similarly, leaned towards seeking a "Syrian" and "Levantine" identity, and was influenced by the Syrian Salafist ideology, which, although following the general path of Jihadi Salafism, it nonetheless maintained perspectives that are significantly different than those of the Iraqi organization.

The previous discussion in this chapter revealed that there is a fundamental difference in the intellectual frame of reference of the Islamic State and that of Al-Nusra Front. IS was influenced, doctrinally and ideologically, by the writings of Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir, Al-Zarqawi's Sheikh. Al-Muhajir's writings hold a rather hostile attitude towards those who disagree or differ, whether Sunnis or Shiites, and his thought represents the "doctrinal code" that explains the Iraqi organization's behavior and practices in killing those who differ with it, and its overuse of suicide operations,

beheadings, slaughter, and mutilation of bodies. The Iraqi organization was also influenced, on a practical level, by the concept of an "Emirate of Savagery" (inspired by Abu Bakr Naji's theories on the "Management of Savagery"), and manifested this in its imposition of power, influence, and governance of the areas under its control.

In contrast, Al-Nusra Front is influenced by the thought of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, and by extension the Salafist Qutbian-Muslim Brotherhood school of thought. It avoided imposing its power and attempted to remain distant from the circle of local struggles and confrontations with local nationalist and Islamist factions. The Front was relatively more lenient and flexible in its doctrinal and ideological positions than was the Islamic State.

The Schism of Al-Qaeda and the eruption of internal strife resulted in fierce clashes on various levels, the ideological, intellectual, political, and military levels, and even in the media. The following days witnessed the expansion and further rise of the Islamic State in both Iraq and Syria, compared to the retreat and decline of Al-Nusra Front, and the fracturing of its internal cohesion. This dichotomy in the state of affairs of each organization begs the questions; How do we explain the Islamic State's rise in Syria amid Al-Nusra Front's decline, when it was the latter that was closest to echoing and embodying the Syrian conditions, socially, politically, and even religiously, whereas the Islamic State remained fixated on the cause of the Sunnis in Iraq?

It is, necessarily, an important question. One of the keys to answering it is that the Islamic State was able to achieve

significant breakthroughs in the Iraqi scene, and was able to simultaneously take control of vast areas of land (including major cities), thus proving its strength and capabilities, making it an "attractive" model. Indeed, the 'strong' always possesses the power of influence and appeal. Whereas, on the other hand, Al-Nusra Front was afflicted by its dual crisis of its identity and path, and was shaken in its handling of the hostile international and regional position towards it. Furthermore, amongst its Jihadi Salafist ranks were those who found that the Islamic State achieves larger, clearer, and more assertive expressions of the Jihadi Salafist identity, compared to Al-Nusra Front, which attempted to circumvent and downplay the ideological differences between it and other Islamist factions.

The key to the Islamic State's strength lies in the ongoing Sunni crisis in Iraq, and in the organization's adoption of the Sunni identity discourse. Meanwhile, the situation in Syria began to take a similar path amid transformations in the nature of the struggle there and the increasing apprehension among Sunnis in Syria of being targeted, oppressed, and subjected to extreme levels of psychological and social pressures arising from the horrendous level of violence practiced by the Syrian regime, and the atrocities it is committing in killing hundreds of thousands, detaining thousands, and causing the displacement of millions of Syrian civilians. These atrocities worsened the feelings of frustration, despair, and outright existential threat among Syrian Sunnis, all of which are factors that help give the Islamic State an upper hand amid Al-Nusra's declining influence. Indeed, the Islamic State during that phase began to acquire more and more of the Syrian popular base that had previously backed Al-Nusra Front.

There are other logistical and practical factors that may contribute to explaining the predominance of the Islamic State, especially its control of oil resources and its capability of self-sustenance, in addition to its superior technocratic, military, and media and communications expertise compared to Al-Nusra Front.

Al-Nusra Front's leadership recognized the magnitude of its structural crisis, and suffered terrible military losses at the hands of the Islamic State. It attempted to escape from this crisis and maintain its internal cohesion through the idea of establishing an emirate. However, this idea only came after the organization had already retreated and its influence declined, forcing it to reposition itself in the southern region. This further weakened the idea of an 'emirate,' which has yet to see light, and the new organizational restructuring (represented by dismissing Abu Mariah al-Qahtani and other leaders who enjoyed harmonious relations with other armed factions) did not lead to any fundamental changes in Al-Nusra's approach, thus far at least. The organization remains trapped in an internal crisis-ridden cycle caused by the paradox of its dual identity; a paradox that was born with the organization from its inception and appeared more manifestly in its conflict with the Islamic State ∎

Chapter Three

The Road to Announcing the "Caliphate"

Introduction

Chapter one paused at the historical moment in which the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) was facing a major challenge represented by the rebellion of its Sunni social "incubator" and host, against the organization's sectarian identity-driven policies and its hardliner approach. Sunni support councils were formed and *Sahawat* (Awakening) forces emerged, constituting a major point of transformation in the Sunni scene in Iraq; from a position of support for militant Jihadists to a position of cooperation and coordination with U.S. forces, commanded by General David Petraeus, who launched the "troop surge" and "counterinsurgency" strategies. These strategies worked to arm and fund the *Sahawat* forces, which numbered over 100,000.[143]

However, the participation of Sunnis in fighting AQI, and its successor ISI, did not result in any significant breakthroughs in the makeup of the new political system in Iraq. The Shiite influence continued to grow steadily and was controlling all aspects of the state. Efforts to integrate the *Sahawat* into the government's security and military forces failed, thus exacerbating the Sunni community's feelings of exclusion and marginalization in the new Iraq.[144]

---

[143] See: Hisham al-Hashimi, "*Sahawat Al-Fasa'il al-Sunniya*" (The Awakening of the Sunni Factions), op. cit.

[144] Omar Ashour, "*Al-Qaeda in Iraq: Eliminating Leaders Will Not Necessarily Cut Lifelines*," op. cit.

At a later stage, the era of the Islamic State's current leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, underwent significant internal transformations of the organization's ideological and organizational frameworks. These changes came at a time that Nuri al-Maliki gained a second term as Prime Minister, towards late 2010, and the United States was beginning to withdraw its troops from Iraq in accordance with the troop withdrawal timeline it had agreed upon with the Iraqi government earlier in 2008.

As a result, and with the conclusion of troop withdrawal from Iraq (officially on December 31st, 2011), Iraq was sinking deeper into a climate of Iranian influence,[145] Shiite domination in government, increasing authoritarianism, sectarian policies, marginalization of Sunnis, and a situation where all branches of the state were replete with corruption.
[146]

Coinciding with the U.S. troop withdrawal, two important events occurred:

First, mass revolutionary protests and demonstrations erupted throughout the Arab world demanding freedom, justice, democracy and dignity, starting in Tunisia towards the

---

[145] Anthony Cordesman, Adam Mausner, Sam Khazai, Peter Alsis, and Charles Loi, "*The Real Outcome of the Iraq War: US and Iranian Strategic Competition in Iraq*," Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 8, 2012, available on the following link:
http://csis.org/publication/real-outcome-iraq-war-us-and-iranian-strategic-competition-iraq. An Arabic translation of the document is available through Dar Babil for Studies and Media, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.darbabl.net/show_tarjama.php?id=251

[146] Between 2010 and 2011, corruption became rampant in all aspects of the Iraqi state, where the Corruption Perceptions Index of 2011, surveyed by Transparency International, put Iraq in the rank of 175 out of a total of 182 countries. See: *Corruption Perceptions Index 2011*, By Transparency International, available on the following link:
http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2011/results

end of 2010, and then in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria (mid-March 2011), and eventually, demonstrations erupted in Iraq towards the end of 2012.

Second, Osama bin Laden, leader of Al-Qaeda's central organization was killed on May 2nd, 2011 at the hands of U.S. Special Forces in Abbottabad in Pakistan. The second in command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, assumed the leadership of the organization succeeding Bin Laden.

By 2012, the "Islamic State in Iraq" began to recover, feeding largely off the mistakes of Al-Maliki's government, and the escalating conflict in Syria, which brought about sectarian repercussions that helped in mobilizing and recruiting Sunnis. ISI's strategies re-adjusted to once again reclaim control of regions it had lost during the *Sahawat* phase. It launched offensives throughout Iraq's provinces, and although the strategies seemed to be focused against the *Sahawat* and their leaders, the organization nonetheless marched forward with limitless objectives.

The Iraqi organization was recuperating quickly. It began to reignite its efforts in mobilizing and recruiting fighters by exploiting the "Sunni crisis" in both Iraq and Syria. It also commenced its heavy militant operations. No area in Iraq, particularly in Baghdad and Al-Anbar province, was spared from being targeted, including U.S. forces, the Iraqi state and its ministries and financial departments, and their allied local forces and entities.[147]

---

[147] Akram Hijazi, *"Al-Dawra al-Tarikhiya: Al-Iraq ma bayna al-Baghdadi al-Awal wa al-Baghdadi al-Thani (4),"* (Lit., The Historical Cycle: Iraq between the First Al-Baghdadi and the Second al-Baghdadi (4)), August 2, 2010, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.almoraqeb.net/main/articles-action-show-id-239.htm

This chapter discusses the dynamics employed by the Iraqi organization in re-launching and in restoring its capabilities and resources, in terms of its strategy, tactics, and internal command structure. The chapter examines the conditions that helped the organization's strong re-emergence, particularly Al-Maliki's policies and the growing Iranian influence in Iraq after the U.S. withdrawal. Furthermore, it highlights the dynamics of the ideological discourse and rhetoric that accompanied the decision to declare the "Islamic Caliphate," and the practical and intellectual repercussions of the declaration.

1. A New Strategy, Manifold Tactics, and Restructuring

The shifts in the Iraqi organization's priorities and structure, which succeeded in restoring its influence and strength, resulted from an in-depth review of its path, future vision, and its strategy in dealing with the sectarian and ethnic reality in Iraq and the interplay of various local, regional, and international factors.

By 2010, and with the imminent withdrawal of U.S. troops, the organization issued an important document illustrating its strategy and the revisions of its future vision and its new tactics. The document was entitled "A Strategic Plan to Strengthen the Political Position of the Islamic State of Iraq."[148]

---

[148] A Strategic Plan to Strengthen the Political Position of the Islamic State of Iraq, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=158433

The document explained the "real" reasons behind the emergence of the *Sahawat*, and considered that ISI was late in fighting it because of the importance of its "social incubator." It also rejected the accusations made against it by other nationalist resistance factions that it committed "wrongful actions and behaviors" that led to the emergence of the *Sahawat*. The document accused the nationalist factions of becoming "hotbeds" for generating *Sahawat* forces. While admitting to the decline of the organization's influence over many regions inside Iraq, the document also accused the United States of launching a "dirty war," that included carrying out bombings in markets, public spaces, mosques, and killing opponents of the organization, and pinning such attacks on the "Islamic State of Iraq."

The document discussed the success of the Islamic State's strategy in confronting the *Sahawat*, resulting in the latter's retreat and decline. In indicating that the organization was beginning to gradually regain its influence and control, the document essentially had the primary purpose of delineating the organization's strategy for the post-U.S. withdrawal era. It highlighted five main pillars for its future work:

Striving to unify efforts: It is clear here that "unity" basically means that other factions join the "Islamic State of Iraq," which Al-Qaeda has struggled, sacrificed, and compromised in order to establish it. The "State" is built upon the foundations of the jurisprudence of *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniya* (Imperial rule; the political theory of governance developed in medieval Islamic history), which affirms the legitimacy of the establishment of the "State" and the duty of uniting behind it, according to Islamic Shari'ah. The document referred to the provision that the establishment of the "Islamic State" does not necessitate full consensus (as espoused by other Islamic political theories). The document quotes Abu Hamza al-

Muhajir's call to other groups to abandon personal and special interests and engage in the project of the Islamic State, considering that it represents the Muslim *Ummah.*

Balanced military planning: Planning that is based on the conclusion that U.S. forces are effectively withdrawing and that the U.S. can no longer tolerate remaining in Iraq. On this basis, the document calls for focusing efforts on targeting what it dubbed "domestic enemies;" bearing three principles:

The principle of "nine bullets against apostates and one bullet against the Crusaders:" a strategy that specifically targets Iraqi army and police, and spreading terror in their ranks to prevent further recruitment.

The principle of "cleansing:" preventing Iraqi forces from being able to establish permanent and stable centers, bases, and strongholds, by "cleansing" the land and displacing the enemy.

The principle of "Targeting Policy:" focusing on targeting the most qualified and upper echelons of the Iraqi military and police, and the most prominent political figures.

Forming 'Jihadist' Awakening Councils: The document acknowledges the rise of tribal Awakenings (*Sahawat*), suggesting that they were financially motivated and had sought to gain personal benefits and maintained an anti-Shariʿah ideology. Hence, the document draws the features of a counter plan, in which the organization will form "Jihadist" *Sahawat* councils, based on what the document considers religiously-sound and moral foundations. These Jihadist *Sahawat* will have a decentralized administrative system that gives broad authority to tribal leaders in administering the security situation in their respective regions, under the auspices of the "Islamic State of Iraq."

Attention to Political Icons: By highlighting and priming model Sunni leaders and icons who enjoy social acceptance and popularity, and exhibit qualifications, capability, and integrity.

Reassuring citizens: By establishing just rule in all regions that come under ISI control, and paying attention to administrative aspects, maintaining stability, and building a strong internal front by formulating legal and judicial structures to regulate the economy and the penal code in accordance with Islamic Shari'ah law.

In the era of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, shifts and changes to the organization's strategies and tactics were not limited to the structure and framework of the organization, but extended, in the military aspect, to depend on "Salafist" former Iraqi officers, such as Haji Bakr and Abd al-Rahman al-Bilawi. The military wing thus became more professional, skilled, and cohesive at the security level, the leadership of which became dominated by Iraqis. Meanwhile, Al-Baghdadi invested in Arab and foreign Jihadists in the religious departments, especially those coming from the Arab Gulf states, such as Abu Bakr al-Qahtani (Omar al-Qahtani), Abu Humam al-Athari (Turki al-Ban'ali, or Turki bin Mubarak bin Abdullah, from Bahrain), and 'Othman Aal Nazeh al-'Asiri, from Saudi Arabia, among others.

In the critical security positions, the new leadership relied on the "Turkmen Tal Afar Ring," which included Abu Ali al-Anbari. In terms of media and communications, the organization depended on Arab and foreign elements, such as Syrian Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, who became ISI's spokesman.

The arrangements of the organization's military operations in 2011 changed from a random and disorganized

nature to a more coordinated and systematic method. The 'armed' units were in control, deciding the timing and locations of operations. They targeted the headquarters of provincial and local councils, including in Baghdad. The 'armed' units adjusted their strategies to conduct waves of successive and simultaneous operations rather than individual operations and planting bombs. These operations were successful in creating shock and awe, proving through them the organization's progress, organizational abilities, and its presence on the ground, in the cyber world, and in the media.

The advanced operations were part of a new plan that the organization named "*Hadm al-Aswaar*" (Demolishing Walls), in reference to the upcoming operations that aimed to release its members from prisons.

2. The "Demolishing Walls" Plan: Regaining Influence and Expansion

By 2011, the U.S. troops had withdrawn from Iraq, Arab popular revolutions emerged on the political stage, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's policies of Sunni marginalization and exclusion continued, and the *Sahawat* were never integrated into Iraqi military and security apparatus (on the contrary, they were arrested and prosecuted). Amid these conditions, profound changes took place in the Sunni community's perceptions and perspective on the political process, and protests and demonstrations in Sunni provinces began to intensify and expand. This was exploited by ISI in an attempt to demonstrate the correctness

of its "identity" approach and effectiveness of its combat strategies. It also used it as an opportunity to assert the Iraqi political process' failing the Sunnis. It soon began to restore its influence and re-impose its control to the levels it had previously enjoyed.

The organization instituted the "Demolishing Walls" plan to restore its influence and its territorial control. In a speech entitled "*Wa Ya'ba Allahu Ila an Yatimma Nouruhu*," (And Allah Refuses Except to Perfect His Light), in July 2012, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced the launch of the new plan. He stated: "Whoever thought that people do not want the Islamic State, let them know that the majority of the Sunnis in the land of *Al-Rafidayn* [Mesopotamia, in reference to the two rivers] support it and are awaiting its return. I can only commend our tribes and people in the land of *Al-Rafidayn* – tribal leaders and individuals – who were, and still are, the fuel of Jihad in Iraq, and the refuge and shelter of the Mujahideen. On the occasion of the return of Islamic State to the regions that had sided away from it, as you see, I call upon you and urge you to exert more efforts, push your sons into the ranks of the Mujahideen in defense of your religion, property, and honor, and in obedience to God and compliance with His commands. As for those who have been led astray, among some of the leaders and members of our [Sunni] tribes, who stood by the side of the Crusader America, and then became followers and tails of the 'Safavid' [Shiite] government; we say: What would it harm you, by God, if you follow the truth and stand victorious to the religion of God as strongly as you have fought it. Repent and return to righteousness and God will forgive you and replace your sins

with good deeds. If you were told that the Islamic State kills all those who have fought it, and does not accept any justice for them, then that is of defamation against us – and there is much of it – and know that we do not judge whoever wants repentance out of fairness or intercession."[149]

In his speech, Al-Baghdadi addressed the Shiites in a blatant and hostile language, affirming the notion of "identity" and his organization's representation of Sunni Islam. He states: "As for you spiteful *Rafidha* [rejecter Shiites]; we are the sons of Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein, and grandsons of Abu Bakr, Omar, and *Dhul Nurain* [Othman, the third Rashidun Caliph]. Our grandfather is *Haydar al-Karrar* [nickname of Ali bin Abi Talib, the fourth Rashidun Caliph] Emir of the Believers Ali. You are Magian Shiites, grandchildren of Abu Lu'lua, Ibn Saba', Rustum, and your grandfather is Khosrau. And in no way will the Magian Shiites defeat the sons of Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein [grandchildren of Prophet Muhammad and sons of Ali]."[150]

Furthermore, the spokesperson of the Islamic State of Iraq, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, in a speech entitled "*Al-Iqtihamat Afja*" (The Onslaughts are More Catastrophic), detailed the new "Demolishing Walls" plan, indicating that the Islamic State is launching the plan in an effort to re-impose its influence over the regions it had previously lost. He says: "Emir of the Believers of the Islamic State of Iraq –

[149] Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, an audio recording entitled "*Wa Ya'ba Allahu Ila an Yatimma Nouruhu*," (Lit., And Allah Refuses Except to Perfect His Light), Ramadhan 1433 AH, July 2012. Al-Furqan for Media Production, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.dd-sunnah.net/forum/showthread.php?t=153320
[150] Ibid.

May God protect him – Shaikh Mujahid Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced the launch of a new phase of Jihadi work to return to the areas and impose control by force, and to defeat the 'Safavid' army and its supporters. [Al-Baghdadi] announced the "Demolishing Walls" plan, and gave his directives and commands to strike the pivots and corners of the Safavid scheme, and precise targeting of the heads of the Safavid government, its government headquarters, security and military bases, and the dens of *Rafidha* Shiite evils, its tails, and its agents and collaborating Sunni traitors. Hence, the Ministry of War mobilized its men and its heroes. The legions and brigades of Mujahideen prowled throughout the land and swept the country far and wide in simultaneous operations that exposed the failure and collapse of the government's security plans and the inability of its intelligence forces, these forces that are hyped by the enemy and paraded night and day in media outlets. Upon this plan, their heads and leaders – who have become the joke of the streets – began to curse one another amid an exchange of blame, accusations, and conflicting statements."[151]

Al-Adnani adds: "The phase unfolded exactly as the Shaikh [Al-Baghdadi] wanted and planned. The barracks were stormed, the checkpoints were crushed, the headquarters were demolished, planes were shot down, and the heads of unbelief *Kufr* throughout the country were cut off. With God's praise and blessings, the prepared plan succeeded and

---

[151] Abu Muhammad al-'Adnani, official spokesperson of the Islamic State of Iraq, audio speech entitled "*Al-Iqtihamat Afja*" (Lit., The Onslaughts are More Catastrophic), dated July 23, 2012, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FdsJp1Rjcjg

its targeted objectives were achieved. This phase will be concluded in the timeframe that was decided, and a new phase will begin. We shall announce it in its suitable time, God willing."[152]

Al-Adnani appeared very confident in speaking about the new phase; he says: "Now we will attack them and they will not attack us. The signs of victory became evident as their soldiers escaped and left their positions. The apostates among the Sunnis repented, and the people rallied behind the Islamic State of Iraq."[153]

In concluding his speech, the spokesman declared challenge and defiance; he states: "The Islamic State of Iraq has declared it with utmost resonance: There will be no negotiations, no compromise, and no blandishment. There will be steadfastness without retreat; it is a relentless war."[154]

The domestic and regional conditions served to benefit ISI and effectively helped it restore its strength. A year after the announcement of the "Demolishing Walls" plan, the organization re-emerged as a striking force, and the plan was crowned on July 21st, 2013 with a dual attack on the prisons of Abu Ghraib (west of Baghdad) and Al-Taji (north of Baghdad). The prison attacks resulted in the escape of nearly 600 prisoners, including a number of senior leaders of the organization. ISI issued a statement on July 23rd, 2013 claiming responsibility for the operation, which it named

---

[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid.

"*Ghazwat Qahr al-Tawaghit*" (The Battle of Crushing the Tyrants).[155]

With the announcement of the end of the "Demolishing Walls" plan, the organization launched a new plan, on July 29th, 2013, dubbed "*Hassad al-Ajnad*" (The Soldiers' Harvest), aimed at territorial control over Sunni provinces in Iraq and to expand its control to Syrian provinces. In a statement in response to the campaigns of "displacing Sunnis," ISI announced that: "In continuation of the series of qualitative attacks that were launched in the past months in support of the vulnerable Sunnis, who are being oppressed and displaced from their homes in various regions, especially in Diyala; and after the Safavid scheme exposed its goals

---

[155] A Statement regarding "*Ghazwat Qahr al-Tawaghit fi Sijnay Abu Ghraib and Al-Taji*" (Lit., The Battle of Crushing the Tyrants in the Abu Ghraib and Al-Taji Prisons), Mu'asasat al-'Itisam, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://daawla.tumblr.com/page/18
The operation stirred wide controversy inside the Iraqi government, and resulted in officials exchanging blame and placing responsibility on each other, considering its magnitude, timing, and the major threat it posed. The Iraqi Minister of Justice Hasan al-Shammari noted that the escape of hundreds of prisoners from Abu Ghraib and Al-Taji prisons, most of them belonging to Al-Qaeda, was planned and predetermined with the knowledge of senior Iraqi officials. He added that the objective was to convince Washington to abandon its plans to strike the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad by amplifying the role of Al-Qaeda and "*Da'esh*" [ISIS]. However, that would have indicated the rising strength of the Islamic State. Investigations into the incident later revealed that this was, in fact, true. For more details, See: Ahmad Hashim Al-Haboubi, "*Ghazwat Qahr al-Tawaghit.. Khatimat Khitat 'Hadm al-Aswar'*," (Lit., The 'Battle of Crushing the Tyrants'.. The Conclusion of the 'Demolishing Walls' Plan), September 2, 2013, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.kitabat.com/ar/page/02/09/2013/16209/%D8%BA%D8%B2%D9%88%D8%A9-laquo%D9%82%D9%87%D9%80%D9%80%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%BA%D9%8A%D8%AAraquo%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A9-laquo%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B1raquo.html

without equivocation and unmasked its grim ugly face without concealment or dissimulation [Shiite practice of *Taqiyya*]; the men of the Islamic State launched the first of their qualitative operations in Iraq within the plan of "*Hassad al-Ajnad*" (The Soldier's Harvest), after they concluded the previous phase of "Demolishing Walls" with the daring operation in breaking the shackles of lions and freeing them from the prisons of Al-Taji and Abu Ghraib, thereby devastating the strongholds of Safavid reservations in the Baghdad of the Caliphate and other places."[156]

On his part, the spokesman for the organization, Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani, confirmed in an audio recording the launch of the new plan in an effort to empower and consolidate the power the Islamic State, and announced the conclusion of the "Demolishing Walls" plan. In the recording, he gave details on the operations carried out against the Abu Ghraib and Al-Taji prisons.[157]

The promotional material and recordings published by the media arms of IS, most notably "*Al-Furqan*" Foundation, demonstrate the significant transformations in the organization's structure, capabilities, violent tactics, nature of its identity, and its terrifying combat strategies. Through these media outlets, IS issued a series of skillfully produced, tech-

---

[156] A Statement on the Battle of the "*Al-'Ashr al-Awakher*," (Lit., Final Ten Days). The statement came in response to the campaigns of displacing Sunnis. Produced by Al-I'tisam for Media Production, the Ministry of Media – The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Sham) ISIS, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=324265

[157] Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, a transcribed audio recording entitled "*Lan Yadhurrukum illa Athaa*," (Lit., They Will not Harm You Except for Some Hurt), published by Al-Furqan for Media Production, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://bab-ul-islam.net/showthread.php?p=44980&langid=8

savvy videos, entitled "*Saleel al-Sawarim*" (The Clanking of the Swords), that show a diverse range of fierce operations and Jihadi advice, and calling on the *Sahawat* and Sunni political forces to repent and return to their religion, labelling them as "agents" of the Shiite government. The videos also included speeches by IS leaders that stress the Sunni identity and attacks Shiites and what they consider the "Safavid" scheme. The speeches also focus on the corruption of the political process and the policies of marginalization and exclusion of the Sunni component of Iraqi society.

The videos, exhibiting high level of quality, visual and audio effects, and mastery in technical production, highlight the effects of suicide missions, car bombings, improvised explosive devices, and raids on government security, military, and police headquarters and centers. They also show attacks against the *Sahawat* and those who they label as "agents and collaborators," using silenced and suppressed firearms, and document a series of quality operations carried out by IS militants. Yet, the most important evidence signaled in these videos is the forceful return of the organization to regions it had previously lost.

The important message that the organization sought to express through these intense qualitative media productions is to essentially say that there is no salvation for the Sunnis in Iraq except through the use of force and rallying behind the "Sunni" Islamic State, which has become a striking force capable of devastating the Iraqi army, Shiite forces, and counter Iran's influence in Iraq.

3. Al-Maliki as a Partner in the Rise of the "Islamic State"

Two key factors worked to strengthen IS and turning it into a new "monster" and giant force in the region. First is the rise of counter-revolutions and policies that reproduced authoritative regimes in the Arab world; epitomized by the coup against the outcomes of democracy, and efforts to contain and suppress popular revolutions. The second factor is Iran's policies that seek to reinforce its influence in Iraq, embodied by the direct intervention through Revolutionary Guards and investing in the network of Iraqi and Lebanese (Hezbollah) militias, among others, to save its Syrian ally, the regime of Bashar al-Assad, from being overthrown. The latter, indeed, worked in conjunction with Iran and Russia to curb the Syrian revolution by branding it with "terrorist" and "sectarian" labels and attacking it with brutal force.

The identity-oriented ideological perspective and the military strategic approach of IS were emboldened with the coup against Arab peaceful revolutions and protests, whereby the slogan of "peaceful" revolutions became void of attraction and effectiveness. The military coup in Egypt, on July 3rd, 2013, under the banner of "Egypt Fights Terrorism" and the labelling of the Muslim Brotherhood movement as a terrorist organization ushered in a new phase that conflicts with the paths of democracy and inaugurates a new era of authoritarianism. This new era meant for IS the need to assert holding on to the option of military force as the only option to actualize the Islamic State and proclaim the establishment of the Islamic Caliphate.

The transformations in Egypt were not limited to Egypt's domestic borders, but rather reverberated throughout the region, soon affecting the Hamas movement and banning its activities (on March 4th, 2014), on grounds that the movement has shifted from a resistance movement to a "terrorist" organization. The effects were followed by Saudi Arabia issuing its own list of terrorist organization on March 7th, 2014, which also classified the Muslim Brotherhood movement as a terrorist organization.

IS exploited these events to promote its ideological vision and strategic approach, which is based on *Takfir* (disavowing as unbelieving) of democracy, and its lack of faith in peaceful approach to change. On August 31st, 2013, in a recording entitled "*Al-Silmiyya Dinu Mann?*" (The Peaceful Approach is the Religion of Whom?), IS' spokesperson Abu Muhammad al-Adnani stressed the correctness of the Jihadi and fighting approach, disavowed democratic systems as un-Islamic, and extended this disavowal to all who believe in democracy, institute it, and use it as the basis of law, beginning with the Muslim Brotherhood and calling on them to repent. He states: "You should know, O Sunnis revolting everywhere, that our plight is not the governing systems but rather the *Shirki* (idolatrous) laws that govern you. There will be no difference between one ruler and the next unless we change the law; there is no difference between [Husni] Mubarak, Mu'ammar [Ghaddafi], and [Zine El Abidine] bin Ali, and between [Mohammad] Morsi, [Mustafa] Abdul Jalil,

and [Rachid] al-Ghanouchi; they are all tyrants who govern with the same laws."[158]

In stressing the futility of a peaceful path to change, Al-Adnani adds: "It is time for us to recognize and acknowledge that peacefulness does not achieve what is right, or invalidate what is wrong. It is time for the advocates of the peaceful approach to stop with the false claims, for the people of unbelief *Kufr* will never be peaceful with the people of belief, and the belief of an unarmed peaceful person cannot stand in the face of the unbelief a criminal armed aggressor.. Actualizing dignity, liberation from oppression, and breaking the shackles of degradation cannot come about except by the clanking of the swords, spilling blood, and sacrificing lives and souls, and will never be by peaceful calls or parliamentary elections."[159]

Al-Adnani devotes a part of his speech to attacking the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian Salafist Al-Nur party (dubbing it the "Dark" party), both of which participated in elections. He states: "The [Muslim] Brotherhood is nothing but a secular party in an Islamic cloak; further yet, they are more sinister and deceptive than the secularists. They are a party that worships 'seats' and parliaments; they could afford to wage Jihad and die for the sake of democracy, but could not afford to wage Jihad and die for the sake of God. The [Muslim] Brotherhood party and its brethren in the Dark [Al-

---

[158] Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, spokesperson of the Islamic State, an audio recording entitled "*Al-Silmiyya Dinu Mann?*" (Lit., Peacefulness is the Religion of Whom?), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://bab-ul-islam.net/showthread.php?t=20110

[159] Ibid.

Nur] party abandoned all the fundamentals of the faith and many of the branches of Islam. They abandoned the fundamentals of the faith when they agreed to give sovereignty of governance and legislation to other than God Almighty alone."[160]

Perhaps the most important aspect of Al-Adnani's speech are the words of advice with which he concludes his speech, addressed to "the People of the Sunnah;" the Sunnis of both Egypt and Iraq, likening the Egyptian army to the Iraqi one (which he dubs "Safavid"), and calls on the Sunni community to "renounce peaceful calls, bear arms, and wage Jihad for the sake in God; to ward off the aggressors of the Egyptian army and the Safavid army."[161]

The emerging Arab regional climate –which backtracked away from democratic transformations, heading instead towards chaos and restoration of authoritarianism and disintegration – intertwined in effect with the Sunni crisis in Iraq and Syria. Former Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki used sectarian policies to buttress his power and influence, backed by Iran and the United States under the pretext of the "War on Terror." He also used the "Terrorism Act" to eliminate his political opponents and rivals and to solidify his power. Al-Maliki furthermore exploited the "Accountability and Justice Act," which replaced the "De-Baathification" law, to marginalize and exclude prominent Sunni politicians under the pretext that they had ties to senior ranks in the former Baath Party. Al-Maliki's sectarian policies were also evident

---

[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid.

in the violent break up of Sunni sit-ins and protests in the city of Al-Hawija in Kirkuk Province on April 23rd, 2013, killing 50 peaceful protestors and wounding over 110.

Before Al-Hawija events, security forces clashed with demonstrators on two occasions, once in Fallujah (on January 25th, 2013), which left 7 dead, and another time in Mosul (on March 8th, 2013), killing one person. Al-Maliki insisted that the protesters included terrorists belonging to the former Baath Party, or that they were motivated by sectarian hostility towards Shiites.[162]

Not only did these policies instigate and provoke the Sunni community, but they also simultaneously pushed the Shiite community towards greater radicalism. This culminated in the Iraqi Sunnis' conviction of the futility of peaceful struggle, a reaction that was well-invested by the Islamic State, which worked to expand its recruitment efforts and intensify its armed operations, all the while weaving alliances on the basis of "identity."

Notwithstanding Al-Maliki's sectarian policies, the United States agreed during his visit to Washington in early November 2013 to sell Iraq large quantities of advanced sophisticated weapons using the pretext of "fighting

---

[162] See: "*Make or Break: Iraq's Sunnis and the State*," The International Crisis Group, Middle East Report No. 144, August 14, 2013, available [in English] on the following link:
http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq/144-make-or-break-iraq-s-sunnis-and-the-state.aspx
The report is also available in Arabic on the following link:
http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Iraq/Arabic%20translations/144-make-or-break-iraq-s-sunnis-and-the-state-arabic.pdf

terrorism;" preventing a spillover of violence from Iraq to neighboring countries; and to rein in the Jihadists in Syria. The United States effectively supported Al-Maliki's policies and committed to providing Iraq with advanced weapons such as reconnaissance drones and Hellfire missiles. The U.S. began negotiating with Iraq the training of joint Special Forces, and establishing bases for unmanned planes and drones under the pretext of battling "Al-Qaeda," culminating in January 2014 with the establishment of "Sunni Military Councils."

With the peaceful demonstrations turned into an armed movement, IS operations began to expand in Al-Ramadi and resulted in the complete takeover of Al-Fallujah. Al-Maliki considered the escalation as "terrorism" led by Al-Qaeda and IS, and his characterization was supported by the United States, followed by the U.N. Security Council (on January 11th, 2014), which expressed support for the efforts of the Iraqi government in Al-Anbar Province against what the Security Council described as violence and terrorism. The Security Council condemned IS attacks, without any actual reference to the other actors in the violence or to the just demands of protestors.

The feelings of anger, resentment, and rebellion among Sunni activists, demonstrators, and wide segments of the Sunni community peaked with the declarations of U.S. and U.N. Security Council support for Al-Maliki. To the Sunnis, the declarations essentially confirmed the world's indifference towards their peaceful activism. It is this climate that prompted the establishment of 'insurgent' military councils (consisting of members of the former Iraqi army and

armed tribal elements, and the emergence of new Iraqi resistance groups such as *Al-Jaysh al-Islami* (The Islamic Army), *Hamas al-Iraq* (Iraq's Hamas), *Kata'ib Thawrat al-'Ishrin* (The 1920 Revolution Brigade), *Jaysh al-Mujahideen* (The Jihadists' Army), *Ansar al-Sunnah* (Supporters of the Sunnah), and the *Jaysh al-Tariqa al-Naqshabandiya* (The Army of the Naqshbandi Order). Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi capitalized on this climate by striking deals, alliances, and weaving networks with Sunni forces that were growing ever more convinced of the sectarian identity-oriented nature of Al-Maliki's and his allies' war, using the pretext of "terrorism."

In this pivotal moment, IS emerged as the "spearhead" to counter Al-Maliki's forces and militias, a role it played through rebuilding its Sunni social host and incubator. Al-Baghdadi's "State" worked to assess the capabilities of Al-Maliki's army and police, and exposed their weakness, inability to act, and the collapsed morale of its soldiers. Within a short period of time, IS managed to marginalize other resistance groups, which it had previously clashed with in 2007, and worked to neutralize the "Military Councils" and the group led by Sheikh Abdullah al-Janabi. This marginalization and neutralization was actualized through IS' strategy of merging and integrating other factions, taking oaths of allegiance, *Istitaaba* (imposing on others to repent), house arrests, and/or forcing other factions or groups to remain silent and immobile.

4. Announcing the "Caliphate" State and Removing Borders

Since 2012, Al-Baghdadi's Islamic State (IS) was noticeably evolving. Although many thought that the declaration of the establishment of the "Islamic State" is a matter of propaganda and superficiality that does not extend beyond the realm of the virtual and hypothetical worlds; however, the international, regional, and local positions quickly changed as the world woke up on Tuesday, June 10th, 2014 to the shock of the fall of the city of Mosul, in Nineveh Province, into IS hands. Suddenly, everyone was speaking of a "real" state that inhabits the realm of the real world. Accordingly, IS' spokesperson Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, spoke in an audio recording issued the day after Mosul's fall (on June 11th, 2014), threatening to march onto Baghdad, and, in clearly sectarian rhetoric, said: "Between us we have a score to settle, I am truthful and you are the liar. It is a heavy and long score. But the settling of scores will not be in Samarra or Baghdad, but rather in Karbala, which has been defiled, and in the idolatrous *Al-Najas* [in reference to the Shiite holy city of Al-Najaf]. Await us, and we are waiting with you."[163]

In concurrence with IS' expansion into Syria, the organization also extended the areas under its control and influence in Iraq. After the death of the head of IS' Military Council, Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Bilawi (who blew himself up in Mosul after being cornered by Iraqi forces on June 4th, 2014), IS waged a massive and broad attack at dawn on

---

[163] See Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani, an audio recording entitled "*Wa maa Asabaka min Hasanatin fa Min Allah*," (Lit., Whatever Good Happens to You, It is from God), published by Al-Furqan for Media Production, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zpjlj5jqbt4

Tuesday, June 10th, 2014, which resulted in the fall of the city of Mosul into its hands.[164] On the day after the attack, Al-Adnani mourned the 'martyrdom' of Al-Bilawi, commended his efforts and achievements, and directed a message to Prime Minister Al-Maliki threatening to march onto Baghdad.[165]

On June 29th, 2014, IS issued a video entitled "*Kasr al-Hudud*" (Breaking the Boundaries),[166] showing the organization's machinery demolishing barriers between the Iraqi and Syrian borders. A number of IS leaders appeared in the video surrounded by crowds of its fighters. IS Spokesperson Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, appeared –with his face digitally blurred – in a speech denouncing the "borders of humiliation," the "idolatry of nationalism," and boding the promise of the Prophet (Peace be Upon Him) of the return of a "Caliphate based on the Prophetic Method." Another military leader, Omar al-Shishani (the Chechen), appeared next to Al-Adnani and spoke in the Chechen language, with Arabic subtitles, enumerating the organization's

---

[164] The way in which the city of Mosul fell stirred significant questions. Various scenarios emerged in an attempt to explain what had occurred, especially the complete collapse of Iraqi forces there. 'Conspiracy theories' were at the forefront of these scenarios. The Iraqi official narrative insisted on the complicity of some military and political leaders. However, such explanation was the result of the serious shock and the state of "denial" related to the readiness and capabilities of the Iraqi Army, coupled with political problems, the escalating sectarian issues, and the growing influence of ISIS. For more details regarding the exchange of accusations and the laying of blame among Iraq's official leadership, and to reach a more accurate narrative, See: Ned parker, Isabel Coles, and Raheem Salman, "*Special report: How Mosul Fell - An Iraqi general Disputes Baghdad's Story*," Reuters, October 14, 2014, available on the following link:
http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/14/us-mideast-crisis-gharawi-special-report-idUSKCN0I30Z820141014

[165] Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani, "*Wa maa Asabaka min Hasanatin fa Min Allah*," (Lit., Whatever Good Happens to You, It is from God), Op. cit.

[166] The Islamic State, "*Kasr al-Hudud*," (Lit., Breaking the Boundaries), broadcasted through ISIS's media arm Mu'asasat al-I'tisam, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yst8UgICCvc

170

accomplishments. The end of the video showed scenes of executing a number of border guards; labelled in the video as guards of the "Sykes-Picot borders," and a number of hostages to whom the phrase "The Islamic State" is said, and they shout back loudly "shall remain."

While the international community was still under the effects of the shock of the fall of vast and important areas of Iraq, the organization's spokesperson Al-Adnani announced in a speech entitled "*Hatha Wa'adu Allah*" (This is God's Promise) the establishment of the "Islamic Caliphate," on June 29th, 2014. The declaration also announced the inauguration of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (whose real name is Ibrahim 'Awwad al-Badri), as a Caliph of all Muslims. The declaration not only declared the Caliphate, but also imposed it upon all the other forces and groups. In the speech, Al-Adnani warns: "We warn Muslims, that with the declaration of the Caliphate; it has become incumbent upon all Muslims to pledge allegiance and support the Caliph Ibrahim – May God protects him. The legitimacy of all emirates, principalities, groups, and organizations is now invalid; these entities are now under the authority of the Caliph and control of its soldiers." The threat did not stop with a mere warning, but extended to threatening of killing the advocates of pluralism. Al-Adnani adds: "Whoever wants to fracture the ranks: Throw a bullet in their heads, and take out their guts, regardless of who they are, there will be no dignity."[167]

On the day following his inauguration as Caliph, on July 1st, 2014, Al-Baghdadi gave a speech that was closer to telling the case of the Caliphate and describing the conditions of

---

[167] Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, an audio recording entitled "*Hatha Wa'adu Allah,*" (Lit., This is God's Promise), published by Al-Furqan for Media Productions, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1qkBXKvs_A

Muslims. In this speech, entitled "*Risala ila al-Mujahideen wa al-Ummah al-Islamiya fi Shahr Ramadhan,*" (A Letter to the Mujahideen and the Muslim Ummah on the Month of Ramadan), Al-Baghdadi calls on the Islamic State's soldiers to adhere to Jihad and work on actualizing the message of the Caliphate. He addresses the whole world, saying: "Muslims today are a word that is resonates loudly, they are feet of a heavy stomp, a word that lets the world hear and understand the meaning of terrorism, feet that stomp upon the idolatry of nationalism, crushes the idol of democracy and exposes its fakeness. Listen Oh *Ummah* of Islam, hear and understand, rise and stand up; for it is time for you to be liberated from the shackles of weakness, and to rise in the face of tyranny; against the treacherous rulers, agents of the Crusaders and atheists, and the guards of the Jews."[168]

At the end of his speech, Al-Baghdadi calls on Muslims to immigrate to the areas under the control of the Islamic State (the Caliphate), describing it as the "Abode of Islam." He states: "O Muslims everywhere, whoever is able to immigrate to the Islamic State ought to immigrate, for the migration to the Abode of Islam is obligatory."[169]

A few days later, Al-Baghdadi (the Caliph) appeared for the first time, in voice and picture, giving the Friday sermon at the Grand Mosque in Mosul, on the Sixth day of the holy month of Ramadan.[170]

---

[168] Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, "*Risala ila al-Mujahideen wa al-Ummah al-Islamiya fi Shahr Ramadhan,*" (Lit., A Letter to the Mujahideen and the Muslim Ummah on the Month of Ramadan), published by Al-Furqan for Media Productions, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ud_drSE2n0Q

[169] Ibid.

[170] See: The Friday Sermon and Prayer at the Grand Mosque in the City of Mosul, by the Emir of Believers (May God Protect Him), available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itu6NhED9Yk

In the following days, and with the retreat, escape, and complete collapse of the Iraqi government's forces, the Islamic State was able to take over four military divisions and weapons storage facilities. IS began to expand and impose its control over large areas and cities in Al-Anbar province, in western Iraq, including the city of Al-Qa'im (western Iraq near the borders with Syria), and the towns of Rawah and 'Aana (west of Al-Ramadi in Al-Anbar province), after the government forces withdrew from there. Iraqi government forces also lost control of the Rabi'a official border crossing with Syria, located in Nineveh Province, to the Kurdish Peshmerga forces.

The Islamic State also took control of the city of Tikrit, in Salahuddin Province, and the towns of Al-Dhuluiya and Al-Mu'tasim (about 90 km north of Baghdad), in addition to other Iraqi areas. Meanwhile, the Kurdish Peshmerga forces seized control of Kirkuk, amid continued fighting over the Baiji refinery, and in Tal Afar.

5. Expansion and Rise within the Syrian Conflict

The "Islamic State" was now fighting on two fronts, in Iraq and in Syria, and used to its advantage the conditions in Iraq; including the growing Sunni peaceful protests, the escalating Sunni-Shiite polarization, and the climate of sectarianism.

At the same time that IS was engaged in a bloody conflict in Iraq, Jihadist factions in Syria that were opposed to IS exploited its preoccupation in the Iraqi front and its seizing control of Al-Fallujah, and on January 3rd, 2014 launched a

wide-scale coordinated attack on areas under IS influence.[171]
The offensive began with an attack by the "Mujahideen
Army"[172] on IS strongholds in the city of Atarib, and in the

---

[171] The attack came two days after the "Islamic Front" announced the death of
Abu Rayyan (Hussain al-Sulaiman), one of the leaders of the *Ahrar al-Sham*
movement, tortured at the hands of the Islamic State. Disputes between the Islamic
State and other factions escalated after the IS refused to turn in the members who
killed Abu Rayyan. The commander of *Syria's Revolutionaries' Front* Jamal
Ma'arouf declared war against the Islamic State on January 3rd, 2014, giving them
a 24-hour ultimatum to leave. An Army of Mujahideen was also formed to
confront IS. At the time, many linked the implications of these escalations
between factions to the forthcoming Geneva II conference, which started on
January 22nd, 2014. During this period of time, IS was facing a wide attack,
whereby an armed attack against IS came in conjunction with an even greater
political, religious, and media attack. Syrian Islamic commissions and entities
issued a statement on December 22nd, 2013 accusing "*Da'esh*" (ISIS, at the time)
of deliberately instigating disputes with other opposition factions, and called on
the organization to stop interfering in the affairs of Syrians. The statement urged
ISIS to put a halt to behaviors that lead to "strife and evil." The statement was
signed by the following Islamic commissions and bodies: *Hay'at al-Sham al-
Islamiya* (The Islamic Levant Commission), *Rabitat al-'Ulamaa' al-Suriyeen* (The
Association of Syrian Scholars), *'Ulmaa' wa Du'aat al-Thawra* (The Revolution's
Scholars and Religious Advocates), *Al-Hay'a al-Shar'iyah fi Halab* (The
Religious Commission in Aleppo), *Rabitat Khutabaa' al-Sham* (The Association
of Levant Preachers), *Jam'iyat 'Ulamaa' Al-Kurd fi Suriya* (The Association of
Kurdish scholars in Syria), *Al-Multaqa al-Islami al-Suri* (The Syrian Islamic
Forum), and the *Hay'at Al-'Ulamaa' al-Ahrar* (The Free Scholars' Association).
See: "*Al-Hay'at al-Islamiya bi Suriya: Solouk Da'esh Yad'ou li al-Fitna wa al-
Shar,*" (Lit., Islamic Associations in Syria: The Behavior of ISIS Calls for Strife
and Evil), Al-Arabiya net, December 22, 2013, available [in Arabic] on the
following link: http://goo.gl/m9Ok4P

Also, the National Opposition Coalition issued a statement on January 1st, 2014
describing ISIS as a "terrorist" organization. The statement pointed out that there
is an animate relationship that links ISIS with the Syrian regime, adding that the
"spillage of the blood of Syrians at the hands of this organization unmasks once
and for all its terrorist and anti-revolution nature. See: "*Al-I'tilaaf Yasif Tanthim
'Da'esh' bel Irhabi 'Uqba Maqtal Mudeer Ma'bar Hudoudi.. wa Yad'ou al-
Muqatileen li al-Insihab Minhu,*" (Lit., The Coalition Describes ISIS as Terrorist
after the Killing of a Border Crossing Manager.. And Calls on Fighters to
Withdraw from the Organization," Syria News, available [in Arabic] on the
following link: http://www.syrianews.com/readnews.php?sy_seq=166221

[172] The establishment of the "Mujahideen Army" was announced on January 2nd,
2014, a day before it declared war against ISIS. It consists of a group of Islamist

western neighborhoods of Aleppo, followed by the engagement of the "Syria Revolutionaries' Front,"[173] which attacked most of IS' strongholds in the countryside of Idlib.

Factions from the "Islamic Front" and the Free Syrian Army also participated in sieging the IS' headquarters in Idlib Province, and clashed with IS forces in the northern and western countryside of Aleppo and Al-Raqqa. Al-Nusra Front, on the other hand, preferred to remain neutral and avoided engaging in the war against IS, and played the role of mediator between the conflicting groups. It did, however, engage in battles against IS in Al-Raqqa, but soon withdrew along with *Ahrar al-Sham* and other factions in February 2014, leaving IS to settle in the cities of Al-Raqqa, Al-Bab, Manbej, and Jarablus.

The wide-scale coordinated offensive against IS surprised the organization, and forced it to retreat from many areas after suffering heavy losses, including the death of the Commander of the Military Council, Haji Bakr, and the capture of his wife and two sons.

However, an in an ironic twist of events, the wide-scale operation led to a counterproductive "turning point" that was

---

combat factions, including: *Firqa 19* (Division 19), *Harakat al-Nur al-Islamiya* (The Islamic Light Movement), *Tajamou' Istaqim Kama Uomirt* (The Assembly of Stand Upright as Ordered), *Kata'ib Nur al-Din al-Zinki* (The Nurruddin al-Zinki Corps), *Liwaa' al-Huriya al-Islami* (The Islamic Liberty Brigade), *Liwaa' Ansar al-Khilafa* (The Supporters of the Caliphate Brigade), *Liwaa' Amjaad al-Islam* (The Glories of Islam Brigade), *Liwaa' al-Ansar* (The Supporters Brigade), and *Liwaa' Jund al-Haramayn* (The Soldiers of the Two Holy Places Brigade).

[173] The establishment of the *Jabhat Thuwar Suriya* (The Syria Revolutionaries' Front) was announced on December 9th, 2013. The Front consists majorly of members of the Assembly of "*Kata'ib wa Alwiyat Shuhadaa' Suriya*" (The Assembly of Legions and Brigades of Syria's Martyrs) led by Jamal Ma'arouf, in addition to other brigades concentrated in the countryside of Idlib. The Front participated strongly in fighting ISIS since January 2014. It is considered close to Saudi Arabia.

used to the Islamic State's advantage. As IS fighters retreated to the city of Al-Raqqa, the organization worked to rearrange its ranks and plan a vicious counter-attack using its typical horrific tactics. IS used car bombs,[174] suicide missions, adhesive improvised explosives, deadly confrontations, and targeted assassinations[175] to regain areas it had lost, and to expand into other regions. On January 4th, 2014, IS issued a statement giving opposing factions a 24-hour ultimatum to halt their attacks against it, remove barriers in the way of its fights, release all of its detained members, and threatened to escalate and withdraw from battlefields against the Syrian regime in Aleppo.[176]

The military and combat experience of the Islamic State played a key role in confronting the opposing factions. Also, IS' media apparatus appeared effective; its Religious Committee active; and its Intelligence and Security Council superior. IS invested in its vast experience in dealing with the tribally-based local community, and worked to attract it in various ways (carrots and sticks), to ensure its loyalty.[177]

---

[174] IS carried out a number of attacks using car bombs against an infantry division on February 1st, 2014, and seized control of Al-Ra'i Prison, which belonged to the *Al-Tawhid* Brigade in the countryside of Aleppo on February 1st and 2nd, followed by its seizing of Koniko gas field in Dair al-Zor that belonged to Al-Nusra Front, on February 2nd.

[175] In one day, on February 1st, 2014, IS carried several successful assassinations, including the assassinations of the Military Commander of the *Al-Tawhid* Brigade Adnan Bakour, the Military Commander of *Suqour al-Sham* Corps Abu Hussain al-Deek, and Military Commander of *Shuhadaa' Idlib* Corp Hamdu Basha.

[176] Statement: "*Nidaa' min al-Dawla Al-Islamiya fi Al-Iraq wa Al-Sham*," (Lit., An Appeal from the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham/Levant ISIS), available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=344788

[177] For more details on the strategy of the organization in dealing with the local tribal society, and to ensure its loyalty, see: Felix Legrand, "*The Colonial Strategy of ISIS in Syria*," Arab Reform Initiative, June 2014, available on the following link: http://www.arab-reform.net/colonial-strategy-isis-syria

Furthermore, most of the "immigrant" foreign fighters flooding into the region joined the ranks of the Islamic State and pledged allegiance to Al-Baghdadi as an Emir. The Chechen Military Commander, Omar al-Shishani became the most important IS official on the Syrian front, as he led operations and attacked strongholds of Al-Nusra Front in Aleppo, Idlib, and Al-Raqqa, which the organization seized by the use of brutal force.

The Islamic State also began to seize "liberated" territories using fierce tactics, forcing small factions, tribes, and residents of seized areas to pledge allegiance to Al-Baghdadi, imposing the authority of its religious courts, and imposing education in its schools and *Kuttab* for elementary education. IS temporarily halted its fight against the Syrian regime; freeing itself almost completely to fighting various opposition factions under the pretext that the latter have entered into a state of unbelief (*Kufr*), apostasy (*Ridda*), forming Awakenings (*Sahawat*), and "cooperating and being agents to the Americans."

By July 2014, the Islamic State had a firm grip over the eastern Syrian region, particularly after the withdrawal of Abu Mariah al-Qahtani and the forces of Al-Nusra Front towards the city of Dar'aa in southern Syria, and after Al-Qahtani accused Al-Nusra Front and other armed factions of complacency and negligence in the battlefield.

An Arabic version of the article is available on the following link:

http://www.arabreform.net/sites/default/files/%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%8A%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%A9%20%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%B4%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9.pdf

Conclusion

The Islamic State's remarkable attack on the morning of June 10th, 2014 that led to the fall of Mosul in its hands and the organization's subsequent expansion into other Iraqi provinces while maintaining control of the Iraqi-Syrian borders was not a mere coincidence or haphazard occurrence without signals, conditions, or dynamics. On the contrary, since its weakening at the hands of *Sahawat* and the turning of the Sunni community against it in 2007, the Islamic State worked to review and revise its strategies, tactics, and restructure its leadership frameworks. These revisions were surely successful; for during the era of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the previous expansionist military endeavor of the organization transformed into precise security operations, led by experienced and skilled military and security commanders. This empowered the organization and enabled it to revamp its resources, capabilities, and to improve its military and security skills; and the organization re-emerged in its second launch with greater strength and momentum than it did the first time around.

Also, one the most important factor in explaining IS' recent ascent consists of the sociological factor; that is, the Sunni community. Indeed, Al-Maliki's exclusionary policies and his campaign of marginalizing the Sunnis, coupled with the mounting Iranian influence, further reinforced the Sunnis' fear for their 'identity.' These policies, combined with settling scores with the Sunni political elite under the pretext of the

"War on Terror," and the use of excessive force against the peaceful Sunni protests in a number of provinces, all these elements worked in favor of IS' plans and revisions, which eventually bore fruit and led to the rise and strengthening of the organization.

The sociological factor is not limited to the borders of Iraq; in fact, Syria's entry into the wave of peaceful popular protests, and the transformation of the nature of the conflict there towards militarization and sectarianism, helped bring about Al-Nusra Front, which in turn became a new factor in pushing the Syrian Sunni community to uprise, culminating in a speedy spiraling of the situation towards military action and violence there.

In Iraq, the failure to integrate the Sunni community into the Iraqi political process and the forceful suppression of peaceful protests there, combined with the escalating conflict in Syria, and the emergence of the Sunni cause as a "regional problem," are all factors that created apt conditions for a return to militant action in Iraq. It is in this context, precisely, that another aspect of the Islamic State's strength emerges: The organization remained outside the realm of the political process at a time that most Sunni armed factions dissolved (with the *Sahawat* phase beginning in 2007) and, along with wide segments of the Sunni community, had wagered on the political process and American promises. However, and with the decline of "political" momentum; and the increasing frustration of Sunnis as their electoral victory – led by their secular Shiite ally Eyad Allawi in the 2010 elections – was complacently taken away from them; followed by a political and security "sectarian cleansing" campaign against them; all this served the discourse and political platform of the Islamic State. These factors strengthened its ability to recruit and attract those who grew hopeless of the political process and

the outcasts of the former Iraqi army excluded from the political process; thus supplementing the Islamic State with military experiences and added memberships to its ranks. These factors created a climate suitable for the organization's second emergence in Iraq, and conditions that brought about a "new breed" that is more violent and deadly than ever before.

The sociological factor, epitomized by the Sunni crisis spanning Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, is indeed crucial in interpreting the power of the Islamic State, and it is the main factor that explains (but in no way justifies) its ideological orientation and brutal practices against its opponents; practices that were exchanged within the cycle of responding to the brutality of the other side against the Sunni community.

The main condition (and proverbial golden key) to dispel the enthralling aura casted upon the Islamic State, its strength, and practices, is embodied by the "Sunni crisis" in the region. This "Sunni crisis" came about with the transformation in the nature of the struggle in the region towards an identity and sectarian-driven one. With the escalation of domestic strife and civil wars, Sunnis in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon are increasingly feeling the effects of the Arab political vacuum and are thrust into a state of frustration and disappointment in light of growing Iranian influence in both Iraq and Syria, Arab political disintegration, and the climate of chaos and internal wars and divisions ■

Chapter Four

The Schism of Al-Qaeda: Disputes and Implications of Discord

Introduction

The previous chapters examined the development and escalation of disputes between the Islamic State (previously AQI), on one side, and the central Al-Qaeda organization and Al-Nusra Front, on the other. It is evident that the roots of the disputes date back as far as when Al-Zarqawi was initially weaving his network. An "ambiguous relationship" evolved between Al-Zarqawi's organization and Al-Qaeda; although Al-Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Bin Laden and declared his organization to be officially part of Al-Qaeda, under the banner of "Al-Qaeda in Iraq," (in 2004), nonetheless, fundamental differences remained lurking beneath the overt relationship, resulting from each side's different perspective on the priorities of the struggle. Al-Zarqawi's hostile position towards Shiites and his excessiveness in carrying out suicide operations that killed large numbers of civilians effectively exacerbated the differences between the two sides.

At a later stage, the gap between the two organizations widened even further after Al-Zarqawi was killed in 2006 and his organization became further more immersed in Iraqi affairs, championing the "Sunni identity" cause, and becoming more defined with the "Iraqization" of its leadership and ranks. Al-Zarqawi's successors' declaration of establishing the "Islamic State" in Iraqi Sunni provinces effectively deepened the crisis with the mother organization. Al-Qaeda's central leadership rejected the move to declare the "state," which is not consistent with Al-Qaeda's global

strategy that focuses on confrontation with the United States without establishment of an "Islamic state," at the moment at least.

The declaration carried in its folds a problematic facet, the implications of which manifested at a later stage. The "Islamic State of Iraq" (ISI) considered Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) as a part of the state, and only one of its components, a matter that brought to light a fundamental contradiction between AQI's loyalty to the central Al-Qaeda organization and its belonging to the new supposed entity.

Despite the magnitude of these differences, they nonetheless remained unspoken of and concealed, and were never declared publicly until the conflict erupted after Al-Nusra Front was established and launched its operations in Syria, initially under the supervision and support of the Iraqi organization and with the approval and blessings of the central Al-Qaeda.

From the onset, the identity of Al-Nusra Front was "ambiguous," as previously explained, trapped in the depth of the gap between the ISI and Al-Qaeda. As the disputes escalated, and after Osama bin Laden was killed, the situation erupted when Al-Nusra Front's leader, Al-Jolani, rejected ISI's declaration of merging the two groups to establish ISIS, preferring instead to pledge his allegiance to Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of the central Al-Qaeda organization.

Al-Zawahiri's effort to contain and mediate between the two sides was futile, especially with Al-Baghdadi refusing Al-Zawahiri's decision to maintain the independent nature of Al-Nusra Front, and his call to ISI to contain its operations within Iraq. Consequently, the central Al-Qaeda leadership became part of the conflict. With the disputes and

controversies escalating until they reached the point of actual armed confrontation between ISI and Al-Nusra Front, Al-Zawahiri eventually announced Al-Qaeda officially breaking affiliation and ties with ISI.

At a later stage, ISI declared establishing the Islamic "Caliphate," and extended geographically and functionally deeper and wider in both Iraq and Syria. This pushed the conflict with Al-Nusra Front to an advanced level, especially after prominent Jihadi Salafist figures such as Abu Qutada al-Filastini and Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, among others, refused to recognize IS' "Caliphate."

The disputes and heated debates did not stop with Al-Qaeda and IS, but extended to affect the followers and supporters of the Salafist current throughout the world; who entered into an unprecedented state of polarization and gravitation between supporters of one side or the other. The debates extended into the realm of Salafist ideological, jurisprudential, and intellectual discourses.

This chapter sheds more light on the development of the dispute between the central Al-Qaeda organization and the Iraqi branch after the rise of Al-Nusra Front, examining the various implications the disputes had on the Jihadi Salafist current in general.

1. The Rise of Disagreements and Failed Attempts at Containment

With the eruption of the revolution and subsequent civil war in Syria in 2011, the Iraqi branch grew wary that its fighters would leave to Syria without controls. This prompted Abu

Bakr al-Baghdadi's advisor, Colonel Haji Bakr, to put forward the idea of forming a group of non-Iraqis to head to Syria, led by a Syrian, in an effort to prevent Iraqis from joining the Syrian front without prior authorization. This plan thereby would ensure that Iraqis would not defect from ISI to Syria, and gives the new leadership in Syria room to recruit non-Iraqis from abroad. In response, ISI's Military Council sent Abu Muhammad al-Jolani to Syria with several others (between July and August 2011), tasked with preparing to form a jihadist organization that would be an extension to ISI.

With Al-Baghdadi choosing Al-Jolani to lead the Syria endeavor, ISI drew the framework for the new branch's operations in Syria and discussed the mechanisms of implementing its objectives. Al-Jolani renewed his allegiance to Al-Baghdadi and left to Syria, along with seven or eight other members of ISI.[178] Al-Jolani proceeded in building a jihadist network that resulted in the creation of "Al-Nusra Front." Indeed, Al-Jolani later acknowledged this timeline of events, and gave more details about the nature and limits of the relationship with the Iraqi branch.[179]

---

[178] See: Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, "*Liqaa' al-Yawm: Al-Nusra wa Mustaqbal Suriya*," (Lit., Today's Interview: Al-Nusra Front and the Future of Syria), Al-Jazeera network, December 19, 2013, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.aljazeera.net/programs/today-interview/2013/12/19/%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%88-%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D9%88%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A8%D9%84-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7

[179] For more details on the early stages of Al-Nusra Front, its main figures, and Al-Jolani's efforts, see the narrative of Abu Mariah al-Qahtani. It is noteworthy that his narrative neglected of the Iraqi branch's role in the Front's genesis and initial formation. See: Abu Mariah al-Qahtani, "*Hallaa Taraktum lana Umara'ana*," (Lit., Would you Leave for Us our Emirs), op. cit.

The Iraqi branch operated and carried out its operations in Syria under the name of Al-Nusra Front, which was achieving significant successes and attracting local and foreign fighters. It began to enjoy a wide range of support from the global Jihadi Salafist movement as well,[180] and up until December 2012, was able to carry out significant militant operations, declaring its responsibility for over 500 attacks, including a series of suicide missions.[181]

The differences and tense relations between Al-Nusra Front and ISI began to emerge as a result of the ambiguity of the Front's intellectual, strategic, and practical frames of reference, as discussed earlier. Al-Nusra Front was growing inclined towards political pragmatism and adaptation with the local Syrian affairs. ISI, on the other hand, was moving towards more ideological rigidity and fixation on the Sunni-identity complex. The tense climate between the two organizations prompted ISI to put Al-Jolani's loyalty to Al-Baghdadi to the test. The latter suggested dissolving Al-Nusra Front and to return to work under ISI's command. On his part, Al-Jolani, who was attempting to rid his organization of its commitment to ISI, declined Al-Baghdadi's suggestion on

---

[180] The Al-Qaeda command, and all its regional branches, initially supported Al-Nusra Front, and the Front also enjoyed support and reinforcement from militant Jihadists around the world. This support was mainly before the dispute erupted between the Front and the Iraqi branch. Among the prominent Jihadists that supported Al-Nusra: Sheikh Hamid al-'Ali (Kuwaiti), Abu Qutada al-Filastini, Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi, Sulaiman al-'Alwan, Abu al-Munthir al-Shinqiti, Abu Humam al-Athari, and Abu Muhammad Al-Tahawi, among others.

[181] For more details on the militant operations adopted by Al-Nusra Front, since issuing Statement No. 1 on March 20, 2012 and until Statement No. 199 on January 12, 2013, See: "*Al-Kitab al-Jaami' li Jamee' Bayanat Jabhat al-Nusra li Ahl al-Sham: Min al-Bayan Raqam 1 ila al-Bayan Raqam 199*," (Lit., The Collective Book of all the Statements of Al-Nusra Front in Support of the People of Syria: From Statement No. 1 to Statement No. 199), op. sit., available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://archive.org/details/all-jn-press

grounds that Al-Nusra's Shura Council rejected the move. After rounds of debate and discussions, each side stuck to their position, and attempts to heal the rift and resolve the differences were unsuccessful.

The tense debates were preoccupying the jihadist ranks of Al-Nusra Front, who were following the developments closely. Polarization between supporters of each side magnified and was evident in the virtual world, through websites and online forums, and in the real world on the battlefield. The split between the two organizations became inevitable.

In an audio recording on April 9th, 2013, Al-Baghdadi declared merging Al-Nusra Front in Syria to ISI, giving the new integrated organization the name "The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham" (ISIS).[182] In his statement, Al-Baghdadi recounted the path and evolution of the organization from Al-Zarqawi and his network to *Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*, then Al-Qaeda in Iraq, followed by the Islamic State of Iraq (under Abu Omar al-Baghdadi), right down to his own command of ISI and its expansion into Syria.[183]

Not only did Al-Baghdadi's ISIS declaration expose the deep differences between ISI and Al-Nusra Front, but also amplified the previously-muffled historical differences between the central Al-Qaeda organization and the Iraqi branch, which were contained under the leadership of Osama bin Laden. The situation spiraled downhill when Al-Jolani, leader of Al-Nusra Front, gave a speech the next day (April 10th) effectively rejecting the merger, and declaring his affiliation with the central Al-Qaeda organization instead,

---

[182] See: Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, "*Wa Bashshir al-Mu'minin*," (Lit., And Bring Good Tidings to the Believers), Op. cit.

[183] Ibid.

publicly swearing allegiance to Al-Zawahiri.[184] The Syrian organization's name was changed to "*Jabhat al-Nusra – Tantheem Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Sham*" (Al-Nusra Front – The Organization of Al-Qaeda's Jihad in the Levant). To his credit, however, Al-Jolani did indeed acknowledge the role of ISI in establishing Al-Nusra Front and admitted to having initially worked under Al-Baghdadi's command.[185]

In his speech, Al-Jolani was keen to present a discourse that is uniquely different than ISI's, which is based on forcefully imposing control and dominance. Al-Nusra Front, he emphasized, is based upon the strategy of "*Al-Ansar*" (local supporters), and the principle of Shura without marginalization or exclusion. He did, however, acknowledge that the ultimate goal of his organization is to implement the rule of Shari'ah law, stating: "We have announced from the beginning that we seek to reclaim God's sovereignty on Earth, and to empower the Ummah by implementing God's law and propagating its approach. We did not wish to rush the announcement of a matter in which we must be patient. The functions of the "state," in terms of implementing Shari'ah law, resolving disputes and conflicts, and seeking to establish security amongst Muslims and securing their necessities are being carried out to the utmost ability, despite some deficiencies. Thus, the issue of declaring [the state] has not been our interest or concern as long as the substance is present. Furthermore, the Islamic State in the Levant [*al-Sham*] is being built at the hands of everyone, without

---

[184] See: Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, "*I'laan al-Bay'a li Tanthim al-Qa'ida wa Bay'at al-Thawahiri*," (Lit., The Announcement of the Pledge of Allegiance to Al-Qaeda Organization and the Allegiance to Al-Zawahiri), Op. cit.

[185] Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, an untitled transcribed audio recording, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
 http://alshaaaaaaaaam.blogspot.com/2013/04/blog-post_315.html

exclusion of any essential party from those who participated with us in Jihad and fighting in Syria; including Jihadist factions, notable sheikhs from among the Sunni community, and our immigrant brothers, let alone allowing for the exclusion of Al-Nusra's leadership and Shura members."[186]

As Al-Jolani found himself in an awkward and difficult position, he resorted to a choice of which he was not completely convinced; that is, escaping forward by announcing his allegiance to Al-Zawahiri and declaring joining the central Al-Qaeda organization. This move was motivated by his increasingly pragmatic inclination and focus on adapting his organization to the local Syrian and Levantine environment, as well as his attempt to disconcert Al-Baghdadi and gain the support of the global Jihadi current.[187]

On his part, Al-Zawahiri entered into the row in an attempt to heal the rift. Two months after Al-Baghdadi's declaration, on June 9th, 2013, Al-Zawahiri responded to Al-Jolani's allegiance in a written letter[188] effectively faulting both leaders. He noted that "We were not informed, consulted, or asked for approval regarding what took place by both sides, and unfortunately we heard it from the media, just like everyone else." In explaining his judgement on the matter, Al-Zawahiri expressed his perspective and –as the senior-most leader of Al-Qaeda – his final decision that "The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham is to be effectively dissolved. Work shall commence under the name of the

---

[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.
[188] See a photocopied version of Al-Zawahiri's letter to Al-Baghdadi and Al-Jolani, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://twecontent.org/amazing/box/oBCex6K5LR0/%D8%B1%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%AE-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B8%D9%88.html

Islamic State of Iraq, with its territorial boundaries confined to Iraq. Al-Nusra Front for the Support of the People of Levant is an independent branch of the Al-Qaeda organization, and it follows the Central Command, with its territorial boundaries confined to Al-Sham [Syria]."[189]

In his letter, Al-Zawahiri delegated Abu Khalid al-Suri, as a representative of Al-Qaeda, to be the reference and authority in arbitration of any dispute that may arise in interpreting Al-Zawahiri's decision. Al-Suri is to have the prerogative of forming a Shari'ah court in the event that any of the sides infringed upon the other.

The response of ISI's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, was negative and critical, to say the least. On June 14th, 2013, Al-Baghdadi announced in a speech his rejection of Al-Zawahiri's decision on grounds that the letter contained doctrinal and methodical irregularities and errors. Al-Baghdadi stressed that he and his organization shall not back down from expanding towards Syria.[190]

The general points outlined in Al-Baghdadi's speech were explained in further detail by ISI's spokesman, Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani. In an audio recording on June 19th, 2013, Al-Adnani reiterated doubts about the authenticity of Al-Zawahiri's letter and whether it was truly issued by the latter. Al-Adnani emphasized the existence of a "real state" that re-emerged in Iraq and imposed itself in Syria; its determination to eliminate the borders and establish the Islamic State in the areas under its control in both Iraq and Syria; and to implement Shari'ah law throughout its land. Al-

---

[189] Ibid.
[190] Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, a speech entitled "*Baaqiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham,*" (Lit., It Shall Remain in Iraq and in the Levant/Syria), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://justpaste.it/gtch

Adnani stressed that ISI considers Al-Zawahiri's decision to divide the authority territorially between Iraq and Syria as "null and void," asserting instead that Al-Nusra Front is but merely a branch that belongs to the Islamic State, but its affiliation was not announced for security reasons.[191]

On November 8th, 2013, Al-Zawahiri returned with another audio speech confirming the authenticity of his letter and its contents. The second speech essentially reiterated the contents of the letter, and confirmed the validity and authenticity of the decisions attributed to him.[192]

The dispute between Al-Zawahiri (leader of the central Al-Qaeda organization) and Al -Baghdadi (leader of what by now was called ISIS) once again reignited the muffled and silenced historical crisis between Al-Qaeda's center and the Iraqi branch. The cornerstones of the conflict had always been the issues of the organization's ideological identity, priorities of the struggle, and the sectarian factor. The dynamics of "identity wars" constituted the key knot of the dispute. Central Al-Qaeda insisted on the strategy of "*Al-Ansar* wars" and sought to build alliances with Iran to counter what it considers the U.S.-Zionist scheme in the region. The Iraqi branch, on the other hand, grew fixated on "identity wars" to counter what it considered "Safavid" Shiite scheme, and to confront Iran and its Shiite allies and curb their influence, while simultaneously maintaining its fight against the United States and its allies.

---

[191] Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, an audio recording entitled "*Fa Tharhum wa maa Yaftarun,*" (Lit., So Leave Them and their Fabrications Alone), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BK1XShwkPhw

[192] See: Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Ibtaal al-Damj wa Fasl al-Welaya al-Makaniya,*" (Lit., The Voiding of the Merger and Dividing the Territorial Governance), available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cax1C6ETCp0

2. Al-Qaeda's New "Guidebook" after Bin Laden's Revisions

The "Abbottabad" documents[193] found by U.S. forces in Osama bin Laden's Pakistan hideout in May 2011 revealed that there was sharp criticism, albeit undeclared, among the central Al-Qaeda leadership towards the approach of the Iraqi branch and its increased targeting of Shiites. However, the dispute did not reach the point of outright rupture and estrangement until recently. Bin Laden had been keen to avoid confrontation with Al-Zarqawi and his organization, and worked persistently to contain and resolve the disputes in a calm and subdued manner.[194]

Ayman al-Zawahiri succeeded Bin Laden in commanding Al-Qaeda, and in September 2013, he issued what may be considered a new and revised "guidebook" and methodology of work for Al-Qaeda, entitled "*Tawjihaat 'Aamma li al-Amal al-Jihadi*," (General Instructions for Jihadi Work). In it, he stressed that "Al-Qaeda's military work targets first and foremost the global head of unbelief; America and its ally Israel, and second; their local allies who rule our countries." Al-Zawahiri also warns: "There should be

---

[193] The Abbottabad Documents consist of 175 pages in original Arabic electronic letters, draft letters, and internal Al-Qaeda communications found at Osama bin Laden's hideout in Abbottabad, Pakistan following the U.S. Special Forces raid at the compound that ended with the killing of Bin Laden in May 2011. Versions of these documents are found at "*Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Ladin Sidelined?*" At the website of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, released on May 3rd, 2012, available on the following link:
https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/letters-from-abbottabad-bin-ladin-sidelined
[Translator's note]
[194] See: Mohammad Abu Rumman, "*Qiraa'a fi Ab'aad al-Khilaf bayna al-Zawahiri wa al-Baghdadi*," (Lit., A Reading of the Dimensions of Conflict between Al-Zawahiri and Al-Baghdadi), Op. cit.

no fighting against deviating factions such as the *Rafidha* [rejecter] Shiites, Ismailis, Qadianis, and the deviant Sufi groups, unless they initiate and fight the Sunnis. If fighting them is inevitable, then the response should be limited to confronting only the fighting parties amongst them, while proclaiming that we are defending ourselves."[195]

Al-Zawahiri's approach here reflects the level of variance and divergence between the visions of central Al-Qaeda and ISI, both in their perspectives towards the priorities of the struggle and their positions towards Shiites and other Muslim factions that are not in agreement with the organizations' religious or political orientations.

On its part, and in contrast, ISI's spokesman Al-Adnani invested in the success of the "Demolishing Walls" plan (that was crowned on July 21st, 2013 with the attack on Abu Ghraib and Al-Taji prisons and the escape of ISI prisoners) to reiterate and stress the nature of the disputes between Al-Qaeda and ISI, and to refute a number of claims, including that the ISI forces others to pledge allegiance, and that it initiates the fight against them. In a speech entitled "*Lan Yadhurrukum illa Athaa*," (They shall not Harm You Except for Some Hurt), Al-Adnani states: "The State does not force anyone to pledge allegiance, and it does fight except those who fight it." Another claim Al-Adnani attempts to dispel is that ISI is unconcerned with propagating the religion, but is rather preoccupied with fighting. Al-Adnani stresses that the 'State' practices *Da'wa* before it fights. Furthermore, he responds to the accusation that ISI is merely repeating the mistakes of Iraq, as a "state" without a political project;

---

[195] See: Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Tawjihaat 'Aamma li al-'Amal al-Jihadi*," (Lit., General Instructions for Jihadi Work), Mu'asasat al-Sahaab for Media Production, available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=4154

stressing that the "Islamic State" mission is the "Ummah's mission, and we shall fight to establish the 'Islamic State' all those who fight us, and leave alone those who do not. This is our project and we shall not compromise or give up on it."[196]

Al-Adnani proceeds to outline the future plans schemed for the region by regional and world powers, summarizing them in two projects: "First: The project of a civil democratic state is a secular project supported by all the infidel groups, together, despite their conflicting interests and variance of their methods, not out of love for the people of Iraq or out of mercy for the people of the Levant [Syria], but out of fear of the return of God's sovereignty on Earth and the establishment of the Islamic caliphate. We say to the proponents of this project: You have been exposed in Egypt and your ills were revealed; the two idols have collapsed: democracy and the bankrupt [Muslim] "Brotherhood." Know that between you and a state that does not govern by God's law in [Syria] are seas of blood and mountains of skulls and body parts; you shall not dream of security or safety. The Second: the project of a local nation state that would be called "Islamic." This project has an "Islamic" façade, but its real truth is a nationalist state that submits to the tyrants in the West, and one that becomes their follower in the East, aimed to deflect the course of Jihad and strike it at its core."[197]

Al-Adnani concludes with the emphasis on ISI's position towards the central point of contention with its Jihadi Salafist opponents, stressing that, doctrinally (in ISI's perspective at least), it is not obligatory to completely fulfill the

---

[196] Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, a transcribed audio recording entitled "*Lan Yadhurrukum illa Athaa,*" (Lit., They Will not Harm You Except for Some Hurt), Op. cit.
[197] Ibid.

jurisprudential provision, which necessitates complete consolidation and preparedness in order to establish the "Islamic State."[198]

Furthermore, in another speech on May 11th, 2014, Al-Adnani accuses Al-Zawahiri of deviating from the approach of Al-Qaeda, and denied the existence of any allegiance from ISI towards Al-Qaeda. He adds: "The 'State' is not a subsidiary branch belonging to Al-Qaeda, and had never been. For if God would will for you to lay foot in the land of the Islamic State, you would only pledge allegiance to it and would become soldiers to its Qurashi Emir, the grandson of Al-Hussain, as you are today soldiers under the rule of Mullah Omar. It is not correct for an emirate or a 'state' to pledge allegiance to an organization." [199]

The dispute reached an unprecedented level of an exchange of accusations and casting doubts. For the first time, Al-Adnani's speech included a reference to the "secretive" relationship between the central Al-Qaeda organization and Iran. He states: "The Islamic State remained committed to the advice and directives of the Sheikhs and notable figures of Jihad; and thus, since its inception, the Islamic State did not strike the rejecters [Shiites] in Iran, but left them safe there. It [Islamic State] subdued the anger of its soldiers, despite its ability then to turn Iran into pools of blood. It has repressed its rage all these years, bearing the accusations of being agents of its bitterest of enemies, Iran, because we did not target it, leaving the [rejecter] Shiites there enjoying the

---

[198] Ibid.

[199] Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, an audio recording entitled "*'Uthran Amiru al-Qa'ida*," (Lit., Excuse Me, Oh Emir [Leader] of Al-Qaeda), May 11, 2014, Al-Furqan for Media Productions, available [in Arabic] on the following link:http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrwvi5vqC_w

security.. out of adherence to the orders of Al-Qaeda, to safeguards its interest and its supply line in Iran. Al-Qaeda has a valuable debt hanging on Iran's neck.. The [Islamic] State did not strike in Iran, or in the land of the two holy places [Saudi Arabia] at the request of Al-Qaeda and to maintain its interests – Al-Qaeda's interests that is – and its supply lines."[200]

This controversy led to a climate of polarization and sorting out preferences within the overall ranks of Jihadists. The Islamic Front and Al-Nusra Front both declared the name the "Battle of Nahrawan" on its fight against the Islamic State, describing it as a battle with the *Kharijites* [insurrecting rebels/outsiders] of Al-Baghdadi's state." ISI, on its part, considered itself waging "wars of apostasy" anew against factions of the Free Syrian Army, the "apostate infidels," and against the "collaborators," and *Sahawat* of other Islamic factions.

3. The Schism: Implications of the Split

The disputes transformed into an armed conflict on the ground, a struggle over dominance between ISI and other Islamist factions, particularly Al-Nusra Front. Despite the wide-scale military, media, and political campaign against ISI by rival factions, the Iraqi organization nonetheless proceeded with expanding territorially, seizing control by using terrifying combat tactics. Efforts to mediate and arbitrate

---

[200] Ibid.

failed, and ISI continued to achieve decisive military victories, as mentioned before.

After mediation efforts failed and the attempts at reconciliation turned into a bitter dispute between the two sides. With the eruption of armed conflict between the factions, Al-Qaeda's leader Ayman al-Zawahiri ultimately declared rupturing all relations with the Iraqi organization. In a statement issued on February 2nd, 2014, Al-Zawahiri declared that the organization now called "ISIS" is not a branch of the central Al-Qaeda organization, and that the latter has no organizational relations with the former, and stressed that Al-Qaeda is not responsible for the actions of ISIS.[201]

Al-Qaeda's decision to break all ties with ISIS consequently resulted in heightening the strife and hardening the rigidity and radicalization of ISIS. With the militarization of the conflict between the factions, ISIS launched attacks against Al-Nusra Front strongholds in Dair al-Zor (on the same day Al-Zawahiri's statement was issued). It seized the Koniko gas field in Dair al-Zor, and then proceeded to attack areas in the countryside of Al-Hasaka, effectively cutting supply routes to Dair al-Zor. This prompted Al-Nusra Front to up the ante. Emboldened by Al-Qaeda's decision to rupture ties, Al-Nusra issued a statement on February 7th, 2014

---

[201] The General Command – Al-Qaeda Jihad Organization, "*Bayan bi Sha'n 'Alaaqat Jamaa'at Qa'idat al-Jihad bi Jamaa'at "Al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-'Iraq wa al-Sham*," (Lit., A Statement Regarding the Relationship between Al-Qaeda Organization and the "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria/Levant" Organization), February 2, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://justpaste.it/ea9k

describing the details of ISIS transgressions and threatening to respond to its "aggression and malice."[202]

Two days later, on February 9th, 2014, ISIS responded with a counter statement[203] that insisted on Al-Nusra Front's subordination to the "Islamic State." The Statement accused Al-Nusra's leaders of treason, disloyalty, siding with the *Sahawat* (Awakenings) and the apostates, and calling on them to take heed of what happened to the *Sahawat* of Iraq. In reaction, Al-Nusra Front responded the next day with another statement[204] repudiating the accusation that it cooperates with the *Sahawat*, stressing instead that it works with "Muslims in general," not "apostates," and that it has no ties to "collaborators" and "traitors." Al-Nusra insisted that armed factions and tribes were instigated to fight ISIS in response to the latter's transgressions and attacks.

The war of statements did not change the reality; ISIS became more violent in dealing with armed factions in Syria, especially after the coordinated attack against it in January that killed its military leader Haji Bakr (which prompted a number of initiatives[205] for reconciliation and arbitration).

---

[202] Al-Nusra Front, a statement entitled "*Wa Qad A'thara man Anthar*," (Lit., He who Issues a Warning is Relieved of Responsibility), February 7, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://justpaste.it/ec4z

[203] The Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham/Levant, the governorate of Al-Barakah, a statement entitled "*Haatha Bayaanun li al-Nas*," (Lit., This is a Statement for People), February 9, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://justpaste.it/ecx3

[204] Al-Nusra Front, a statement entitled "*Fatabayyanuu*" (Lit., Investigate or Verify the Truth), February 10, 2014, in response to ISIS' statement "*This is a Statement for People,*" available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://justpaste.it/ed7l

[205] Among the most famous initiatives taken during that time is an initiative by the Saudi Arabian Sheikh Abdullah al-Muhaisini, one of the renowned exponents of Jihadi Salafist movements. Launched on January 23rd, 2014, under the title "*Mubadarat al-Ummah*" (The Ummah's Initiative), the effort was widely received

With the increased support and influx of allegiances to ISIS, domestically and from abroad,[206] ISIS proceeded to implement its plan to control, dominate, and eliminate opponents. This plan climaxed with the assassination of Al-Zawahiri's envoy Abu Khalid al-Suri[207] on February 23rd,

---

in the media, and was supported by a number of prominent Jihadi Salafist figures. See the text [in Arabic] available on the following link:
http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=348225

The Islamic State, however, categorically rejected the initiative. Ten days after he launched it, Al-Muhaisini responded with a statement announcing the Islamic State's rejection of his initiative, and held the organization responsible for the fighting that was ongoing between various factions. See: Abdullah al-Muhaisini, "*'An Mubadarat al-Ummah, Ala Hal Ballaght,*" (Lit., Regarding the Ummah's Initiative: Have I Relayed the Message?), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s08_Tm_Mbyg

[206] In late February 2014, 17 Jihadi fighters, including Abu 'Ubaida al-Lubnani, signed the statement "*Al-Munasarah al-Khurasaniya li al-Dawla al-Islamiya,*" (Lit., The Khurasan Support for the Islamic State). On February 18, 2014, 20 of the global Jihadi scholars published a statement in support of ISIS, and urge "those who adhere to the correct doctrine, among the Jihadi groups in Iraq and the Levant, to join the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham and to pledge allegiance to its emir." Among those who signed the statement is Abu Munthir al-Shinqiti. Also, on February 2nd, 2014, the Mujahideen Shura Council (*Aknaf Bayt al-Maqdis*), issued a statement entitled "*La Tasubbu Ahl al-Sham wa lakin Subbu Thalmatahum,*" (Do not Curse the People of the Levant, but Instead Curse the Darkness they are in). It stated: "The original cause of the fighting in the Levant (Syria specifically) is the unfair judgement against the Islamic State and its Emir, Emir of the Believers, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi." As for the Al-Qaeda regional branches in Al-Maghrib (North Africa), the Arabian Peninsula, and in Somalia, they preferred to remain silent on the issue and not take sides in the conflict in any clear way.

[207] Abu Khalid al-Suri was born in Aleppo, Syria in 1963. His real name is Muhammad Bahayaa, and is among the first generation of Al-Qaeda leaders. He witnessed the birth of the "Islamic Front to Fight the Jews and the Crusaders" in 1998, and was close to Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Pakistani authorities turned him over to Syrian authorities, and it was rumored to have released him briefly in April 2012 before re-arresting him. The renowned Jihadi Salafist exponent, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri described Abu Khalid in his book "The Call to Global Islamic Jihad," saying: "My brother, friend, and companion, the patient Jihadist Sheikh Abu Khalid al-Suri, may God protect him and benefit us and the Ummah by him and his likes." He adds: "How I wished he would have

2014, which stirred a storm of fierce debates and disputes between Jihadi Salafist factions in Syria, and a wave of accusations between Jihadist inside and outside Syria. Abu Khalid al-Suri, Al-Qaeda's longtime man behind the scenes, worked for years as an operational coordinator between central Al-Qaeda and its regional branches and extended networks, without international intelligence agencies ever being able to capture or kill him. Nevertheless, he was killed in Syria alongside six of his companions in a suicide mission against the headquarters of *Ahrar al-Sham* movement in the neighborhood of Al-Halk in Aleppo.[208]

---

reviewed this book before it is published, in addition to Sheikh Osama bin Laden, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Sheikh Abu al-Layth al-Libi." See: Abu Musʿab Al-Suri, "The Call to Global Islamic Jihad," op. cit.

[208] It appears that Al-Baghdadi's announcement of merging Al-Nusra Front into his Islamic State aroused Abu Khalid al-Suri's anger, especially that the latter does not support declaring a state or an organization under an "emirate of fighting," or in the stage of building strength, obtaining power, and vexing opponents (*Al-Shawka wa al-Nikaya*). Al-Suri saw it futile to declare a state or an emirate in the stage of consolidation of power (*Tamkeen*). It is this position, perhaps, that prompted some members and supporters of the *Ahrar al-Sham* and the Islamic Front to accuse ISIS of assassinating Al-Suri. They based their conclusions on a statement issued by Abu Khalid al-Suri in January 2014, in the context of arbitration, which included "Advice" to ISIS' leadership, calling on them to "repent," and considered their claim of "belonging to the Sheikhs of Jihad" such as Osama bin Laden, Al-Zawahiri, and Abu Musʿab al-Zarqawi, to be "a far cry from the upright and correct approach." See: "*Bayan Al-Sheikh al-Qaʾid Abu Khalid al-Suri fi Tahawwul Baʿd al-Mujahideen li Quttaʿ Turuq Sahwajiyah Mukhtaraqeen wa Nus-huhu lahom,*" (Lit., The Statement by the Sheikh and Leader Abu Khalid Al-Suri regarding the Turning of some Jihadists to Infiltrated Thugs and Highway Robbers), available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.muslm.org/vb/showthread.php?526745-
%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%AE-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%AF-
%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%88-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%8A-
%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%B6-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%8A

Two days after Al-Suri's assassination, Al-Nusra Front's leader Abu Muhammad Al-Jolani issued a statement entitled "*Laytaka Rathaytani*," (Wishing You would have Eulogized Me), in which he outlined the real nature of his organization's relationship with Al-Baghdadi's "State."[209]

In the statement, Al-Jolani, once more, presented the idea of resorting to arbitration of Shari'ah law in settling disputes between ISIS and the rest of the Jihadi Salafist factions. He nominated three figures to be arbitrators: Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Abu Qutada al-Filastini, and Sulaiman al-'Alwan (three of the most prominent global Jihadi Salafist scholars and ideologues today). However, the three figures themselves had already declared their support for Al-Nusra Front, which suggests that Al-Jolani was perfectly aware that ISIS would respond with categorical rejection of the issue of arbitration.

Al-Jolani's statement was loaded with criticism and attack against Al-Baghdadi, labeling his ideology as "the thought of an ignorant transgressor," and called on him to retract his religious edicts (*fatawa*) related to "disavowing Jihadist groups." Al-Jolani gave ISIS a 5-day ultimatum to respond to his demands, threatening to annihilate it "from its roots" in both Iraq and Syria. He adds: "If you do not put an end to your inflictions against the *Ummah*, you will instigate it to rise against your ignorant and transgressing thought and to annihilate you even from Iraq. And; you are aware that

---

%D9%86-%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%B9-
%D8%B7%D8%B1%D9%82-
%D8%B5%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%A9-
%D9%85%D8%AE%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%86-
%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%AD%D9%87-%D9%84%D9%87%D9%85

[209]Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, an audio recording entitled "*Laytaka Rathaytani*," (Lit., Wishing You would have Eulogized Me), February 25, 2014, Mu'asasat al-Manarah al-Baydhaa', available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://bab-ul-islam.net/showthread.php?t=24119

there are hundreds of esteemed brothers who are awaiting a signal from the *Ummah* regarding Iraq."[210]

On his part, Al-Zawahiri condemned the killing of Abu Khalid al-Suri in a eulogy[211] issued on April 5th, 2014, and implicitly blamed ISIS for the assassination. He reiterated his call to reject infighting and resort to arbitration and reconciliation, warning against the consequences of excessiveness, *Takfir*, and the shedding of blood between the Mujahideen. He cautioned that the infighting would lead to a situation like what happened in Algeria in the 1990s, in which the struggle was deflected and turned into a civil war.

By then, Al-Zawahiri's advice was no longer feasible, especially that it came after the decision to rupture relations with ISIS and renounce its affiliation with Al-Qaeda.[212] For ISIS, the decision was expected and anticipated, and became a suitable occasion to announce its complete independence

---

[210] Ibid.

[211] Ayman al-Zawahiri, an audio speech entitled "*Rithaa' Shaheed al-Fitna al-Shaikh Abi Khalid al-Suri Rahimahu Allah,*" (Lit., A Eulogy of the Martyr of Strife Sheikh Abu Khalid al-Suri, May God Rest His Soul), April 5th, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0zk6OsjjdI

[212] During this phase, the debate raged within the ranks of global Jihadi Salafist movements regarding the affiliation of the Islamic State to the Al-Qaeda organization, and about the nature of the historical relationship between them. In the context of attempting to strip the Iraqi branch of its legitimacy and prove its rebellion, the Egyptian Salafist sheikh, Hani al-Suba'i (who resides in London and is close to Al-Qaeda's leadership), published a group of questions on March 25th, 2014 related to the dispute between the Iraqi branch and the central Al-Qaeda organization. He stressed that there is incumbency in pledging allegiance. He addressed his questions to Ayman al-Zawahiri and asked him to respond. However, the questions were essentially an assertion of support to the approach of Al-Nusra Front and Al-Qaeda, and an effort to expose the Islamic State's "deviation," especially that the questions came after Al-Qaeda's decision to officially dismiss the Iraqi branch's affiliation, and the latter's progress in the battlefield and access to more support from some global Jihadist entities.

and to build a jihadist narrative that monopolizes the representation of the "real Jihadist truth." ISIS' Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani accused Al-Zawahiri himself of deviating from Al-Qaeda's norm and approach. In an audio message on April 14th, 2014, Al-Adnani attacked Al-Zawahiri and accused him of supporting deposed Egyptian President Muhammad Morsi and praying for him. He also shamed Al-Zawahiri for sitting "distant from the battlefield," and criticized the latter's acceptance of allegiance from the "renegade treacherous traitor Al-Jolani," in addition to charging him with deviating from Al-Qaeda's historical approach under Osama bin Laden.

Al-Adnani states: "Al-Qaeda organization today is no longer the Al-Qaeda [base] of Jihad, for it is not an Al-Qaeda of Jihad one that is praised by the pitiful, flattered by the tyrants, and tickled by the deviant and misguided.. It is not an Al-Qaeda of Jihad one that the *Sahawat* and the secularists entrench in its ranks.. Al-Qaeda's leadership today seeks to destroy the Islamic State and the coming Caliphate."[213]

The next day (April 19th, 2014), Al-Qaeda's media arm (Al-Sahaab) released an audio-recorded interview in which Al-Zawahiri affirmed the repudiation of the Iraqi branch and held it responsible for the infighting between Jihadi factions in Syria and its deviation from Al-Qaeda's approach. Al-Zawahiri stressed that "Al-Qaeda is a message before it is an organization. If we distorted this message then we have lost, even if we were to expand organizationally and financially." In cautioning against the Iraqi branch's deviation, he states:

---

[213] Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, "*Maa Kana Hatha Manhajuna wa lan Yakoun*," (Lit., This was not Our Approach, and Will Never Be), April 18, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://alplatformmedia.com/vb/showthread.php?t=44901

"This presents to our enemies the greatest opportunity to smear our reputation and to cause the *Ummah* to separate from us."[214]

4. Between Two Models

Despite Al-Zawahiri growing hopeless of bridging the gap and putting an end to the fighting between ISIS and Al-Nusra Front along with others, and despite his renunciation of Al-Baghdadi's and ISIS' ruthless approach, the Al-Qaeda commander nonetheless put forth yet another attempt at reconciliation. In response to the urging of Hani al-Sabai'i, a prominent figure close to Al-Qaeda and Jihadi Salafist movements, Al-Zawahiri issued an audio message on May 2nd, 2014, entitled "Shahada li Haqn al-Dimaa'" (A Testament to Stop the Bloodshed), in which he emphasized ISIS' historical affiliation with Al-Qaeda as a regional branch, and insisted on the existence of a pledge of allegiance to the mother organization. He quoted passages from exchanged communications between the two organizations, and stressed the binding nature of Al-Baghdadi and his state's allegiance to Al-Qaeda. Al-Zawahiri renewed calls to resort to arbitration by an independent religious commission that would hear the case. He maintained a soft rhetoric in his message, addressing Al-Baghdadi as the "Venerable Sheikh Abu Bakr al-Hussaini al-Baghdadi," and urging him to follow the example of Al-Hassan bin Ali (bin Abi Talib, the

---

[214] Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Al-Waqi' bayna al-Alam wa al-Amal*" (Lit, Reality between Pain and Hope), Op. cit.

Prophet's grandson), when he "buried the strife," and brought about reconciliation between two great Muslim groups. 215

Once again, ISIS' response was negative. On May 11th, 2014, ISIS' spokesperson Abu Muhammad al-Adnani issued a statement entitled "*'Uthran Amiru al-Qa'ida,*" (Excuse Me, Oh Emir of Al-Qaeda), denying again the existence of an "allegiance" between his organization and Al-Qaeda. He states: "The 'State' is not a subsidiary branch belonging to Al-Qaeda, and had never been. For if God would will for you to lay foot in the land of the Islamic State, you would only pledge allegiance to it and would become soldiers to its Qurashi emir, the grandson of Al-Hussain, as you are today soldiers under the rule of Mullah Omar. It is not correct for an emirate or a 'state' to pledge allegiance to an organization." [216]

It is clear that ISIS' delay in responding to Al-Zawahiri's letter was deliberate; it came after it was able to repel counter-attacks, and expanded territorially in both Iraq and Syria. The response was not confined to denying the "allegiance" and insisting on the deviation of Al-Qaeda's approach under Al-Zawahiri's leadership, but extended to accusing the central Al-Qaeda organization of having "questionable" relations with Iran. Al-Adnani expressed that "Al-Qaeda has a valuable debt hanging on Iran's neck.. The [Islamic] State did not strike in Iran, or in the land of the two holy places [Saudi Arabia] at the request of Al-Qaeda and to maintain its interests – Al-Qaeda's interests that is –and its supply lines," as discussed before.

---

[215] Ayman al-Zawahiri, an audio message entitled "*Shahadah li Haqn al-Dimaa*" (Lit., A Testament to Stop the Bloodshed), May 2nd, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rfvgCLq-BBY

[216] Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, "*'Uthran Amiru al-Qa'ida,*" (Lit., Excuse Me, Oh Emir [Leader] of Al-Qaeda), Op. cit.

Moreover, Al-Adnani laid the responsibility of infighting between Jihadists on the shoulders of Al-Zawahiri, accusing him of dividing and tearing Al-Qaeda apart, and of committing fatal doctrinal and methodological errors. Al-Adnani put forth two options for Al-Zawahiri "in order to stop the bloodshed"; either to "continue in your error and stubbornness, whereby fighting and divisions will continue throughout the world, or to admit and acknowledge your error and change course, whereby we would extend to you our hands again." Al-Adnani also urged Al-Zawahiri to reject Al-Jolani's allegiance, considering the latter a "treacherous traitor."

He cautioned Al-Qaeda's Emir to "stop manipulating religious and doctrinal provisions and terminology," and to explain his positions regarding various issues, including Al-Qaeda's position towards deposed Egyptian President Muhammad Morsi (whose 'unbelief' (*Kufr*) is evident in Al-Adnani's perspective), and towards the Muslim Brotherhood movement in general. The response also included a call to "reject peaceful methods" and to "urge Muslims – explicitly – towards Jihad." Al-Adnani stressed that resorting to an independent court for arbitration is an "impossible" matter, and that ISIS will not get out of Syria. Finally, he calls on all Al-Qaeda branches to take an official and firm position regarding the ongoing dispute.[217]

For his part, Al-Jolani asked Al-Nusra Front's General Religious Official (and commander of the eastern region) Abu Mariah al-Qahtani to respond to Al-Adnani. On May 13, 2014,[218] Al-Qahtani issued a stern statement void of any

---

[217] Ibid.
[218] Abu Mariah al-Qahtani, an audio speech entitled "*Ayuha al-Mutaradid*," (Lit., Oh You who is Hesitant), May 13, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzFhOXwWsdU

"soft" rhetoric this time, calling on all the "Mujahideen" in Syria to fight ISIS in order to eliminate the entity entirely, and "relieve Muslims from them."

Al-Qahtani stressed that fighting ISIS, an entity he described as "the *Kharijites* [outsiders/renegades] of this era" has become inevitable, in order to stop this "barbaric organization," and to topple it. He considered that any Jihadist who hesitates in fighting them will be considered their collaborator and a supporter of their continued oppression and treason against the Syrian people, adding that "the remedy for this group is the sword of Ali, with which [Ali] asked the Prophet to fight the *Kharijites* in Al-Nahrawan [battle], and in it asking for God's reward."[219]

Al-Qahtani held ISIS responsible for the fall of Homs in the hands of the Syrian regime, which resulted from ISIS' soldiers cutting supply lines from the Mujahideen inside the city. He warned that Aleppo would fall the same way, after ISIS exposed the hideouts of fighters of other armed factions. Al-Qahtani considered that the Syrian regime benefits from ISIS, an organization that has "supported the *Nusayri* [Alawites] in continuing to violate the sanctity of Muslims and kill innocent people," according to his expression.[220]

The war of statements, which came in parallel to the war on the battlefield, ushered in a new, unprecedented, and critical phase for the global Jihadi Salafist current. The new phase witnessed the expansion of ISIS in both territory and dominance, on the one hand, and the decline and fracturing of Al-Nusra Front and the schism of Al-Qaeda, on the other. Armed clashes between Jihadist groups and ISIS continued in Syria with the polarization in the ranks of Jihadists evident

---

[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid.

with several groups and movements siding with Al-Nusra, while others joined the ranks of ISIS and pledged allegiance to Al-Baghdadi. Jihadist factions in Syria grew more apprehensive and fragmented, unable to effectively draw their future visions or understand the nature of dealing with ISIS and the Syrian regime. The nature of the desired state and system in Syria and its relationship with the international community became more blurred. The reluctance and confusion of Syrian armed factions was reflected in their attempted adaptive notions, manifested with the May 17th, 2014 announcement by a number of factions of signing "The Revolution's Code of Honor."[221]

Various Islamic political, intellectual, and advocacy (*Da'wa*) movements and groups issued many statements and religious edicts (*Fatwas*)[222] denouncing Al-Baghdadi's

---

[221] A group of Syrian armed factions issued a "Revolution's Code of Honor for Fighting Groups," that includes the most important principles that govern revolutionary work, including rejection of extremism and *Takfir* (disavowing others as infidels), respecting human rights, rejecting the division of Syria, and reliance upon Syrian fighters in the conflict against the regime. The "Code" was signed by The Islamic Union of Levant Soldiers, the Levant Brigade, the Mujahideen Army, the Al-Furqan Brigades, and the Islamic Front. The document was well-received by Al-Nusra, especially that it stressed the focus on the "Syrian" aspect, and its mention of the need to comply with laws and conventions. The Islamic State, on the other hand, dismissed it, and did not issue any official response to it. The signing of the "Code" later became a stigma of dishonor and unbelief (*Kufr*), with jihadists pursuing those who signed it. Thus, Syrian jihadists began to disavow it and reject its contents, considering it a retreat from the idea of an "Islamic State." See the statement announcing "*Mithaq Sharaf Thawri li al-Kata'ib al-Muqatila,*" available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xPyM3bjgGw

[222] Various Islamic groups, entities, and prominent figures criticized the declaration of the "Caliphate." In Iraq, the "Association of Muslim Scholars" stressed that "a declaration by any group of the establishment of an Islamic, or non-Islamic, state or emirate in light of these circumstances is not in the interest of Iraq and its unity." Dr. Sheikh Ahmad al-Raysouni, vice president of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, headed by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, also criticized the declaration; stating that the announcement by the 'Islamic State'

declaration of the State of the Caliphate, basing their religious rulings to the incomplete fulfillment of the Shari'ah and *Fiqh* (jurisprudential) stipulations for the establishment of the Caliphate. Most important of these missing conditions are the absence of "*Tamkeen*" (consolidation of power), and the "ignorance" of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. However, it is amidst the influx of such opinions and *fatwas* that the "Caliph" Al-Baghdadi appeared, for the first time publicly, giving the Friday sermon at the Grand Mosque in Mosul on the 6th of Ramadhan, July 5th, 2014. Al-Baghdadi's public appearance effectively put to rest the controversies and debates about his true character and doubts about his real existence.[223]

Criticisms and denunciation of the declaration of the Caliphate were also issued by figures from within the global Jihadist current, such as Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Abu Qutada al-Filastini. Al-Maqdisi, Al-Zarqawi's former mentor, wrote an article on his online forum "*Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*" in which he raised a number of questions, without necessarily diverting from his previous statements and letters. He questioned, doubtfully, the religious legitimacy of declaring the Caliphate. He states: "Will this caliphate be a refuge for every vulnerable person, and a shelter to every Muslim, or will this title be used as a sword over the necks of those Muslims who are in disagreement with them.. and, what is the fate of the rest of Muslim fighting groups who have gained the allegiance of its members in Iraq and Syria and in

---

of establishing the Caliphate is a "delusionary mirage and a figment of their imagination." Hizb al-Tahrir, on its part, considered the declaration of the Caliphate a matter of "mere chatter; that does not offer progress or delay in the reality of the Islamic State organization."

[223] See: The Friday Sermon and Prayer at the Grand Mosque in the City of Mosul, by Al-Baghdadi, op. cit.

all corners of the earth, and what is the fate of their bloods in the perspective of that which is called the Caliphate?!"[224]

Abu Qutada al-Filastini also strongly criticized the declaration of Al-Baghdadi's caliphate, warning in a lengthy letter that the declaration will thrust the Mujahideen fighters into a bitter internal struggle. He states: "What the Islamic State in Iraq declared to be the "State of the Islamic Caliphate" is null and void.. and is the error of the foolishness of those who cannot project the secondary notions upon the fundamentals [of religion]." He described ISIS as an "innovation" (*bid'a*).. that "which there shall be no fighting under its banner unless for necessity." He called on the "wise" members of the organization to "prevent further excess and exaggeration from amongst them if they want for themselves and their fellow brothers any good."[225]

For its part, Al-Nusra Front was even more concerned with the issue of declaring the caliphate, especially after a number of its members defected and pledged allegiance to Al-Baghdadi. The strongest response came from Abu Mariah al-Qahtani, the Front's religious official and commander of the eastern region, who stressed (through his account on Twitter) that ISIS is an organization that belongs to the "extremist *Kharijites*," and that the "caliphate" is imaginary, an illusion aimed to attract Arab and foreign fighters to replenish the deficit in their ranks.

---

[224] Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, "*Haatha Ba'dhu ma 'Indi wa Laysa Kuluhu*," (Lit., This is Some of What I have [to Say] and not All of It), Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=01071401

[225] Abu Qutada, Omar Mahmoud Abu Omar, "*Thiyaabu al-Khalifa*," (Lit., The Garb of the Caliph), available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://eldorar.net/sites/default/files/klefha.pdf

Conclusion

The differences and subsequent clashes between the Islamic State organization, on one hand, and Al-Qaeda and Al-Nusra Front, on the other, exceeded the attempts at containment and reconciliation. These differences were not confined inside the boundaries of Iraq and Syria, or even Lebanon, but extended and reflected a climate of extreme polarization among Jihadi Salafist mediums throughout the world, divided between the two models that transpired from this conflict.

The situation today reflects, indeed, two distinct and even antagonistic and conflicting currents, with each disavowing the other. Jihadi Salafist leaders, along with Al-Qaeda and Al-Nusra Front, consider the "Caliphate" current to be extremist *Kharijites*, and *Takfiris* who disavow all who are in disagreement with them. This current sees in the Islamic State a "tool" that effectively serves the agenda of opponents of Jihadi Salafist movements, and a "model" that will not be sustained, despite its current strength and dominance. Abu Qutada al-Filastini perhaps expresses best this wager on IS' inevitable collapse by describing the model of the Islamic State as a mere "bubble."

In the opposing camp, followers of the Islamic State charge Al-Zawahiri with "deviating" from the path of Osama bin Laden, and cast the labels of "treason" upon Al-Nusra Front, accusing it of rescinding its allegiance and loyalty towards the Islamic State. Proponents of this camp insist that

IS, and what it represents of a model of power, rigor, and fierceness in fighting its rivals is the most capable of survival and of defending Sunni communities and its Sunni identity in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. To them, the IS model is the most unequivocal in defining and confronting sources of danger and threat, led by the Shiites, Iranian influence in the region, and the hostile Arab regimes.

In the face of the mainstream perspective that rejects the establishment of the "Islamic State" and refuses to recognize the "Caliphate," proponents of the IS model published numerous books and articles, in print and the Internet,[226] defending the ideology and approach of the 'State,' and responding to opponents on matters related to the ongoing conflict between the two currents, the establishment of the Islamic State, and finally, regarding the declaration of the Caliphate.

The climate of division and polarization within Jihadi Salafist circles, globally and regionally, is still clouded with a great deal of uncertainty. Some groups declared, explicitly or implicitly, their support for IS, whether through announcing allegiance, adopting the IS logo and slogans, or mimicking its practices. These groups include, for example, the Mujahideen Shura Council in Darna, Libya,[227] groups from within the Jihadi Salafist current in Jordan[228] and in Morocco.[229]

---

[226] The blog of Jarir al-Hasani, available on the Internet, is considered one of the most prominent sites specializing in publishing the responses of individuals close to the Islamic State to opponents, available on the following link: http://thabat111.wordpress.com/page/6/

[227] Abdullah Sulaiman Ali, *Da'ish fi Darna al-Llibiya: Mahkamah Shar'iyah wa Istamalat Dhubbat,"* (Lit., ISIS in Libya's Darna: A Shariah Religious court and the Lobbying of Officers), published in the Beirut-based Al-Safeer newspaper, October 22, 2014.

[228] See: for example, the Jordanian case in a report by Tamer al-Smadi, entitled "*Tantheem al-Dawla.. Qiblat al-Jihadiyeen al-Urduniyeen,*" (Lit., The Islamic

Meanwhile, other groups hold steadfast to their relationship and support for the central Al-Qaeda organization, such as the *Ansar al-Shariʻah* group in Tunisia. All the while, other groups remain in limbo and have not declared their positions, such as the Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula branch in Yemen.[230]

The Islamic State has come to provide a realistic model that rivals the model of Al-Qaeda, and seeks to pull the rug from under the central organization's feet, so-to-speak. It seeks to seize the legitimacy of representing and embodying the Jihadi Salafist current, by virtue of what it considers itself to be; a story of success in constructing power and force and realizing the dream of establishing an Islamic state, all of which are ultimate goals espoused by the principles and values of the Jihadi Salafist movement in general. However, the success of this model depends on its ability to survive and keep going, which is a big and existential challenge for IS,

---

State Organization.. The Directed Destination of Jordanian Jihadists), Al-Jazeera Net, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2014/10/25/%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%8A%D9%85-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9-
%D9%82%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%A9-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86

[229] See: Walid Ramzi, "*Inqisam al-Qaʻida fi al-Maghrib al-ʻArabi hawla Dawlat al-Khliafa*," (Lit., The Schism of Al-Qaeda in the Arab Maghrib [North Africa] over the Caliphate State), The Magharibiya electronic website, July 18, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://magharebia.com/ar/articles/awi/features/2014/07/18/feature-01

[230] See: Saʻoud bin Saleh al-Sarhan, "*Qaʻidat al-Yaman.. Bawadir Tassaduʻ wa Al-Baghdadi Yataqadam*," (Lit., The Al-Qaeda in Yemen.. Signs of a Rift, and Al-Baghdadi is Leading), Al-Sharq al-Awsat newspaper, October 13, 2014, available on the following link: http://www.aawsat.com/home/article/199751

especially in light of the formation of a global and regional military coalition against it.

Indeed, the recent developments pose yet another question on whether defeating IS militarily in Iraq and Syria will effectively destroy or weaken this model, reclaiming for the mother organization, Al-Qaeda, its respective position within the overall Jihadi Salafist ideology. Or, conversely, will it bring about the birth of a new generation of Jihadi Salafists who exceed in their ideology and practice the traditional Salafist Al-Qaeda-oriented approach?

The answers to this question will be discussed in the concluding chapter of this book, which examines the future horizons and prospects of the Islamic State organization, and after a discussion in the coming chapters of the development of the ideological path of the Jihadi Salafist movement, in general, and the organizational structures of both IS and Al-Nusra Front ■

Chapter Five

The Struggle over the Ideology of Jihadi Salafism

Introduction

Despite the distinctly different paths taken by each of the ideologies of the Islamic State, on one hand, and Al-Qaeda and Al-Nusra Front, on the other; they both ultimately belong to the overall current of Jihadi Salafism, albeit now representing a new phase of its developments and schism. The two ideologies nonetheless share in common a number of important central issues, which represent the basic ideological core for all who belong to this general current.

It is important to recall, here, that the contemporary Jihadi Salafist movement, with Al-Qaeda as its most prominent representative, had completely broke off with reformist Islamic thought, which crystallized with the end of the 18th century and extended well into the mid-20th century. The Jihadi Salafist movement placed the concept of Jihad at the heart of its priorities. It reformulated its theoretical and practical connotations from a concept linked with struggle against the "outside" or against the "occupation," to a revolutionary concept that aims to overturn the overall conditions of Muslims, by replacing the reformist notions that call for a gradual application of the Shari'ah and the use of peaceful approaches with a revolutionary and 'Jihadi' approach to realize goals and objectives.

For contemporary Jihadi Salafism, the concept of "Jihad" has become closer to a revolutionary ideology that aims to topple the "*Jahiliyya*" (ignorance) regimes that are controlling

the fates of the Arab and Muslim worlds. This revolutionary ideology is based upon the principle of "*al-Hakimiyya*" (God's sovereignty), which dictates the *Kufr* (unbelief) and *Ridda* (apostasy) of the current regimes and the contemporary Muslim countries that were created with the waning of colonialism and imperialism. The Jihadi Salafist ideology blasts this modern heritage that resulted in the rise of the contemporary "nation states," which are built upon the principles and political-economic systems of Arab nationalism, liberal democracy, or leftist socialism, or even a blend of these ideologies.

The existing differences among the Jihadi Salafist circles, and the two main currents that emerged out of these differences, did not topple the overall fundamental principles upon which Jihadi Salafist ideology is founded. On the contrary, both currents still hold steadfast to these principles, which include the believe in the duty to establish the Islamic state, disavowing as infidels (*takfir*) the Arab regimes that do not govern by Islamic Shari'ah, the principle of "*Al-Walaa' wa al-Baraa'*" (loyalty and disavowal),[231] fighting (armed

---

[231] The principle of "*al-Walaa' wa al-Baraa'*" (Loyalty towards Muslims and Disavowal towards Unbelievers) also represents a central concept for the followers of Jihadi Salafism. The general meaning behind this notion is in its first part: *"al-Walaa'"* or "loyalty and allegiance", which is the commitment to the emotion and the conduct of loving God, ones' parents, all Muslims who are truly committed and of the community of "*Muwahhidin*" (the believers in the one God; the true adherents of "*al Tawhid*"); and in its second part, "*al-Baraa'*" or "disavowal and disassociation", which entails disavowing and animosity towards the idolaters (*Mushrikin*), and towards sins, wrong doings, and the *Tawagheet* (tyrants) who go against and violate the laws of God Almighty (*Sharia*). Jihadi Salafist literature considers "*al-Walaa' wa al-Baraa'*" as one of the key concepts connected to the doctrine of Islam. For them, it represents a principle criterion for measuring the extent of the sincerity and genuineness of a Muslim's faith and his/her commitment to Islam. For more discussion on this principle, see: Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh, "*The Islamic Solution in Jordan…*," op. cit., pp. 385- 387. [Translator's note]

confrontations) as a strategy for change, fighting the United States and the West, belief in and adherence to the Divine doctrines derived from the heritage of Salafist literature, and rejecting democracy. Other principles shared in common between the two currents also include the perspective that the approach of other Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood movement and Salafist groups that do not endorse armed struggle (such as the Traditional and *Harakiyya* (activist/movement) trends of Salafism), is essentially a wrongful approach.

The two currents, however, differ in other issues of no less importance than the above, and are not necessarily related to tactics. There are two distinctly different visions regarding the framework and priorities of the struggle. Is this struggle against the Shiites in general and the other Islamist groups that do not adopt the approach of Jihadi Salafism (as ISIS did in both Syria and Iraq)? Or; is the focus of the struggle on confrontation with the United State, the West, and their allies in the region and attempting to attract more supporters and form alliances with other Islamists (which was the approach of Al-Nusra Front)?

These differences, and their implications, extend to many other important issues, such as the position towards the establishment of the "State" (or the State of Savagery), the position towards Shiites, excessive use of suicide operations, the limits of *Takfir* and *Tadhlil* (disavowing others as deviating astray), and matters related to killing and bloodshed, and other issues that have created a wide gap between the two currents.

This chapter presents a summarized analysis of the paths of Jihadi Salafism, the historical development of its ideological vision, and the stages it went through from its

early emergence in the mid-1960s as local groups, passing through the stage of "solidarity Jihad" in Afghanistan in the 1980s, followed by the establishment of the Al-Qaeda nucleus towards the later years of the 1980s and early 1990s, and the subsequent transformation towards a more "global" framework of Jihad, and the rise of a new generation after the American war on Afghanistan in 2002. The discussion also analyzes the conditions and factors that helped shape the later stages; the era of the "War on Terror," which saw the emergence of the "Islamic State" and the formation of its distinct ideology, but also witnessed a climate that prompted the central Al-Qaeda organization to undergo strategic "revisions," and its attempts at "ideological adaptation" with the climate of the Arab revolutions. Finally, this chapter addresses how these factors culminated in the rise of Al-Nusra Front's ideology, and the more recent eruption of ideological and tactical disputes between the two currents.

1. The "Founding Fathers" of Jihadi Salafist Ideology

The modern conception of "Jihad" developed in the era of the modern Arab nation state, and was used in the context of confronting local regimes, which do not govern by the basic Islamic religious Shari'ah principles, but rather embody tyranny, despotism, and loyalty and subjugation to the colonizers.

Sayyid Qutb is considered one of the founders of the contemporary Jihadi Salafist ideology, albeit having been one of the most prominent leaders and ideological theorists of the

Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, a movement that continuously maintained an ideology distinct from Jihadi Salafism. Qutb's thoughts, particularly in the later stages of his Islamist activism, broke away from reformist Islamist thought and the general vision of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Qutb's book "*Ma'aalim fi al-Tareeq*" (commonly known as *Milestones*), is considered a "constitution" that Jihadi Salafist groups depend upon in most of their notions, particularly regarding their vision and approach of action and mechanisms of bringing about change. Two principles constitute the foundations of this thought: *Al-Hakimiyya* (Divine sovereignty) and *Al-Jahiliyya* (state of ignorance). Qutb borrowed the concept of *Al-Hakimiyya* from the Abu al-A'la al-Mawdudi, the prominent 20th century Islamic thinker hailing from the Indian subcontinent.

Al-Jahiliyya, according to Qutb, "is based on an assault on God's sovereignty on earth, and particularly, against the nature of the ultimate feature of the Divine, that is of *al-Hakimiyya*; and instead, grants the right to govern to human beings by appropriating the right to set the outlook, values, legislation, laws and systems of governance separate and in isolation of the comprehensive model for living life set forth by God."[232]

Qutb's prime motivation in his examination of the concepts of *Al-Hakimiyya* and *Al-Jahiliyya* and today's governance of the Arab and Muslim lands "*Al-Dar*" (abode); and whether they are Islamic in nature or not; is to strip legitimacy from the global systems existing today, whether Arab nationalism, socialism, or democracy, in preparation to

---

[232] Sayyid Qutb, "*Ma'aalim fi al-Tareeq,*" (Lit., Hallmarks in the Path), the book is widely known as "*Milestones*." Cairo, Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 8th ed., 1982, pg. 10.

changing and overthrowing them. Such overthrow would be accomplished by highlighting the revolutionary function of "Jihad" in Islam. There must arise a relentless campaign against all who limit Jihad to the function of defense against foreign aggression, for those who adopt this approach are, according to Qutb: "spiritually defeated, mentally under the pressure of the desperate reality of Muslims who have nothing remaining of Islam except its title: Islam's Jihad is not waged only for defense. Or; do they actually think that they are doing service to this religion by abandoning its approach, that is, to remove all the tyrants from earth, and to ensure that people worship God alone, and that people are taken out of a state of bondage to a state of worship, to be servants to the Lord of all people?! This is not done by forcing them to embrace its doctrine [Islam], but by giving them sanctum that leaves them in solitary with this doctrine after all the other political systems are destroyed or subdued to pay *Jizya* [special tax levied on non-Muslims], and declare their surrender, thereby leaving room for its masses to be left alone with this doctrine."[233]

It may be argued that the conditions that Egypt went through after the triumph of the July 1952 revolution, particularly with the persecution of the Muslim Brotherhood movement after the Al-Manshiya incident of 1954, largely contributed to causing a rift within the movement, between a peaceful current led by Hassan al-Hudaibi, and a revolutionary current led by Sayyid Qutb. This rift constituted the embryonic stage of the formation and development of

---

[233] Sayyid Qutb, "*Thalaath Rasa'il fi al-Jihad*," (Lit., Three Letters on Jihad), Amman, Dar Ammar, 1991, pp. 113-114.

Jihadist groups, which continued to evolve and reproduce since then.[234]

Jihadi Salafism subsequently witnessed a significant development at the hands of Dr. Saleh Sariya,[235] who, since settling in Egypt in 1974, worked to establish a Jihadi group known as "*Al-Kuliyya al-Faniyya al-'Askariyya*" (The Military Technical College). The corpus of Sariya's overall thought is found in his book "*Risalat al-Eman*" (The Message of Belief), which he wrote in 1973, and is considered the ideological basis for later Jihadist movements.

In his book, Sariya diagnoses the essential problem of contemporary society with what he called "collective apostasy," and defines the methodological basis that allows

---

[234] The first Jihadist movement in Egypt appeared in 1958, led by Nabil Bar'i, who left the Muslim Brotherhood movement, and called for the use of violence. In his discourse and thought, he depended mainly on Ibn Taymiyyah as a method of action. 'Alawi Mustafa defected from Bar'i's group in 1973, and established a new organization under the name "Al-Jihad." For more details on the conditions and implications that accompanied the development of the thought of Qutb from peaceful action to radicalism, see: Muhammad Ahmad Khalaf Allah, "*Al-Harakaat al-Islamiya al-Mu'asira fi al-Watan al-'Arabi*," (Lit., The Contemporary Islamic Movements in the Arab World), a seminar, and article entitled "*Al-Sahwa al-Islamiya fi Misr*," (Lit., The Islamic Awakening in Egypt), Markaz al-Dirasat al-Wihda al-'Arabiya, Beirut, 1st ed., 1987, pp. 64-67.

[235] Saleh Sariya was born in Jaffa, Palestine in 1947. He witnessed the Black September events in Jordan, which led to the expulsion of Palestinian organizations from Jordan, and its resettlement in Beirut following armed clashes. Sariya did not participate in the Black September events. He then moved to Iraq, and then escaped to Egypt in 1971, escaping a death sentence in absentia, over the accusations laid against him for forming a cell of the Hizb al-Tahrir and anti-regime activities. In Egypt, he worked at the Arab League headquarters. He received a doctoral degree in Education from Ein Shams University. In 1973, he established "*Shabab Muhammad*" (The Youth of Muhammad) organization, which was known as "the Military Technical College" group. He masterminded a failed coup, and was sentenced to death in 1975. Although he was versed in the heritage of sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, however, he did not have any organizational ties to Hizb al-Tahrir.

for the *Takfir* of the contemporary state and for stigmatizing society as living in a state of contemporary *Jahiliyya*, with the 'state' and 'society' being the two general entities being afflicted by the this contemporary ignorance.

His "Message" begins with an in-depth look at contemporary reality to identify the "identity," and then rule that Arab and Muslim "societies" are unbelieving infidels (*Kufr*). Sariya judges that there is no real belief (*Eman*) if words are not backed by action, and therefore, confining religion to mere worship only serves the ecclesiastical trend, which separates religion (church) from legislation and transactions (state). In its best case scenario, this trend is considered a partner with Western European sources (capitalism), Eastern ones (socialism), and the artificial Arab ones (nationalism and Arab nationalism). These systems, and all that arise from them in terms of institutions and manifestations of material and cultural "westernization," are considered *Kufr* and "collective apostasy."[236]

Based on the above, Sariya reaches the perilous judgement that the existing systems in all Muslim countries are unbelieving (*kufr*), and all the societies within them are ignorant (*jahiliyya*). The *Takfir* of the state is based on all the laws and legislations that conflict with Islam, and all the practices and behaviors that contradict Islam. At the level of individuals, Sariya judges that anyone who supports these regimes and systems and considers them to be "Islamic;" and supports their erroneous and invalid policies; is then effectively an unbelieving infidel (*kafir*).[237]

---

[236] Saleh Sariya, "*Risalat al-Iman*," (Lit., The Message of Belief), The Student Union of Dar al-'Uloom Faculty, University of Cairo, 1977.
[237] Ibid., pg. 28.

The only path, according to Sariya, is that of "Jihad to change these governments and establish the Islamic state." This mission is "an individual duty incumbent upon every Muslim man and woman, because Jihad is ongoing until the Day of Judgement."[238]

The conditions of the late 1970s and early 1980s were crucial in the rise of a number of Jihadi groups in Egypt, which gave additional impetus to the stage of "local Jihadism." These conditions further worked to spread these movements throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds. The largest contribution to the thought of Jihadi Salafist movements came from Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj,[239] whose book "*Al-Faridha al-Gha'iba*" (Jihad: The Neglected Duty), is a fundamental pillar and primary reference for contemporary Jihadi Salafist movements.

In his book, Faraj decides that the majority of Islamist groups meet on a specific goal; that is, to establish the Islamic state, on the ground that the current 'state' is, for all intents and purposes, un-Islamic. Faraj reasons and postulates on two key issues, namely: the *Kufr* of the existing 'state' across the Arab and Muslim worlds, and the necessity of fighting, by invoking the pillar of "Jihad," which is the only religiously legitimate means capable of producing the desired change.

---

[238] Ibid., pg. 37.

[239] Muhammad 'Abd al-Salam Faraj was born in 1962. He graduated from the faculty of Engineering at University of Cairo, and worked there. He is widely versed in the writings of Sayyid Qutb, Abu al-A'la al-Mawdudi, and the heritage of Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim, and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. He became the first "Emir" of the *Jama'at al-Jihad*, and was the main mastermind of the assassination of former Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. He was arrested after the *Manassa* incident on October 6, 1981, and was sentenced to death and executed in 1982. His book, *Al-Jihad: Al-Faridha al-Gha'iba* (Lit., Jihad: The Neglected Duty) is considered a "constitution" for Jihadi Salafist movements in the Arab and Muslim worlds.

Faraj bases his judgement of *Takfir* of the state on the issue of "legislation," with which the secular elite govern. This legislation considers the people to be the source of sovereignty and authority, and considers parliaments to be the only "legislator" in their constitutions. Hence, Islamic law (the *Shari'ah*) is reduced to merely a fraction of the sources of legislation; the overall corpus of which stems from capitalist, socialist, nationalist, or Arab nationalist systems. This makes the state today, according to Faraj, effectively *Kafir*[240] pursuant to the Qur'anic text "*And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the unbelievers*." (The Holy Qur'an 5:44)

Considering the *Takfir* of Arab and Muslim governments today, Faraj founds a premise of Jihad that is based upon a strategy of violence, in order to topple these regimes and establish the Islamic state. This would be accomplished according to two criteria: First, identifying the "near enemy" and the "distant enemy," and second, fighting and Jihad as an individual duty incumbent upon every Muslim.[241]

During the same period (1970s and 1980s), radical Islamist movements grew and spread throughout the Arab and Muslim world. Syria witnessed the rise of "*Al-Tali'a al-Muqatila*" (The Fighting Vanguard) led by Marwan Hadid, which clashed with the ruling regime there. In Algeria, a Jihadi Salafist organization emerged led by Mustafa Bouy'ali, and in Morocco, the thought of Abd al-Karim Muti' became widely popular among Jihadi Salafist circles. Saudi Arabia saw the rise of the Juhaiman al-'Otaibi group, which seized

---

[240] Muhammad 'Abd al-Salam Faraj, "*Al-Jihad: Al-Faridha al-Gha'iba*," (Lit., Jihad: The Neglected Duty), written in 1980, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://alkalema.net/algehad.htm

[241] Ibid.

the holy Mosque in Mecca in 1979. Also in 1979, Jihad was declared against the pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan, followed by armed conflict against Soviet troops following their invasion of the country.

2. From Solidarity Jihad to Global Jihad

Jihad in Afghanistan attracted most of the prominent figures of Jihadi Salafism, including Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, who established the "Services Desk" upon his arrival there in 1984. Osama bin Laden, Ayman Zawahiri, and other figures of Jihadi Salafism also came to Afghanistan from across the Arab and Muslim world, and established their own training camps there.

That stage witnessed an expansion in the concepts espoused by the founders of Jihadi Salafist discourse, such as Sayyid Qutb, Sariya, and Faraj, including the notions of *Al-Hakimiyya* (divine sovereignty), *Al-Jahiliyya* (ignorance), and *Jihad*. Jihadi Salafists who came from the Arabian Peninsula further influenced Jihadi discourse, indoctrinating it with the heritage of the Wahhabi discourse in particular. Their notions grew more reliant upon the Hanbali heritage, especially the thought of the 13th century Hanbali Jurist Ibn Taymiyyah and his disciples, Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn Kathir, and Ibn Rahb al-Hanbali, and the more modern formulation of Hanbali thought espoused by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and his followers. This era witnessed broadened use of other Salafists concepts such as of *Al-Walaa' wa al-Baraa'* (loyalty and disavowal), governing by un-Islamic systems, *Irjaa'* (delaying) in the doctrine, the excuse of ignorance, matters

that invalidate the faith, the *Al-Ta'ifa al-Mansoura* (The Victorious Sect), democracy, *Al-Taghout* (tyrants), and other issues prominent in the Wahhabi Salafist doctrine.

These issues formed the foundations of a comprehensive ideological system for Jihadi Salafism that culminates with the *Takfir* of all the systems of governance in the world, save the *Shari'ah*. This ideology distinguishes between the *Takfir* of two groups: first, the *Kufr Asli* (original unbelief) of People of the Book; the systems of capitalist democracy, socialism, communism, and Arab nationalism as followers of man-made ideologies. The second group, which is disavowed as *Kafir* (unbelief), *Ridda* (apostasy), *Shirk* (associating deities), and *Nifaq* (hypocrisy) are the states and societies in the Arab and Muslim worlds that abandon the Islamic authoritative frame of reference or blend between the historic Islamic system and the modern Western system.

This latter issue (the judgement against Arab and Muslim countries and societies) became a considerable issue of interest and focus in Jihadi Salafist thought. The basis of this ideological perspective is perhaps best explained by the spiritual father of the Afghan Arab Mujahideen, Abdullah Azzam, who says: "Governing solely by the Qur'an and the Sunnah is Islam. Therefore, governing by any man-made laws, willingly and voluntarily, is to yoke Islam from the neck. Everyone who accepts abandoning the word of God and governing by the word of any other, or to prioritize the word of any human being over the Qur'an and the Sunnah, has no place in the religion of Islam. This is unbelief par excellence; there is no blur, ambiguity, or subtlety in it." Azzam adds: "A *Taghout* [idolatrous tyrant] is a *Taghout*, be it Arab, American, Afghan, or Russian. *Kufr* [Unbelief] is one faction, and those who legislate based on what God has not sent forth are unbelievers, even if they pray, fast, and practice religious

rituals. The law that governs the honors, lives, and conditions of people is what determines the identity of the judgement: whether it is believing or unbelieving."[242]

With the Jihad movement in Afghanistan becoming more organized, the first generation of Al-Qaeda, led by Bin Laden, set the basic principles for the organization, which was formed in 1988. Al-Qaeda became a central organization with a structure and clear features. With the swearing of allegiance by members, Bin Laden became the commanding Emir, and the organization developed a Shura Council and various committees, including a military, financial, administrative, and media and communications committee. The organization did not yet have any independent media and propaganda activities, and the beginning stages were marked by a high degree of secrecy and underground work. Furthermore, the thoughts and ideology of the first generation regarding a number of key issues had not yet been firmly determined.[243]

The second Gulf War in 1991 became a decisive turning point that witnessed the rise of Al-Qaeda's "second generation," especially after the withdrawal of Soviet troops

---

[242]Abdullah Azzam, "*Al-'Aqida wa Atharuha fi Binaa' al-Jeel*," (Lit., the Doctrine and its Influence in Building the Next Generation), pg. 94. Also See: Abu 'Ubada al-Ansar, "*Mafhoum al-Hakimiyya fi Fikr al-Shaheed Abdullah Azzam,*" (Lit., The Concept of Sovereignty in the Thought of the Martyr Abdullah Azzam), The Abdullah Azzam Media Center in Peshawar, Pakistan.

[243] Regarding Al-Qaeda organization, see: Abd al-Bari Atwan, ""*Al-Qa'eda: Al-Tantheem al-Sirri*" (Lit., "Al-Qaeda: The Secret Organization"), 1st Edition, published by Dar al-Saqi, Beirut, Lebanon, 2007. Also see: Gilles Kepel, "*Al-Fitna: Huroub fi Diyar al-Muslimin*," (Lit., Strife: Wars in the Lands of Muslims), Dar al-Saqi, Beirut, 1st ed., 2004. The book is an Arabic translation of the French version entitled "*Fitna: Guerre au Coeur de l'Islam.*" (2004). An English translation is also available under the title "The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West," Belknap Press, 1st ed. 2006. Also see: Kameel al-Taweel, "*Al-Qa'ida wa Akhawatiha: Qissat al-Jihadiyeen al-Arab*," (Lit., Al-Qaeda and its Sisters: The Story of Arab Jihadis), Dar al-Saqi, Beirut, 1st ed., 2007.

from Afghanistan in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union and disintegration of the socialist system. With local Afghan groups entering into a domestic armed conflict, Arab and foreign Jihadists there began searching for new safe havens and new fronts for conflict. The Jihadi groups launched fierce confrontations in their original countries in the 1990s, such as the events in Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Chechnya, Bosnia, and elsewhere. Some Jihadists chose to stay in Afghanistan and sided with one or the other rival Afghan Mujahideen factions. Others chose to seek refuge in Europe, particularly Britain, which became a logistical, media, and communications hub for Jihadi Salafists groups around the world, and was dubbed "Londonistan."[244]

Several factors contributed to the emergence of Al-Qaeda's "second generation," including the clash with local regimes, economic transformations in most Arab countries towards the private sector and integration in the globalized world system following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the socialist system, and the resulting social and cultural implications of that in a most Arab societies. By then, some Jihadi Salafist currents arrived at the conviction that Arab and Muslim regimes (the near enemy) are not autonomous and self-sustaining, but are rather reliant on others, particularly the hegemon United States of America.

---

[244] Regarding this phase, see: Gilles Kepel, "*Jihad: Intishar wa Inhisar al-Islam al-Siyasi,*" (Lit., "Jihad: The Spread and Decline of Political Islam), translated into Arabic by Nabil Sa'ad, Dar al-'Alam al-Thalith, Cairo, 1st ed., 2005. The Book is translated into English by Anthony F. Roberts, Belknap Press, 2002 as "Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam), from the original French version entitled "Jihad: Expansion et Déclin de l'Islamisme," first published in 2000. Also see: Ray Takeyh and Nicholas Gvosdev, "*The Receding Shadow of the Prophet: The Rise and Fall of Radical Political Islam*" Westport, Ct: Praeger, 2004. Also available in Arabic under the title "*Nushou' al-Islam al-Siyasi al-Radicaly wa Inhiyaruh,*" translated by Hassan Bustani, Dar al-Saqi, Beirut, 1st ed., 2005.

These findings led to the crystallization of a new notion, developed by Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, which culminated in the birth of the "Global Islamic Front for Fighting the Jews, Crusaders, and Americans," in 1998.[245] This new "Front" is formed upon the concept of "*Jihad al-Nikaya*" (Fighting to cause harm or damage to the enemy), through carrying out subjective and suicide missions intended to harm the unipolar hegemony of the United States and forcing it to abandon its support and backing of authoritative Arab and Muslim regimes, and its colonial settlement (Israel), and forcing it to leave the region.

In a book entitled "*Fursan tahta Rayat al-Nabi*" (Knights under the Prophet's Banner),[246] Al-Zawahiri theorized a new strategy that seeks to internationalize Jihad and globalize the revolution. Three basic variables and conditions explain this transformation in Al-Qaeda's ideology (which by now has become the prime representative of Jihadi Salafism worldwide). First, a local nationalist factor represented by the authoritative political model, entrenched tyranny, and the failed promises of democratic transformation. Second, a regional factor represented by the failure to reach genuine and just peace in Palestine. And third, a global factor represented by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the rise of the unipolar American hegemon, and the advent of globalization.[247]

---

[245] A statement issued by the Global Al-Qaeda Organization entitled "*I'lan al-Harb 'ala Amrika*," (Lit., Declaring War against America), Afghanistan, 1998.

[246] Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Fursan tahta Rayat al-Nabi*," (Lit., Knights under the Banner of the Prophet), published in Al-Sharq al-Awsat newspaper, December 2001, pg. 41.

[247] François Burgat, "*Islamism in the Shadow of Al-Qaeda,*" translated into English by Patrick Hutchinson, University of Texas Press, 1st ed., 2010. The French version is available under the title "L'islamisme à l'heure d'al-Qaida," Paris, La Découverte/Poche, 2010. An Arabic translation by Sahar Sa'id is

The first foreign operation carried out by Al-Qaeda after declaring the "Global Islamic Front" was a series of near-simultaneous bombings that targeted U.S. embassies in East Africa (in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es-Salaam, Tanzania on August 7, 1998).

The events of September 11th, 2001 were critical in the emergence of a "third generation" of Al-Qaeda Jihadis. The events resulted in the United States' invasion of Afghanistan, toppling the Taliban regime, and mobilizing an international coalition in order to eliminate Al-Qaeda, effectively declaring the "Global War on Terror."

The War on Terror dealt major blows to Al-Qaeda's leadership with the killing and assassination of a number of its most prominent ideological and military figures including Osama bin Laden, Anwar al-ʿAwlaqi, Abu Musʿab al-Zarqawi, Abu Yahya al-Libi, Attiya Abd al-Rahman, Abu al-Yazid al-Masri, Abu Hafs al-Masri, Abu al-Laith al-Libi, and the capture of Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, Abu Zubayda, Ramzi bin al-Shaiba, Abu al-Faraj al-Libi and others.

However, Al-Qaeda demonstrated its ability to adapt to the challenges with the emergence of its "third generation," which appeared more dangerous and innovative; ushering in an era of globalizing the Jihadi Salafist movement and establishing regional branches in various places around the world. The rise of the "third generation" in the real world coincided with the rise of the "first generation" of "cyber Jihadists," amid growing dynamism of globalization and the communications revolution.

---

available under the title "*Al-Islam al-Siyasi fi Zaman al-Qaʿida,*" Al-Quds for Publishing and Distribution, Beirut, 1st ed. 2006, p. 60.

Jihadi Salafism, which is Al-Qaeda's wide ideological scope, worked to globalize its mobility and actions in the context of responding to the globalization and internationalization of the "War on Terror." It demonstrated its ability to adapt, grow, and regenerate after suffering military and security attacks that led to the killing or arrest of a number of its prominent leaders throughout the world. After the U.S. and NATO-led attacks on Afghanistan, and Al-Qaeda's loss of its safe haven and headquarters there, the central organization's ideologues worked to renewed the debate regarding the issue of the organization's "centralization," as advocated by Abu Bakr Naji in his book "Management of Savagery,"[248] or "decentralization" adopted by Abu Mus'ab al-Suri in his book "The Call for Global Islamic Resistance."[249]

At the time when the ideology of Al-Qaeda and global Jihadi Salafism appeared to be on the verge of decline, the U.S. invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq in 2003 brought about with it the revival and second rise of Al-Qaeda, this time through Al-Zarqawi and his network, and the emergence of a new Jihadi model that is much more violent and more effective, founded on the basis of "identity" and the *Qital al-Tamkeen* (fighting to consolidate power).

---

[248] Abu Bakr Naji, "*Idarat al-Tawahhush*," (Lit., Management of Savagery), op. cit. pg. 26, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.tawhed.ws/c?i=62
[249] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri (Omar Abd al-Hakim), "*Da'wat Al-Muqawama al-Islamiya al-'Alamiya*," (Lit., The Call to Global Islamic Resistance), op. cit. pg. 896.

3. The Hallmarks of the "Islamic State" Ideology

When U.S. President George W. Bush launched a military campaign against Iraq on March 20th, 2003, the chapters of the "War on Terror" policy were supposed to conclude with the toppling of the "authoritarian" regime of Saddam Hussein and replacing it with a "democratic" system that is loyal to the United States, paving the way for the making of the "New Middle East."

But after more than ten years of the occupation of Iraq, and three years since the withdrawal of U.S. troops from there in 2011, it became evident that the U.S. policies failed to produce stable and loyal democratic systems in Iraq or in the region, and also failed to curb the influence of Iran. Instead, these policies led to the fragmentation of society and the destruction of the state, and contributed to the birth of a new generation of Jihadists who are more dangerous and vicious than the earlier generations. New safe havens for Al-Qaeda were provided, and Iraq has essentially become a "laboratory" for the manufacturing of a new Jihadist ideology; built on the basis of Sunni identity, an ideology that is more deadly, more savage, and more widespread.

In building his network and organization, Al-Zarqawi relied ideologically, intellectually, and doctrinally on foundations that surpass the principles of solidarity Jihad and the logic of the wars of "*Nikaya*" (fighting to cause harm and damage to the enemy), which were strategies that governed the Afghan experience and Al-Qaeda's ideology in the era of Arab revolutions. Contrariwise, Al-Zarqawi's ideological vision was founded on the logic of "management of savagery" and actualizing "*Tamkeen*" (consolidation of power). Hence, his strategic choices of intellectual reference

were set on Abu Bakr Naji's thesis in his book "Management of Savagery: The Most Dangerous Stage the Ummah will Experience," which expounds the transitional Jihadi phase between the stage of building "*Shawkat al-Nikaya*" (the strength to vex and harm), and the destination stage of "*Shawkat al-Tamkeen*" (the strength to consolidate power and influence).

On the religious jurisprudential level, Al-Zarqawi depended on the authoritative reference of his Sheikh Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir, who had the most direct impact in building Al-Zarqawi's combat tactics and his doctrinal approach, particularly in matters related to the priority of fighting the "near enemy" (the "apostate" Arab and Muslim governing regimes), and the *Takfir* and disavowal of Shiites collectively. Indeed, Al-Zarqawi drew most of his extremist radical doctrinal views from Al-Muhajir, especially the strategies of suicide bombings, *Tatarrus* (barricading/ justifying collateral damage), kidnapping, assassinations, beheadings, and the tactics of violence and terror.[250]

---

[250] See: *"Bayan Haqiqat 'Alaqat al-Baghdadi bi Amirina Al-Zarqawi"* (Manifesting the Truth of the Relationship of Al-Baghdadi with our Emir, Al-Zarqawi), op. cit., available on the link:

http://www.sunnti.com/vb/showthread.php?t=15452

According to the media spokesman of Al-Zarqawi's group, Maysara al-Gharib, "Our Sheikh Al-Zarqawi, May God have mercy on his soul, used to love our Sheikh "Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir" – May Allah unshackle his Captivity – and revered and commended him, and had hoped that Al-Muhajir would come to Iraq. It was evident that if the latter would have come, [Al-Zarqawi] would have entrusted him with the responsibility of heading the Religious committee. Our Sheikh used to urge me to teach the students the book of Al-Muhajir "*A'laam al-Sunnah al-Manshoora fi Ma'alim al-Ta'ifa al-Mansoura* (The Pioneers of Spreading the Sunnah in the Hallmarks of the Victorious Sect). We had photocopied the book, and began teaching it to the brothers. This is in addition to the book "*Fiqh al-Dimaa'*" (The Jurisprudence of Blood), for which we had eagerly awaited its arrival to Fallujah at the time, but it did not arrive until the beginning of the second Fallujah battle. The Sheikh [Al-Zarqawi] had mentioned

The following discussion will examine the thought and influence of these two references, starting with Abu Bakr Naji.[251]

Naji's discourse helped in building a combat doctrine and a practical and operational strategy for the Jihadist current that is built on Islamic religious foundations mostly borrowed from the *Sultani* Imperial Rule model, which rely on the jurisprudence of power, strength, and conquest. Naji blends this with the modern Western revolutionary heritage and the principles of modern traditional warfare and tactics of guerilla warfare, which are based on objectivist material grounds and shared "universal cosmic phenomena."

With these introductions, Naji determines that establishing the 'state' is a human universal phenomenon, and also a religious *Shari'i* objective. He argues that there are physical and realistic conditions that represent the most important factors in building the state and in determining its strength or weakness. These conditions should not be

---

to me that he studied it with "Al-Muhajir" for four years, if I remember correctly… Then the days went by, and the book came into Iraq after the second Fallujah events, when many copies of the book were printed, under the title "*Masa'il fi Fiqh al-Jihad*" (Issues in the Jurisprudence of Jihad). It is a good and strong book, worthy of being quoted and taught to the Mujahideen brothers." See: Maysara al-Gharib, "*Min Khafaya al-Tarikh: Al-Zarqawi Kama 'Ariftuhou*," (From the Hidden History: Al-Zarqawi as I knew Him), op. cit., p. 3.

[251] Abu Bakr Naji belongs to the first generation of "cyber jihadists," he is not known in the real world, a phenomenon that appeared with the communications revolution and the rise of the Internet towards the end of 1990s. No one knows the real identity of these Jihadists. The virtual world witnessed the emergence of a wave of virtual Jihadist leaders. The first wave that appeared in 2002 included Abu Bakr Naji, Abu 'Ubaida al-Qurashi, and Lois Attiyah, among others. The second wave that appeared in 2006 included Hussain bin Mahmoud and Attiyatullah. A third wave appeared in 2009, and included Abd al-Rahman al-Faqeer, Yaman Mukhdab, and Assad al-Jihad 2.

neglected, and there should be an endeavor to search for the phenomena and social laws that determine these conditions.

Naji borrows the concept of "*Tawahhush*" (savagery) from the thought of Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406 CE), which also corresponds with the concept of "chaos." Naji emphasizes the inevitability of the stage of savagery and chaos, and looks for ways to utilize and exploit it in order to reach the stage of actualizing and establishing the "Islamic state." He states: "The management of savagery is the upcoming stage that the Ummah will go through, and is the most dangerous stage. If we succeed in managing this savagery, then this stage – God willing – will be the path to the state of Islam, awaited since the fall of the Caliphate. However, if we fail – God forbid – then this does not mean the end of it, but rather this failure will lead to more savagery…!! And; this further savagery resulting from failure does not mean that it is worse than the conditions we are in right now, or a decade ago [the 1990s], or preceding decades. Indeed, the worst levels of savagery are levels better than stability under the regime of unbelief [*Kufr*]."[252]

In the book, Naji examines various historical experiences that witnessed management of savagery, and emphasizes that the modern state may be overthrown, theoretically, through two forces: "people" and "armies." However, these two forces have been tamed using various methods of distraction, procurement, and manipulation. Furthermore, the 'nation state' is subject to international powers and a global system that is keen to preserve these powers and maintain their hegemony and control. Despite that, society ultimately produces a group of people that does not bow to the conditions of reality, and will seek change on the basis of

---

[252] Abu Bakr Naji, "The Management of Savagery," op. cit., pg. 4.

understanding the nature of the state, society, and universal and cosmic phenomena. This rise of change-seekers will come about in spite of the massive capabilities of dominant nations, and prove that the latter are built on the "illusion of force," bolstered by a giant lying media machine. According to Naji, "it is true that these forces are powerful, and that they draw strongly on the forces of local regimes and agents who rule the Muslim world; yet despite all this, this power is not enough. Hence, the captain [major powers] resorts to creating a false media "aura" that portrays these powers as invincible, and as able to surround the whole universe and reach every land and every sky as if they possess the power of the Creator."[253]

To ensure the success of the management of savagery, several tasks must be accomplished, including: achieving internal security, providing food and healthcare, securing the area of 'savagery' from attack, establishing religious judiciary among people who live in the areas of 'savagery,' raising the level of religiosity and belief, improving combat capabilities through training the youth and building a fighting society and raising awareness of the importance of this aspect, working to disseminate religious and worldly sciences, spreading "watchful eyes" (scouts or spies) and establishing a micro-intelligence agency, easing people's hearts with something of money and worldly affairs within religious limitations (the rules of which should be known at least to the individuals within the management), deterring hypocrites with sound argument and other means and forcing them to suppress and contain their hypocrisy and not declare their inhibited opinions, tolerating those of them who obey in order to stop their ills, promotion and empowerment to achieve the

---

[253] Ibid., pg. 7.

possibility of expansion and ability to attack enemies to deter them, seize their resources, and keep them in a constant state of fear and need to remain placid, and finally, forming alliances with those who did not give full allegiance to the management.[254]

Naji provides a set of basic rules that lead to a transition from the stage of *Nikaya* (causing harm) and *inhak* (exhaustion) to the stage of *Shawka* (strength) and *Tamkeen* (consolidation of power). He explains them at length, and they may be described as the "ten commandments" of the "Management of Savagery." They are: 1. Mastering the art of management; 2. Determining who leads, who manages, and who makes the essential administrative decisions; 3. Adopting the proven military principles and tactics; 4. Striking with full force the enemy's most vulnerable points; 5. Achieving *Shawka* (power); 6. Understanding the rules of the political game; 7. Polarizing and mobilizing; 8. Determining the rules of affiliation and membership; 9. Mastering the security dimension, surveillance, and infiltrating the enemy by spreading scouts (and spies); and 10. Mastering education and learning within the movement.[255]

Abu Bakr Naji's book offers a general strategic view of the natures of the struggle and the mechanisms of Jihadi military action. Al-Zarqawi's network, in its subsequent forms down to the "Caliphate" of Al-Baghdadi, despite benefiting from Naji's general outlines, nonetheless devised their own strategic vision in a more sharp and effective way, and did not officially endorse or incorporate Naji's "commandments" as a strategic and ideological "guidebook" for the organization, nor did they adopt his writings in

---

[254] Ibid., pg. 12.
[255] Ibid., Table of Contents, pg. 1.

structuring their leaderships and ranks. They did, however, utilize the books and letters of Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir as a doctrinal and ideological foundation for the organization, since its inception, and consider it an authoritative reference. Nevertheless, Naji's book remains an important key to understanding the differences between Al-Qaeda's strategy, which is based on the so-called Jihad of *Nikaya* with the distant enemy, and IS' strategy, which focuses on establishing emirates and religious provisions during the transitional phase (which is witnessing a state of chaos and disintegration of countries and societies), and is not satisfied with limiting its objectives to fighting the "distant enemy."

As for Al-Muhajir's book "Issues in the Jurisprudence of Jihad," it is considered the endorsed jurisprudential basis and "guidebook" for the Islamic State (in all its preceding names), and is widely known among Jihadists as "The Jurisprudence of Blood." Al-Muhajir's frame of reference is, as he claims, the Qur'an, Sunnah of the Prophet, and the historical Sunni jurisprudential heritage in its four schools of thought (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali), in general, although it depends especially upon the Hanbali school of thought, and particularly the thought of Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim, and the Hanbali Wahhabi Salafist ideology.

In the introduction, Al-Muhajir indicates that the book is originally "Chapter II of another larger message entitled "*Al-Jaami' fi Fiqh al-Jihad*" (The Comprehensive Compilation of the Jurisprudence of Jihad), and this book is the chapter related to "The provisions of blood and related issues." [256]

---

[256] Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir, "*Masa'il fi Fiqh al-Jihad,*" (Lit., Issues in the Jurisprudence of Jihad), op. cit., pg. 8, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://ia601203.us.archive.org/19/items/kotobjehad/masael.pdf

In surveying the contents of the book, it is evident that Al-Muhajir's thought is implemented in the battlefield, and the spirit of the book runs in all the speeches of IS' leaders, starting from Al-Zarqawi, to Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, and culminating with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. It is clear that the book exemplifies the organization's jurisprudential approach, methods, and choices.

The book outlines several issues that are addressed in detail. The first issue deals with the rule of contemporary political systems, and reaches the conclusion that all these systems fall within the realm of *Kufr* (unbelief) and *Ridda* (apostasy). Al-Muhajir reviews the religious provisions and rulings that apply to these systems as a result of their unbelief and apostasy, which include, first and foremost, the duty of fighting these systems because they have turned into *Dar al-Harb* (Abode of War). In examining *Dar al-Harb*, Al-Muhajir finds that all the countries in the world, starting with the Arab and Muslim countries, have all entered into the realm of *Kufr* and *Ridda*, and must be fought. He states: "These rulings will remain in effect until the *Da'wa* (advocacy to religion) is spread, and the word [of Islam] reaches all horizons, and until no infidel remains; and that will continue and extend to the Day of Judgement."[257] Al-Muhajir asserts that "All Muslims have reached the consensus that the "*Dar al-Kufr*" is an abode that Muslims are permitted to fight. If [Muslims] enter that abode without security: they are allowed to desecrate the blood and property of infidels as they please."[258]

In the seventh issue examined in the book, the author determines the permissibility of murdering, killing, and fighting the infidels in any means that achieve the objective.

[257] Ibid., pg. 28.
[258] Ibid., pg. 27

He states: "It is legislated to the Mujahideen worshippers of God, in order to uphold the word of God supreme, the permissibility to attack, kill, and fight the belligerent infidels in every means that would take their lives and extract their souls from their bodies in order to cleanse the earth from their filth, and to eliminate their strife, by any means possible."[259] Al-Muhajir also stresses the obvious legality of possessing and using non-conventional weapons; he says: "Hence, we find it permissible to attack belligerent infidels, kill, and fight them in every way to achieve the objective, even if the means is what is known today as Weapons of Mass Destruction, including nuclear, chemical, biological, and so forth when needed. There is no doubt of this permissibility under the pretext of the priority of deterrent and defensive fighting; that is, when the infidel enemy invades the lands of Islam."[260]

In the second issue, the author determines that there is no right to protection from killing or seizure of property except through embracing the religion, since the lawfulness of killing is not related to whether the targeted person or group is fighting or not. Al-Muhajir emphasizes that the mere *Kufr* means that the targets are within the Abode of War, and therefore it is permissible, if not obligatory, to kill them. He states: "Every infidel that has not been given protection by Muslims through a covenant whereby tribute money is paid, or is granted truce or safety, then he or she shall not be safe in blood or money."[261]

The fourth issue discusses the permissibility of assassinating infidel fighters. The fifth issue is dedicated to the permissibility of martyr (suicide) operations, and although

---

[259] Ibid., pg. 163.
[260] Ibid., pp. 187-188.
[261] Ibid., pg. 29.

Al-Muhajir considers that the issue of suicide operations in its contemporary fashion, is considered among the "*Nawazil*" (calamities or momentous events), he nonetheless infers its permissibility from similar incidents in Islamic history and general Qur'anic texts and Hadiths (Prophets sayings). He states: "It is evident from what we've discussed the permissibility of martyr operations in their contemporary manner, without the slightest doubt."[262]

The eighth issue determines that killing fighting infidels is lawful using whatever weapons available, even if Muslims (whom it is unlawful to kill) are among them. In the ninth issue Al-Muhajir determines the permissibility of acts of vandalism and destroying the lands, property, and facilities of the enemy.

The tenth issue determines that it is lawful to abduct and kidnap infidel fighters. The eleventh issue addresses the provisions of mutilation of bodies,[263] and the twelfth issue is dedicated to the permissibility of beheading infidels. According to Al-Muhajir, "None of the Islamic jurists disputed the legality of beheading infidel fighters, and slitting their throats whether they are dead or alive. On the contrary, they consider this issue among the obvious and established matters, since Muslims have practiced it in their Jihad of the enemies of God, generation after generation, from the time of the Prophet and until this day."[264]

Clearly, Al-Muhajir's book is unparalleled in its extensive consideration of various possible methods that lead to killing, and hence, it has been commonly referred to as "The Jurisprudence of Blood."

---

[262] Ibid., pg. 114.
[263] Ibid., pg. 569-573.
[264] Ibid., pg. 278.

The religious ideology, in its theoretical and practical aspects, presented by Naji and Al-Muhajir has not merely become general instructions and guidance, but has also become a guidebook and methodology for the Islamic State organization and its brutal practices. This ideology took a practical and actualized dimension in a climate fertile for Jihadist activities in Iraq, where the conditions of *Tawahhush* (savagery) and chaos materialized with the U.S. invasion and occupation, which worked to dismantle the state structures and fragment the fabric of society based on clear ethnic identity basis (Arab-Kurd) and religious-sectarian basis (Shiite-Sunni).

The conditions, factors, and substantive circumstances that created a fertile climate for chaos and savagery in Iraq were met through the combination of implications of foreign occupation, domestic oppression and despotism, and structural and societal divisions. This climate was indeed exploited by Al-Zarqawi and his successors in developing and refining their militant Jihadist ideology on religious-sectarian-identity basis. They exploited and utilized this climate within the context of a "social incubator" inside the Sunni segment of Iraqi society, which has suffered from oppression, despotism, and compounded marginalization and exclusion; conditions that gave further impetus and strength to the Islamic State organization, and supplied it with skilled professional military and security capabilities through the engagement of former Iraqi military officers, in addition to the experience of Arab and foreign volunteers in the battlefield.

4. Al-Nusra Front: Al-Qaeda's Revisions and "Ideological Adaptability"

The ideology of Al-Nusra Front, on the other hand, is based on a variety of Jihadi Salafist sources, but it lacks a degree of coherence and cohesion considering its recent inception (with the rise of the Syrian revolution in March 2011, and its official declaration in January 2012). Al-Nusra Front had initially been made up of a hybrid mix of fighters, supported and backed by the Iraqi branch. However, its ideological authoritative reference relies mainly upon the discourse of *Harakiya* (Movement/organizational) Salafism, which emerged from the heart of the Muslim Brotherhood. Its ideology also follows the Jihadist school originally theorized by Sayyid Qutb, and later adopted by Ayman al-Zawahiri and the central Al-Qaeda organization and Marwan Hadid, founder of *Al-Tali'a al-Muqatila* (The Fighting Vanguard) in Syria. The principles and foundations of this school of Jihadi Salafism were later crystallized with the thought of Abdullah Azzam, the spiritual father of Afghan Arabs in Afghanistan, and further refined in the thought of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, in diaspora.

While there are multiple tributaries that contributed in formulating Al-Nusra Front's ideology; its main line of thought, nonetheless, remains well within the overall discourse of Jihadi Salafism. Al-Nusra's ideology and approach underwent a number of changes and transformations, as previously mentioned, before it settled with the so-called "revisions" of the central Al-Qaeda organization, revealed through the documents obtained by the Americans from Osama bin Laden's hideout in Abbottabad, Pakistan where he was killed.

The Abbottabad documents, which were later published, expose the frustration and resentment of Al-Qaeda's leadership towards the path of the Iraqi branch during the era of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi and the subsequent declaration of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). The documents reveal a clear recognition of aspects of the network's failure in attracting the support of the Arab masses, in general, and acknowledgement of serious errors committed by some branches, such as excessive use of *Tatarrus* (barricading/justifying collateral damage) operations, which led to killing large numbers of innocent civilians, and the overemphasis on *Takfir* (disavowing others as unbelieving infidels).

The documents, consisting of an exchange of letters and correspondences between Bin Laden and other prominent Jihadist figures, reveal that the Al-Qaeda leadership reached the conclusion that there is dire need to correct the path of the movement. This correction is to be actualized through integrating and engaging with Arab and Muslim societies, even if this leads to changing the name of Al-Qaeda and adopting other titles or forms, in order to improve its overall image, on the political level, and also among the populations and the media.[265]

The era of Arab popular revolutions reinforced the importance of these revisions and their public dissemination. A collection of letters and articles by Al-Qaeda's leadership, dating back to the early days of the "Arab Spring," reflect a

---

[265] The Abbottabad documents are available and may be viewed and downloaded through the website of the Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, Arabic originals and English translations are available on the following link:
https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/letters-from-abbottabad-bin-ladin-sidelined
Also see doubts cast about the letters at a site linked to the Islamic State, available on the following link:
http://the-islamic-state.blogspot.com/2013/09/blog-post_7584.html

state of concern of losing the support of Arab and Muslim populations. They reveal the attempts of the leadership to devise what may be called "ideological adaptation," through which the discourse of Jihadi Salafism and its movements would be refined and improved in a manner that prevents it from colliding and conflicting with the peaceful popular movements. This "adaptation," however, would maintain the Jihadi Salafist ideological "hard nucleus," which stands upon the principle of *Al-Hakimiyya* (Divine sovereignty and authority), implementing Islamic *Shari'ah*, and confronting the United States, but all the while reviving the option of peaceful popular action in order to achieve its goals and implement the *Shari'ah*.[266]

From these revisions, the concept of "*Ansar al-Shari'ah*" (Supporters of Islamic Shari'ah) re-emerged, and its practical applications were witnessed in Yemen and Tunisia, and its echoes are evident in the title of Al-Nusra Front itself; that is, the "Nusra" (Support) of the people of al-Sham in Syria and the greater Levant region. This concept is based on the need for Jihadi Salafism to integrate and incorporate itself into societies and be mindful of general issues concerning the masses, particularly in confronting tyranny, establishing the Islamic system, and directing the revolutionary course towards "Islamization," all the while remaining outside of the parliamentary path and the boundaries of the political game.[267]

---

[266] See: Mohammad Abu Rumman, "*Min 'al-Salafiya al-Jihadiya' ila 'Ansar al-Shari'ah:' Al-Takayyuf ma'a Haqbat al-Thawrat al-Dimuqratiya al-'Arabiya wa al-Dawr al-Siyasi al-Jadid*," (Lit., From 'Jihadi Salafism' to 'Ansar al-Shariah': Adaptation with the Era of Arab Democratic Revolutions and the New Political Role), Majalat al-'Uloum al-Ijtima'iya (The Social Sciences Journal), Kuwait University, Vol. 42, No. 2, 2014, pp. 236-241.

[267] Ibid., pp. 241-251.

The idea of *Ansar al-Shari'ah* espouses a transformation from the "elitist," substantive, military-oriented approach to a general popular, peaceful, propaganda-driven approach under the banner of implementing *Shari'ah* and *Al-Amr bel Ma'arouf wa al-Nahi 'an al-Munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding wrong). Indeed, this is to be a major qualitative leap and transformation compared to previous phases of the evolution of Jihadi Salafist ideology, which geared the movement towards military action and a shift (in the late 1990s) from fighting the "near enemy" (Arab regimes) to confronting the "distant enemy" (the United States and its allies). The more recent post-Arab Spring transformations, however, reflect an approach that combines and integrates the dimensions of the struggle; upholding the objective of "globalizing Jihad" and confrontation with the United States, and simultaneously seeking to take advantage of the wave of popular revolutionary activism to push towards implementation of *Shari'ah* in Muslim societies and states that manage to overthrow its despotic regimes.

The approach of Al-Nusra Front in integrating into society and searching for "*Ansar*" supporters from within the local communities bears great similarity to the outputs of the central Al-Qaeda leadership's revisions. In manifesting these similarities, however, Al-Nusra Front initially did not seek to expose the nature of its relationship with Al-Qaeda, or the Iraqi branch, in an effort to avoid falling into the same pitfalls as in Iraq, and to remain under the radar of intelligence agencies, and facilitate work and coordination with other armed factions in accordance with the "*Ansar*" approach.

According to this "new approach," it is necessary to avoid declaring Al-Nusra's affiliation with Al-Qaeda, so as not to give the Syrian regime further justification to suppress the

revolution under the pretext of fighting "terrorism," and to not provoke the United States, or the local social incubator and host that is essential to attracting more *Ansar*. However, Al-Jolani was forced to reveal his organization's affiliation with Al-Qaeda after Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared establishing ISIS. Al-Zawahiri himself acknowledged the surprising exposure, he states: "We were surprised with the declaration [the Iraqi declaration in April 2013 of merging Al-Nusra Front with the ISI], which provided for the Syrian regime and the United States the opportunity they were hoping for… As well as making the ordinary people of Syria wonder, what is it with Al-Qaeda bringing disasters upon us? Isn't Bashar [Al-Assad] enough? Do they want to also bring America upon us?"[268]

In developing and strengthening this new approach, the leadership of Al-Nusra Front found its quest in the writings and thought of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, one of the prominent exponents of global Jihadi Salafism. As previously mentioned, Al-Suri developed his personal views and perspectives based on the heritage of *Harakiya* – Muslim Brotherhood Salafism, represented by the thought of Sayyid Qutb, Abdullah Azzam, Marwan Hadid, and reliance upon the concept of the "War of the Flea."[269]

Al-Suri's writings and discourse became the prime reference of authority for Abu Muhammad Al-Jolani and Al-

---

[268] Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Al-Waqi' Bayna al-Alam wa al-Amal*," (Lit., The Reality between Pain and Hope), op. cit., available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=4630

[269] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri explained one of the main books that discussed "*Harb al-Mustad'afin*" (Lit., The War of the Flea), and he has audio recordings commenting on the book. Al-Suri essentially relies on this book in the thoughts he espouses in his own book, "The Call to Global Islamic Resistance," op. cit., See: Robert Taber, "*The War of the Flea…*"op. cit.

Nusra Front, particularly his books "*Mulahathaat hawla al-Tajruba al-Jihadiyya fi Suriya*" (Observations on the Jihadi Experience in Syria), "*Ahl al-Sham fi Muwajahat al-Nusairiya wa al-Salibiya wa al-Yahud*" (The People of Levant [Syria] in Confronting the Alawites, Crusaders, and Jews), and his more important book "*Da'wat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya al-'Aalamiya*" (The Call to Global Islamic Resistance), which institutes for the formation of Islamic Resistance *Saraya* (brigades), the concept of "lone wolves" (individual Jihad), and transforming Jihad into a collective Ummah project by establishing cells and groups that combine and integrate thought, doctrine, and purpose without being part of any particular organization based on traditional organizational structures.

Conclusion

With the public exposure of differences between Al-Qaeda and the Iraqi organization, and the escalation of confrontations with the latter, Al-Nusra Front received significant support from the central Al-Qaeda leadership and some of the most prominent exponents and ideologues of the global Jihadi Salafist movement. On their part, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi[270] and Abu Qutada al-Filastini[271] both issues letters of support and backing for Al-Nusra. Furthermore, numerous statements and letters emerged in support of Al-Zawahiri's decision to cut ties with the Iraqi organization, and affirming the "correctness" of the approach of Al-Qaeda and Al-Nusra Front, such as letters from Sheikh Sulaiman al-'Alwan and Eyad al-Qunaibi, among others. These developments indicate that Al-Nusra Front has come to epitomize the new phase and new path of Al-Qaeda and mainstream Jihadi Salafist ideology.

But, at the same time, neither Al-Nusra Front nor Al-Qaeda (in its new approach) represents the only trend of Jihadi Salafism. Another trend, exemplified by the ideology of the Islamic State, is attracting on its part the support of a

---

[270] See: Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, "*Laysa Kaman Tardha bi Shaqqi Ibniha*," (Lit., It is not like She who Agrees to the Splitting of Her Baby), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=17111301

[271] See: Abu Qutada al-Filastini, "*Riasala li Ahl al-Jihad fi al-Sham*," (Lit., Letter to the People of Jihad in the Levant), op. cit., available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=335311

group of Jihadist ideologues and large numbers of followers from the rising new youthful Jihadist generation, not only in Iraq and Syria, but also throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds. As demonstrated in previous discussions, the Islamic State and its "Caliph" Al-Baghdadi also attracted the support of second and third generation Jihadists, particularly those most active in the cyber world, such as Abu Sa'ad al-'Aamili,[272]Abu al-Hassan al-Azadi,[273] Abu Humam Bakr bin Abd al-Aziz al-Athari,[274] Abu al-Munthir al-Shinqiti, Abu Muhammad Al-Azadi, Sheikh 'Aani al-'Alam, Abu Yusuf al-Bashir, and Abu al-Munthir Omar Mahdi Zaydan, and others.[275] ∎

---

[272] Abu Sa'ad al-'Aamili, "*Tanbih al-Anam li ma fi al-Tafriqa min Aathaam wa Ahamiyat al-Tawahhud fi Dawlat al-Islam*," (Lit., Warning People against the Sins of Division and the Importance of Unity in the Islamic State), available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://archive.org/details/bayan_2013

[273] Abu al-Hassan al-Azadi, "*Mujibaat al-Indhimaam li al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-'Iraq wa al-Sham*," (Lit., The Provisions of Obligation of Joining the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria/Levant ISIS), available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=329431

[274] Abu Humam Bakr bin Abd al-Aziz al-Athari, "*Mad al-Ayadi li Bay'at al-Baghdadi,*" (Lit., Extending Hands to Pledge Allegiance to Al-Baghdadi), available [in Arabic] on the following link:
https://archive.org/details/baghdadi-001

[275] For more details about the letters of support for the Islamic State, and for their references, see the following link:
http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=337513

Chapter Six

The Evolution of the Islamic State's Structure

Introduction

The tremendous capabilities demonstrated by the "Islamic State," particularly since 2014, have raised a large number of questions regarding the factors and causes – considered by some to be secrets and conspiracies – behind its overwhelming military triumphs against its opponents. IS' victories were on several fronts, including against regular armies (such as the Iraqi Army that completely collapsed in Mosul and other Iraqi cities, and the Syrian Army, as evident in the events at the Tabaqa Military Airfield and the 17th Division in Al-Raqqa), and also against competing armed factions, particularly in Syria, such as Al-Nusra Front and other Islamist forces.

The organization's effectiveness went beyond military capabilities. Economically, IS has gained enormous financial resources, surpassing all other Jihadist and Islamist organizations combined. IS' economic strength implies that a professional and specialized entity is managing this primary sector, which is vital for the success of any organizational or institutional effort.

The same applies to the security aspect. The organization successfully carried out operations that require a high level of specialization, and accurate and meticulously-detailed intelligence gathering. This advanced security aspect was clearly manifested in the takeover of Mosul, the assassinations of high ranking leaders of rival groups, as well

as in the organization's security and protection of its own senior leaders, who are being monitored and hunted by some of the world's leading international and regional intelligence agencies, using the most sophisticated of surveillance technologies.

Furthermore, IS has demonstrated capabilities in the field of media and communications that surpass the abilities of other Jihadi Salafist or Islamist groups, particularly in the ability to utilize the Internet for recruitment, propaganda, mobilization, spreading news, and in the production of high-quality videos and magazines, in both Arabic and English. The organization's technologically savvy media productions have become an intriguing aspect for case studies by specialists in the field.

This chapter examines the structural transformations that shaped the Islamic State, from its early stages, when it operated under the name "*Jama'at Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad,*" to its official affiliation with the central Al-Qaeda organization, and its subsequent declaration of the Islamic State of Iraq (after its leader, Al-Zarqawi, was killed in a U.S. airstrike in 2006), and finally to its current arrangement that evolved and expanded under Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and the declaration of the Caliphate.

The objective of studying the organization's internal structure and delving into its inner arrangements, divisions, and departments, is to explore the dynamics and institutions that stand behind these vast capabilities and missions, and the qualified cadres and utilities at IS' disposal. Surveying these aspects also sheds light on new perspectives in interpreting this level of professionalism and expertise in so many different fields and aspects of the organization's work.

1. The Framework of "*Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*"

On the eve of the U.S. invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq in 2003, Al-Zarqawi worked to rebuild his jihadist network, relying upon the solid foundation that had already been established in Afghanistan's Herat region. He surrounded himself with an inner circle of his most loyal followers, most notably Abu Hamza al-Muhajir (an Egyptian who took over the organization's leadership after Al-Zarqawi's death), Abu Anas al-Shami (a Jordanian who became the organization's first religious official), Nidal Muhammad Arabiat (another Jordanian from the city of Salt, considered an expert in explosives and bomb-making and is thought to be responsible for most of the car bombings claimed by the organization), Mustafa Ramadan Darwish (a Lebanese national known as Abu Muhammad al-Lubnani), Awras Abu Omar al-Kurdi, Thamer al-Atrouz al-Rishawi (a former Iraqi military officer), Abdullah al-Jubouri (known as Abu Azzam, also an Iraqi), Abu Nasser al-Libi (Libian), and Abu Osama al-Tunisi (Tunisian). All of them were killed in 2003, except Abdullah al-Jubouri, who was killed in 2005. Among the Jordanians most trusted by Al-Zarqawi: Muwaffaq 'Udwan, Jamal al-'Utaibi, Salahuddin al-'Utaibi, Muhammad al-Safadi, Mu'ath al-Nsoor, Shehadah al-Kilani, Muhammad Qutaishat, Munthir Sheeha, Munthir al-Tamuni, and Omar al-'Utaibi.

In rebuilding his network and organization, Al-Zarqawi adopted and employed the ideology, thought, and jurisprudential interpretation of his mentor, Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir, who had a profound and direct impact in building Al-Zarqawi's warfare doctrine and idiosyncratic jurisprudential approach.

Al-Zarqawi's network developed and thrived remarkably fast, without operating under a specific name or adhering to a clearly defined structure. According to Abu Anas al-Shami, Al-Zarqawi was waiting for a home-grown Iraqi group to declare itself, with the hopes that his organization would operate with and through it. Al-Shami, however, suggested building an organized structure for the organization under the name "*Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad.*" Al-Zarqawi, who had been operating through a Shura Council for his network made up of members of his inner circle, hesitated for a while, but soon took up the idea and publicly announced the establishment of the newly-arranged organization. From then on, all statements, audio, video, and printed publications, were issued under the new name "*Jama'at al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad.*"

A new, clearly-defined structure emerged under the leadership of Al-Zarqawi and the organization's Shura Council. Al-Zarqawi did not appoint a second-in-command at the time, but the organization devised specific committees to organize its work, including a military, communications, security, finance, and religious committees. Abu Anas al-Shami headed the religious committee and became the organization's first Religious Official starting in late September 2003.

2. The Organizational Structure of Al-Qaeda in Iraq

After eight months of communications between "*Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*" and the central Al-Qaeda organization, the latter submitted to Al-Zarqawi's terms, albeit grudgingly, and

without Al-Zarqawi having to compromise on his strategy or approach. On October 8th, 2004, Al-Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden and dissolved *Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*, which would now operate under the organization's new name "*Qa'idat al-Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers* (Mesopotamia)" (or Al-Qaeda in Iraq, AQI).

The organization expanded considerably under Al-Zarqawi's leadership, and its structure was characterized with a certain level of flexibility, where the surrounding conditions necessitated no absolutes. Although he initially controlled the organization with an iron first, Al-Zarqawi later began to delegate some of his powers to others in the leadership pyramid in order to ensure that the organization would remain operational in the event that he was killed. AQI soon declared Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Iraqi as deputy to the Emir (Al-Zarqawi), thus handing the leadership of the organization to Iraqi nationals and ushering in the phase of "Iraqization," amid continued evolvement and structuring of the organization.

The post of Deputy Emir, or the organization's second-in-command, occupied by Abd al-Rahman al-Iraqi, was created out of realistic necessity in order to maintain the cohesiveness of the organization. The deputy was delegated to perform all functions as Al-Zarqawi's right hand man, and oversee all aspects related to the organization's operations and functions. Al-Zarqawi delegated to Al-Iraqi the responsibility of direct communications with Iraqi members within the organization, meanwhile Al-Zarqawi himself handled communications with volunteer fighters from outside Iraq. The deputy was also entrusted to oversee the needs of the organization's various committees.

As for the military arm of the organization, it was headed by Abu Aseed al-Iraqi, who was in charge of all operational, support, and executive battalions, brigades, and units. AQI also announced the establishment of the "Omar Brigade," which was in direct response to confront the Shiite "Badr Brigade."

The military arrangements and formations followed a specific methodology in selecting targets of attack, combining both a centralized and decentralized decision-making approach. For example, for most of the smaller operations, brigades and units spread across various regions did not need direct orders but rather relied on the discretion of field commanders, albeit in coordination with senior commanders of the battalions and regional emirs.

AQI's military arm was divided into a number of battalions, brigades, and units under various names. Some of them were named after Rashidun caliphs, such as the "Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Battalion," the "Omar Brigade," and the [Omar] "Ibn al-Khattab Battalion." Others carried the name of leaders of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, such as the "Abd al-Aziz al-Miqrin Battalion," or prominent leaders of the organization, such as "Abu Anas al-Shami," and "Abu Azzam al-Iraq," which became the names of battalions responsible for raids and invasions.

Other battalions maintained their original names before joining AQI, such as the *Al-Rijaal* (The Men) Battalion. Meanwhile, the battalion of *Al-Istishhadiyun* (Martyrs-To-Be), which was responsible for suicide missions and vital targets, became one of the most important units in AQI forces. It took the name of "*Katibat Al-Baraa' bin Malik,*" and was commanded by Abu Dujana al-Ansari. It included

the largest number of Arab volunteers, and later came to include a number of Iraqi members.

There were several key battalions that were directly related to the organization's senior command, such as the security and reconnaissance battalion, which was responsible for meticulous vetting of new recruits, gathering intelligence about individuals, locations, and targets selected for operations. The battalion was also responsible for monitoring the paths and movement of occupation forces and private contractors that provided security and logistical support, in addition to scouting the operations, military tactics, and future plans of the U.S. occupation and Iraqi government forces. It also worked to recruit agents to infiltrate into the National Guard, the police, private contractor companies, transportation companies, and other vital entities.

AQI reconnaissance units operated by intermingling with people, recording their impressions and needs, gathering information about individuals targeted for elimination and assassination,; including government officials, diplomats, and senior police and army chiefs, among others. The units also surveyed vital and sensitive locations to scout their weak and vulnerable points. They would send regular and continuous reports to the organization's leadership, which in turn would study and deliberate on the information to choose targets, locations, and timing of operations, and give direct orders to the military arm to execute the operations. The military arm would in turn report on the results of all operations carried out by its forces.

As for the Shari'ah Religious Committee, it was tasked with conducting research and studies to address the religious questions and matters related to the organization's work, and the justification and propagation of its beliefs, approaches,

and practices. The committee issued a magazine entitled "*Tharwat al-Sanam,*" tasked with studying religious edicts and provisions that serve the doctrine and agenda of the organization.

The Religious Committee' was also responsible for addressing and responding to claims and religious edicts (*Fatawa*) related to Jihad and resistance, and covering the news about "Jihad" from the battlefields. The committee was formed by Abu Anas al-Shami, but after he was killed, the organization did not announce the name of his successor out of fear for his life. A special court was established by the Religious Committee, with the jurisdiction to deliberate on cases of spying and espionage within the organization, and issue sentences against abductees and hostages, most of the time reaching death sentences. The court's rulings are final, and are not subject to appeal.

AQI's Media and Communications Department was headed by Abu Maysara al-Iraqi. It issued statements and pamphlets, and released audio and video recordings. The productions of this department exhibited a remarkably high-level of professionalism and technical expertise. The department handled the propaganda aspect of the organization, which played an important role in recruiting new members into the ranks of the organization.

The Internet became the most important means for the Media and Communications Department to publish AQI material. The department exhibited savvy and highly technical skills in the use of the Internet, making it difficult to monitor and trace the addresses and locations of those who operate the organization's websites and its users. Its cadre continuously developed new and advanced methods to overcome the issue of censorship and monitoring. AQI

prioritized the training of its members and followers on the use of technology and the Internet. Indeed, the websites of Jihadist organizations are considered the most important means to introduce the organizations and publish their various political, military, and religious literature and productions.

The Finance Committee, on its part, was tasked with collecting funds needed to finance AQI's various activities. It relied on a network of activists who specialize in fundraising and gathering donations from mosques and businesses, not only in Iraq, but also relying on a network of supporters who raise and funnel funds to the organization from all over the Arab and Muslim world. Furthermore, the committee imposed various taxes, and managed the finances related to spoils of war, which the organization obtained when it seized and took over various regions and important cities.

3. The Institutional Structure of the Islamic State of Iraq

When Al-Zarqawi was killed in June 2006, he left behind a firm, strong, and powerful organization. His followers grew more determined to establish an Islamic State on the basis of a Sunni "identity." Shortly after his death, a pact called *Hilf al-Mutayibeen* (The Pact of the Perfumed [Exalted]) was established on October 12th, 2006,[276] consisting of an alliance

---

[276] See the announcement of *"Hilf al-Mutayibeen,"* (The Pact of the Perfumed Ones); in which a number of masked men, said to be tribal leaders and members of the Shura Council, appear to pledge to govern by Shariah and to support Jihad and the Mujahideen in Iraq, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60mgEeNc7Z8

of various movements, organizations, armed groups, and some Sunni tribal leaders that functioned under the "Mujahideen Shura Council." Three days later, on October 15th, 2006, the organization declared the "Islamic State of Iraq" (ISI), theoretically encompassing a number of Sunni provinces, including Al-Anbar, Kirkuk, Nineveh, Diyala, Salahuddin, Babil, and Wasit.

Abu Omar al-Baghdadi (whose real name is Hamid Dawud al-Zawi) led ISI. The first ISI government formation[277] was announced by the organization's spokesman, Muharib al-Jubouri. The new formation highlighted the dominance of Iraqis in various aspects of the organization, with only a few Arab and foreign members remaining in the leadership, such as Al-Muhajir. On September 22nd, 2009, the organization announced its second cabinet formation.[278]

---

[277] The government of the Islamic State of Iraq consisted of a number of ministries, including: First Minister Sheikh Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Falahi, Minister of War Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, Minister of Religious Commissions Sheikh Abu Othman al-Tamimi, Minister of Public Relations Mr. Abu Bakr al-Jabouri, Minister of Public security Mr. Abu Abd al-Jabbar al-Janabi, Minister of Media Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Mashhadani, Minister of Martyr and Prisoner Affairs Mr. Abu Abd al-Qadir al-'Issawi, Minister of Oil Engineer Abu Ahmad al-Janabi, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Mr. Mustafa al-A'raji, Minister of Health Dr. Abu Abdullah al-Zaydi. See: The First Cabinet Formation of the Islamic State of Iraq, op. cit.

[278] The second cabinet formation of the Islamic State of Iraq was announced in September 2009, and it consisted of: First Minister and Minister of War Abu Hamza al-Muhajir (Abd al-Mun'im al-Badawi), Minister of Religious Commissions Abd al-Wahhab al-Mashhadani, Minister of Public Relations Muhammad al-Dulaimi, Minister of Public security Abd al-Razzaq al-Shammari, Minister of Media Ahmad al-Taa'i, Minister of Martyr and Prisoner Affairs Hassan al-Jabouri, Minister of Oil Osama al-Lahibi, Minister of Health Abdullah al-Qaisi, and Minister of Finance, Yunis al-Hamadani. The announcement is available at the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=552

After Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi and his Minister of War, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, were killed on April 19th, 2010, ISI quickly replaced its senior leaders. The Mujahideen Shura Council issued a statement on May 16th, 2010 announcing that consensus has been reached to inaugurate Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi al-Hussaini al-Qurashi as Emir of the Islamic State of Iraq. The statement also declared Abu Abdullah al-Hassani al-Qurashi as Deputy Emir and First Minister, while Abu Sulaiman succeeded Al-Muhajir as Minister of War.

4. The Organizational Building of the "Islamic State" (The Caliphate)

The Islamic State (IS) is widely considered to be one of the world's most well-developed global Jihadist movements in terms of structure and administrative effectiveness. Its organizational structures were formed based upon a blend of traditional Islamic movements' structures (which were formed under the institution of the Caliphate in Islamic history), and the theoretical political delineations of governance developed during medieval Islamic history, known as *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniya* (Provisions of Imperial Rule), which established a framework for an imperial state based on power, force, and authority. IS' framework also included modern organizational forms of a "state," such as military-security, ideological, and bureaucratic apparatuses.

The Islamic State's structural pyramid consists of:

First – The Caliph: IS' organizational structure is built upon a combination of religious doctrinal roots and modern

necessities. The Caliph is required to possess the qualifications of the position, such as religious knowledge, lineage of Quraysh (The Prophet's clan), and be physically well. The caliph is responsible for all religious and worldly affairs delineated in Sunni Islamic political heritage and in *Sultani* imperial jurisprudence. After being chosen by the Shura Council and the committee of "*Ahl al-Hal wa al-Aqd*" (those who hold binding authority), and as the religious and political leader, the caliph enjoys the absolute obedience of his followers and those who are under the control of his state.[279]

In administering its authority and managing its day-to-day affairs, the organization considers itself as a fully-fledged "Islamic State." Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, the organization's former Emir, was the one who devised the basic structure of the Islamic State. On his part, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the current leader, further developed that structure by indoctrinating the principle of allegiance and obedience, thus solidifying the centralized character of the organization and the caliph's ironclad control of its every aspect.

The organization's pyramid has the caliph on its top. He directly oversees the "councils," a term used by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as an alternative to "ministries" used by his predecessor, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi. These councils represent the organization's cornerstones that form IS'

---

[279] In building its organizational structure, the organization relies upon historical Islamic literature related to statehood, governance, and the caliphate, for reference, especially books on the heritage of *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyah* (The Imperial Rule [Medieval Principles of Governance]). After the Islamic State was declared, the organization's Religious Official, Othman bin Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi, issued his book "*I'lam al-Anaam bimilad Dawlat al-Islam*" (Lit., Informing All of Creation of the Birth of the State of Islam), op. cit., which is based on traditional Islamic references in stressing the incumbency of establishing the Islamic State and the caliphate.

"central command." Al-Baghdadi has extensive powers in appointing and removing the heads of councils after consulting with the "Shura Council," the rulings of which seem to be primarily advisory (*mu'lima*) rather than obligatory (*mulzima*). The final, indisputable decisions are in the hands of the Caliph, who's wide "religious" authority grants him absolute powers in all strategic matters, giving him the final say in most critical decisions.

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi relied upon the Iraqi element in all key positions of the organization, and upon the Arab and foreign members in administering support functions, such as Shura, media and communication, recruitment and fundraising. Al-Baghdadi retained semi-absolute authority in declaring war and deploying raids and attacks. He was also keen to replace the Ministry of War with a Military Council. Al-Baghdadi maintained control of the most important organizational functions, such as security, intelligence, day-to-day management, the Shura Council, the Military Council, the media and communications apparatus, religious committees, and the *Bayt al-Mal* (finance department). He also has the jurisdiction to appoint leaders and emirs in the Iraqi and Syrian territories under IS control.

Under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the organization entered a stage of extreme secrecy and paranoia on the military organizational level. Upon taking his position, Al-Baghdadi worked to restructure the organization, relying upon Salafist former Iraqi Army officers in the military aspect, such as Haji Bakr and Abd al-Rahman al-Bilawi, turning the military arm into a more professional, cohesive entity under the majority-Iraqi leadership.[280]

---

[280] Haytham Manna, "*Khilafat Da'ish min Hijrat al-Wahm ila Buhayrat al-Dam*," (Lit., ISIS's Caliphate, From the Phantoms of Illusion to Lakes of Blood),

At the same time, Al-Baghdadi employed Arab and foreign Jihadists in the religious committees, especially those who came from Arab Gulf states, such as Abu Bakr al-Qahtani (Omar al-Qahtani), Abu Humam al-Athari, (Turki al-Ban'ali or Turki bin Mubarak bin Abdullah, from Bahrain), and 'Uthman Aal-Nazih al-Assiri, among others.[281] Whereas in key security positions, Al-Baghdadi relied upon the "Turkmen Tal Afar Ring," most notably Abu Ali al-Anbari, and depended on Arab and foreign members in the media and communications apparatus, led by Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, spokesman of IS. With the expansion of the organization and the declaration of the Caliphate (after the fall of Mosul in June 2014), Al-Baghdadi began to integrate more and more Arabs and foreigners into the organizational pyramid, however, Iraqis continued to dominate the highest and most critical positions in the leadership pyramid.

Second – The Shura Council: Despite the various changes that effected the makeup of the Shura Council since the leadership of Al-Zarqawi and up until the current leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Shura Council remained by far one of the most significant and important institutions of the Islam State organization.

Currently headed by Abu Arkan al-'Aameri, the Shura Council membership and tasks grow or shrink depending on circumstances and needs. It usually convenes to address and

---

Part I, Geneva: Scandinavian Institute for Human Rights, August 2014, available [in Arabic] at the following link:
http://sihr.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/DAEESH-first-part1.pdf.

[281] Suhaib Anjarini, "Al-Dawla al-Islamiya: Min 'Al-Baghdadi al-Mu'assis' ilaa 'Al-Baghdadi al-Khalifa'," (Lit., The Islamic State: from Al-Baghdadi the Founder to Al-Baghdadi the Caliph), al-Akhbar Newspaper, July 10, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/210299.

deliberate on current affairs, critical decisions, and to draw general policies for the organization. Its membership size fluctuates, numbering between nine and eleven members appointed by Al-Baghdadi upon the recommendation of emirs and regional rulers, and usually includes a number of the organization's longstanding leaders, particularly religious officials.[282]

In theory, the Council has the power to depose the caliph. It maintains the same traditional historical functions reported in Islamic political heritage. As a consultative body, the Shura Council offers Al-Baghdadi opinion and advice on war and peace decision-making, but its advice is nonbinding, and only advisory in nature. Shura is confined to organizational affairs that were not explicitly ruled upon by specific texts in the Qur'an and the Sunnah; because legal Islamic principles dictate that there is no place for Shura or intellectual debate (*Ijtihad*) where a text is available and clear, unless the *Ijtihad* is an endeavor into understanding and interpreting the text. The Council deliberates on interpreting Islamic jurisprudence in the affairs and interests of the organization, the state, and public and private affairs of constituents, and their dealings with others. The Shura council also nominates candidates for positions of regional emirs and memberships of various councils.

The Religious Commission, as part of the Shura Council, enjoys special status given the organization's "religious" and theological nature. It is personally headed by Al-Baghdadi, and is made up of six members. Some of its basic functions

---

[282] Hisham al-Hashimi, "*Haykaliyat Tanthim Da'ish*: *Akhtar 18 Irhabiyan Yuhadiduna Istiqrar al-'Iraq*," (Lit., The Structure of ISIS: The 18 Deadliest Terrorists who Threaten the Stability of Iraq), Al-Mada Newspaper, June 15, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link:

http://almadapaper.net/ar/printnews.aspx?NewsID=466428

include monitoring how other councils adhere to Shariʻah regulations, and nominating candidates for the position of caliph in the event the current caliph dies, is captured, or is somehow no longer able to administer the organization and the state due to illness or disability.

Third – *Ahl al-Hal wa al-ʻAqd* (Those who Loosen and Bind) Committee: The body, effectively consisting of members of society who have binding authority, is a deeply seated concept in Islamic political jurisprudence. It includes a wide variety of members and supporters who are prominent individuals amongst emirs, scholars, leaders, politicians, and social and tribal leaders among the constituents of the "state." The members of the council must possess certain qualifications, such as ability to discern justice and its implications and conditions, knowledge as it pertains to the ability to distinguish who is capable of leading as caliph (including the conditions that such a leader must possess), and wisdom and sound opinion that lead to the most suitable choice for leadership. They must also be knowledgeable of the affairs and interests of the general public, and are often referred to as *Ahl al-Shura* (the people of consultation). Within IS, they represent a wide variety of notable figures, leaders and emirs, in addition to the Shura Council. They appoint and pledge allegiance to the caliph.

According to IS Spokesman, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, Al-Baghdadi was selected as Caliph after "The Shura Council of the Islamic State convened and deliberated on the matter, and after the Islamic State, with God's blessings, acquired all the prerequisites for a caliphate, making it sinful upon Muslims to not pursue [its establishment], especially because the Islamic State has no obstacle or religious excuse that would indemnify it in case the establishment of the caliphate

is delayed or not carried out. Hence, the Islamic State, represented by its "*Ahl al-Hal wa al-'Aqd*" including notable figure, leaders, emirs, and the Shura Council, decided to declare an Islamic caliphate and appoint a caliph for Muslims, and pledge allegiance to the Mujahid Shaikh, the knowledgeable, worshipper, the prudent leader, descendant of the house of the Prophet, God's servant: Ibrahim bin 'Awwad bin Ibrahim bin 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Badri al-Qurashi al-Hashimi al-Hussaini."[283]

Fourth – The Religious (Shari'ah) Commission: It is considered one of the most vital entities within the Islamic State, given its religious nature. Abu Ali al-Anbari was previously responsible for security and religious guidance, but the Religious Commission is now headed by Abu Muhammad al-'Aani. Abu Anas al-Shami was the first to hold that function (during Al-Zarqawi era and the *Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad* Group). Under Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi's leadership, Uthman bin Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi assumed the position.

The Commission issues books and letters, and drafts Al-Baghdadi's speeches and statements, and provides commentary for the organization's videos, songs, and other media productions. The entity is divided into two departments: The first is related to regulating religious courts and the judiciary, and handles litigation, arbitration and mediations in disputes, dictates and carries out punishments (*Hudud*), and manages the function of *Al-Hisba* (integrity in the market), and the role of promotion of virtue and prevention of vice (*Al-Amr bil Ma'rouf wa al-Nahi 'an al-Munkar*). The second department is tasked with preaching,

---

[283] Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, an audio recording entitled "*Hatha Wa'adu Allah,*" (Lit., This is God's Promise), op. cit.

guidance, recruitment, propagation, and monitoring the media.

In the membership of the Religious Commission, the organization relies mainly upon non-Iraqi Arabs and foreigners, particularly members who hail from the Arab Gulf states, as mentioned earlier.

Fifth – The Media and Communications Department: Media and communications is a significantly important function for IS, the Jihadi organization that gives the most priority and attention to the Internet and mass communications. From its nascent stages, the organization has recognized the exceptional value of media outlets in spreading its political message and its Jihadi Salafist ideology. The concept of "electronic Jihad" became a key function early on, from the days of *Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad* and the subsequent era of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).

The Media and Communications Department was first headed by Abu Maysara al-Iraqi. In the days of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), in 2006, the position was held by Abu Muhammad al-Mashhadani as Minister of Media, while Abu Abdullah Muharib (Abd al-Latif al-Jubouri) was spokesman for ISI. In 2009, Ahmad al-Taa'i became Minister of Media. Today, a wider committee, headed by Abu al-Atheer 'Amro al-'Absi, runs the organization's media and communications institution.

IS' media department has undergone considerable development in form and content, and enjoys extensive support and backing. Al-Furqan, an institution for media production, is the oldest and most influential of IS institutions. Recently, new media outlets were established to propagate and spread IS' message, ideology, and missions;,

including: Al- Itisam, Al-Hayat, A'amaaq, Al-Battar, Dabiq Media, al-Khilafah, Ajnad for media productions, Al-Ghurabaa, Al-Israa, Al-Saqeel, Al-Wafaa, and Nasaa'im Audio Productions, in addition to a number of media agencies affiliated with provinces and regions under IS control, such as al-Barakah and al-Khair news agencies, among others.The department also publishes a number of Arabic and English-language magazines and bulletins, such as Dabiq and Al-Shamikhah, and has established local radio stations, such as Al-Bayan in the Iraqi city of Mosul, and another radio station in the Syrian city of Al-Raqqa.

The organization also has media activities through online blogs, most notably in Russian and in English. The Media and Communications Department translates media productions into various languages, including English, French, German, Spanish and Urdu, among others. The organization controls a large number of websites and online forums, which offer a vast collection of literature related to its ideology, discourse, methods of recruitment, fundraising, training, covert and combat tactics, bomb-making, and everything Jihadists need to know for their operations in terms of guerilla warfare and wars of attrition.

The quality and contents of videos and other promotional material produced by IS institutions, like Al-Furqan and Al-'Itisam, demonstrate the significant developments and transformations of the organization's structure, resources, violent tactics, and terrifying militant strategies. IS produced a series of professional high-quality videos entitled "*Saleel al-Sawarim*" (The Clanking of the Swords), of which four episodes were made available in July 2012, August 2012, January 2013, and May 2014 respectively.

After the Islamic State took control of Mosul on June 10th, 2014, it published a series of horrific videos that especially depicted brutal beheadings. In the first video, entitled "*A Message to America*," an IS member is seen beheading American hostage James Foley. On September 2nd, 2014, a second video, with the same title, showed the beheading of another American hostage, Steven Sotloff. Both hostages were American journalists. On September 14th, 2014, a third video was released, entitled "*A Message to America's Allies*," in which IS members are shown beheading British hostage David Haines, followed by yet a fourth video on October 3rd, 2014 that showed the beheading of another British hostage, Alan Henning. The fourth video also included threats of beheading the American hostage Peter Kassig.

Among the most important IS productions that were widely watched on YouTube is the June 29th, 2014 video entitled "*Kasr al-Hudud*" (Breaking the Borders). Other important productions include Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's first public appearance giving a sermon at the Grand Mosque in Mosul, released on July 5th, 2014, and the series entitled "*Rasa'il min Ardh al-Malahim*" (Messages from the Battlegrounds), which documents the victories and operations of the organization, published sequentially with more than 50 episodes released so far. Also a series entitled "*Fa Sharrid Bihim min Khalfihim*" (Displace and Scatter them from Behind their Backs), with the first part covering the liberation battle of the 93rd Brigade in the Syrian province of Al-Raqqa (on August 23, 2014), and the second part covering the conquest of the Tabaqa airfield in Al-Raqqa on September 4th, 2014. Another production entitled "*'Alaa Minhaaj al-Nubuwwah*" (On the Path of the Prophet), was released on July 28, 2014.

By far, the video entitled "*Laheeb al-Harb*" (The Flames of War), is one of IS' largest and most terrifying high-quality production. It shows coverage of many of the IS's battles, as well as a message to coalition countries taking part in the campaign against the organization. The video was produced by IS' English-language al-Hayat Centre production outlet, and released on September 17th, 2014.

Sixth – *Baytul Mal* (the Finance Department): The Islamic State is considered the wealthiest in the history of Jihadist movements, surpassing in financial resources the central Al-Qaeda organization and its regional branches. Since the era of Al-Zarqawi, the organization was successfully able to build extensive and widespread financing networks, and diversified its funding resources. It established an effective finance committee, since the days of *Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*, that collects fund needed to finance its various activities. The committee depends on a network of fundraising activists specialized in collecting donations from businesses and mosques, particularly in wealthy Arab Gulf states and Europe, in addition to collecting funds within Iraq, and the sources of income generated from spoils of battles the organization gains from conquering new areas and levying various taxes.

With the growing influence and power of the organization, and the declaration of the "Islamic State of Iraq," the organization announced its first cabinet formation in 2006, consisting of several ministries specialized in managing revenues from oil and other natural resources. In its second cabinet announced in 2009, the leadership appointed Yunis al-Hamadani as Minister of Finance.

Today, Al-Baghdadi oversees the management of *Bayt al-Mal* (literally "House of Money"), which is the historical Islamic term for the finance institution, and is today primarily

headed by Muwaffaq Mustafa al-Karmoush. The Islamic State's finances increased considerably since it took control of Mosul in June 2014 and of vast areas in Iraq and Syria. Some studies estimate IS' total assets at around two billion U.S. Dollars. The organization has numerous and diverse sources of income, including:[284]

Donations and grants: A report issued by the U.S. Department of State in June 2014 revealed that a large number of wealthy Arab Gulf citizens have funded and financially supported the organization in both Iraq and Syria, including 28 Saudi Arabians, 12 Iraqis, 5 Kuwaitis, and others from Qatar, UAE, Bahrain, in addition to large quantities of grants from wealthy Iraqis after the organization took control of Mosul.

Funds from charity, donations, and Zakat (religious alms): In 2011 and 2012, Islamic channels and media platforms urged Muslims to dedicate their *Zakat* portions, charities, and donations to support Jihad and resistance efforts in Syria. These funds ultimately found their way directly to IS and AL-Nusra Front, and other radical Islamist groups.

Ransom revenues: The organization is active in kidnapping foreign nationals, employees of international

---

[284] Ahmad Muhammad Abu Zaid, "Min al-Tabaruʻat ila al-Nift: Kayfa Tahawala Daʻish ila Aghnaa Tantheem Irhabi fi al-ʻAlam?" (Lit., From Donations to Oil: How ISIS became the Richest Terrorist Organization in the World), The Regional Center for Strategic Studies, September 10th, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link:

http://www.rcssmideast.org/Article/2668/%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%81-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%B4-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A3%D8%BA%D9%86%D9%89-%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%8A%D9%85-%D8%A5%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85-#.VFguPfmUckY

organizations and companies, and Western journalists, and then negotiating with their families and home countries their release in exchange for millions of dollars as ransom.

Seizing resources and goods from conquered areas and establishments, including hospitals, shopping centers, and power and water utilities, all of which provide the organization with millions of dollars in revenue every month.

Revenues from natural resources and mining: The organization seized control of oil and gas resources in both Iraq and Syria. IS controls more than 80 minor oil fields, the products of which it in turn sells locally or internationally through traders. These resources are estimated to generate two million dollars per month. The organization also controls gold mines in the Iraqi city of Mosul.

Levying taxes and fees, which became important sources of revenue that are imposed on businesses, farmers, factories, and wealthy residents in the territories under IS control. The organization also imposes *Jizyah* (protection money) on non-Muslims. It also collects monthly taxes from local companies and institutions estimated at 6 million dollars monthly.

Government funds: the organization seized massive amounts of cash from banks and government institutions upon its control over Mosul, amounting to over ten million dollars.

Agricultural revenues: IS controls wide agricultural fields in both Iraq and Syria, including wheat and produce farms. The organization now has as much as a third of Iraq's wheat production under its control.

Seventh – The Military Council: Given IS' militant nature, the Military Council is considered the organization's most critical entity. The number of its members varies according to the organizations strength and size of its expansion and

influence. Historically, the number of Council members ranged between nine and thirteen.[285] The organization began using the term "Military Council" after its Minister of War, Nu'man Mansour al-Zaydi (AKA Abu Sulaiman Al-Nassir li Din Allah) was killed in May 2011.

The Military Council is commanded by Al-Baghdadi's deputy. Previously, Al-Zarqawi used to hold both positions until Abu Hamza al-Muhajir was appointed Minister of War in the era of the "Islamic State in Iraq" and continued to hold the position while Abu Omar al-Baghdadi was emir. Under the current command of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, Haji Bakr (whose real name is Sameer Abed Muhammad al-Khlaifawi) assumed command of the position. After the latter was killed in Syria in January 2014, he was succeeded by Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Bilawi (Adnan Isma'il al-Bilawi), who in turn was killed in June 2014. The Military Council is currently led by Abu Muslim al-Turkmani (whose real name is Fadhil al-Hiyali).

The council is made up of sector commanders, with each sector consisting of three battalions of 300-400 fighters each. Each battalion is divided into several brigades, with each consisting of 50-60 fighters. The Military Council itself is divided into a Chiefs of Staff commission, raid "commandos" forces, suicide missions units, logistical support forces, sniper forces, and ambush forces. The Council's leadership includes Abu Ahmad al-'Alwani (Walid Jassim) and Omar al-Shishani. The Military Council handles all military functions and missions, such as strategic planning, battlefield command, battlefield preparedness, and oversight, supervision, and evaluation of the military commanders'

---

[285] Hisham al-Hashimi, "*Haykaliyat Tanthim Da'ish…*" (Lit., The Structure of ISIS…), op. cit.

performance, in addition to managing affairs of military armament and spoils of war.

Eighth – The Security Council: This is also one of IS' most important and most critical councils. It is tasked with the security and intelligence operations of the organization,[286] and is headed by Abu Ali al-Anbari, a former intelligence officer in the deposed Iraqi Army, who has a group of deputies and aides. The Council oversees the security affairs of the organization, and the personal security detail for the "caliph" Al-Baghdadi, including securing his residences, appointments, and movements, and following up on the implementation of Al-Baghdadi's orders and adherence to them on the part of regional leaders. The Council also monitors the performance and operations of security commanders in various provinces, principalities, and cities, and supervises the implementation of judicial rulings and *Hudud* punishments. Other tasks include infiltrating rival organizations, protecting the organization from being infiltrated, and overseeing the special forces units, such as the *Istishhadiyeen* (suicide bombers) and *Inghimasyeen* (undercover agents) units in coordination with the Military Council.

The Security Council also assumes responsibility for maintenance of the organization from penetration and infiltration, and has detachments in all IS principalities that administers mail operations throughout the territories under IS control. It also coordinates communications between the organization's sections throughout the areas under its control. Special units, skilled in political assassinations, kidnappings,

---

[286] Haytham Manna, "*Khilafat Da'ish min Hijrat al-Wahm ila Buhayrat al-Dam*," (Lit., ISIS's Caliphate, From the Phantoms of Illusion to Lakes of Blood), op. cit.

and collecting funds and ransoms, also fall under the Security Council's jurisdiction.

Ninth – Administrative Divisions (*Wilayat*): The Islamic State divides the territories under its control into administrative units called "*Wilayat*" (provinces or states), which is the historical Islamic name for territorially-divided areas. These regions are governed by a group of "Emirs," which is also a term derived from historical Islamic political heritage.

There are 16 administrative divisions (*Wilayat*) under IS control or influence, half of which are in Iraq; they are: Diyala, the southern provinces (*Al-Janoub*), Salahuddin; Al-Anbar, Kirkuk, Nineveh, Northern Baghdad, and Baghadad *Wilayat*. The other half is in Syria, and they are: Homs, Aleppo, al-Khair (the area of Dair Al-Zor) al-Baraka (the area of al-Hasaka) al-Badia (desert areas), Al-Raqqa, Hama, and Damascus. [287]

The *Wilayat* are divided into subdivisions called "*Qawati*" (sections), which include cities that retain the official names they had prior to coming under IS control. For example, the province of Aleppo is divided into two sections: the Manbij section, which includes the cities of Manbij, Jarablus and Maskana, and the Al-Bab section, which includes the cities of Al-Bab and Dair Hafir.

The highest authority in each *Wilayah* is represented by an appointed official called a "*Wali*" (governor), and is assisted by a number of senior officials under his command called "emirs" (princes), who control their delegated sectors, such as the Military Emir, the Religious Emir (who heads the

---

[287] Suhaib Anjarini, "*Al-Dawla al-Islamiya: Min 'Al-Baghdadi al-Mu'assis' ilaa 'Al-Baghdadi al-Khalifa'*," (Lit., The Islamic State: from Al-Baghdadi the Founder to Al-Baghdadi the Caliph), op. cit.

Shari'ah commission), and Security Emir. The Emir of Sections is considered the highest authority in each respective section, assisted by a group of Emirs in the military, religious, and security fields. This hierarchy of command is administered across all cities and regions under IS control. The govenors and their deputy Emirs oversee the Section Emirs and their deputies, who in turn oversee the performance of city Emirs and their deputies.

5. Current Leading Figures

In terms of the general hierarchical structure of the Islamic State, there are a number of senior positions, including: the Caliph, who is the overall leader of the organization, a position currently assumed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Deputy Caliph (Deputy Emir), who coordinates the affairs of *Wilayat* inside Iraq, currently held by Fadhil Ahmad Abdullah al-Hiyali, (AKA Abu Mu'taz), the Head of the Military Council, Abu Muslim al-Turkmani Al-'Afri, currently in the province of Nineveh, the *Wali* of Al-Anbar (who is also a member of the Military Council), Adnan Latif Hameed al-Suwaidawi (AKA Abu Muhannad al-Suwaidawi, or Abu Abd al-Salam).

In the southern and mid-Euphrates province, the *Wali* is Ahmad Muhsin Khalaf Al-Juhaishi (AKA Abu Fatimah). The General Finance Official is Mustafa Muhammad Karmoush (AKA Abu Salah). The General Coordinator of Provinces' Mail is Muhammad Hameed al-Dulaimi (Abu Hajar al-'Asafi). The General Coordinator for Patronage and affairs of

widows and families of martyrs and prisoners is ʿAwf abd al-Rahman Al-ʿAfri (AKA Abu Saja).

Among administrative positions, there is the Special Mail Coordinator and Storage Facilities Official held by Faris Riyad al-Nuʿaimi (AKA Abu Shaymaa'), the bomb-making and explosive devices' official is Khairi Abed Mahmoud al-Taa'i (AKA Abu Kifah), and the General Administrator is Shawkat Hazim Klash al-Farhat (AKA Abu Abd al-Qadir).

The official responsible for boarding and lodging facilities for Arab recruits and immigrants, and who handles the transportation of suicide bombers, is Abdullah Ahmad al-Mashhadani (AKA Abu Qassim). The official responsible for following up on affairs of prisoners (members of the organization detained by the government or other factions) is Bashar Ismaʿil al-Hamadani (AKA Abu Muhammad). The General Security official is Abd al-Wahid Khudhair Ahmad (AKA Abu Lo'ay or Abu Ali).

Also within the organization's leadership hierarchy, there is the *Wali* of Kirkuk Niʿma Abed Nayef al-Jubouri (AKA Abu Fatimah), *Wali* of al-Hudud (border regions) Radwan Talib Hussain Ismaʿil al-Hamdouni (AKA Abu Jarnas), *Wali* of Salahuddin Wissam Abed Zayd al-Zubaidi (AKA Abu Nabil), and *Wali* of Baghdad Ahmad Abd al-Qadir al-Jazzaaʿ (AKA Abu Maysara or Abu Abd al-Hameed).[288]

---

[288] See: "*Revealed: The Islamic State 'Cabinet', From Finance Minister to Suicide Bomb Deployer*," The Telegraph, July 9th, 2014, available in English on the following link:
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/10956193/Revealed-the-Islamic-State-cabinet-from-finance-minister-to-suicide-bomb-deployer.html
An Arabic translation of the Telegraph's report was published on Al-Arabiya Net, July 11th, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.alarabiya.net/ar/arab-and-world/iraq/2014/07/10/%D8%AE%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%81%D8%A9-

Conclusion

Clearly, the internal structure of the Islamic State organization is growing in sophistication. In its nascent stages, the structure was in the form of a simple amalgamation of clusters that is typical of local Islamist jihadi groups. It soon began to develop into more clearly-defined and specialized institutions and bodies with the establishment of *Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*, and grew even more sophisticated as the organization joined the central Al-Qaeda organization and declared Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).

After Al-Zarqawi's death, and with the declaration of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), the organization adopted a more institutionalized form that attempted to mimic the organizational arrangements espoused in the books of Islamic heritage. In its attempt to transform the organization into a "state" structure, it formed ministries and appointed Walis (provincial governors) in regions under its control. The real metamorphosis, however, occurred later under the command of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and the declaration of the Caliphate. The operations and functions of the organization's various departments and apparatuses were further developed and institutionalized. They were given specialized and particular tasks that blended aspects of the "modern state" institutions' functions, on the one hand, with the nature and character of

%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%B4-
%D9%88%D8%A3%D8%B9%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%A1-
%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%88%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%87.html

the organization and the conditions under which it was operating, on the other hand, which necessitated a higher degree of complication, anonymity, and opaqueness. This created a distinctive structure that is a hybrid manifesting aspects of a modern state and a convoluted secretive organization at once.

The evolution and developments were not confined to the institutional and functional aspects of the organization; they also impacted the restructuring of the senior leadership and empowerment of local professional and specialized leaders particularly in the military, security, and financial aspects. Several local Iraqi figures came to play a pivotal role in the organization's increasing sophistication and skilled capabilities, such as Haji Bakr, Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Bilawi, Abu Ali al-Anbari, and Abu Ayman al-Iraqi.

The organization exhibited an exceptional ability in the distribution of tasks and duties between local members and foreigners (Arab and Muslim 'immigrants'). Despite a perceived "double-standard" on the administrative level and apparent dominance of Iraqis over key positions in the organization's leadership more recently, the Islamic State nonetheless managed to assimilate and integrate the foreign elements, delegating them with specific roles and missions, and assigning them into positions within a framework that combines both the local (Iraqi) and the "regional" and even "international" levels; that is; the holistic framework of the Islamic "Caliphate." Perhaps this explains one of the most important reasons behind declaring the Caliphate; to maintain the internal cohesiveness of the organization and its ability to absorb the unique diversity under its fold, including Iraqis, Syrians, Arabs, Asians, and even Europeans and other Westerners.

The religiously-oriented framework, akin to the structure of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad, allows the organization to absorb and engage its heterogeneous constituency. On another level, this interpretation may also shed light on Al-Baghdadi's presence in all black attire in the famous, albeit very rare, appearance giving a sermon at the Grand Mosque in Mosul in July 2014, considering that black is a color historically associated with the Abbasid caliphate.

The Islamic State continues to be an attractive model for Jihadists from around the world. Western estimates report that the number of recruits and overall membership of the organization momentously multiplied following the fall of Mosul and the declaration of the Caliphate. This growth is expected, considering the factors of newly-gained power, hegemony, and influence that accompanied the organization's expansion. This is reinforced by the fact that as the Islamic State conquers new areas, it encourages the locals to pledge allegiance to the caliph, and carries out intensified mobilization and propaganda campaigns to achieve that objective. It deeply infiltrates local educational, media, religious, and judicial institutions, effectively pushing the locals to join, either out of fear of real fierce punishments to those who refuse, or in hopes of joining the current 'victors.'

Despite IS' manifest sophistication in its organizational and institutional structure; its effective methods of recruitment and mobilization; skilled technicality and professionalism; and maintaining its internal cohesion; all this, however, does not necessarily mean that it does not face grave challenges. The rapid expansion of its operations, functions, and territories under its control, carries in its folds real threats to its ability to remain cohesive and continue to expand, particularly if it is subjected to wide-scale military

attacks and security campaigns, or in the event that the U.S.' pressures succeed in besieging it economically and geographically, and in draining the capabilities and power it had recently gained. This is the important aspect related to the future horizons and prospects of the Islamic State that the conclusion of this book will address ∎

Conclusion

The Day After:
The War against the 'Islamic State'

Soon after the fall of the city of Mosul and amid rapid IS expansion, the United States and its allies quickly began changing their approach towards the situation in Syria and Iraq. The allies no longer viewed IS as a local Iraqi organization suffering from a structural crisis as it did in 2007-2008, when it was faced with the Sunni community's inability to coexist with its radical religious ideology and had to confront the Sunni tribal *Sahawat*. Rather, IS today has become a cross-border regional actor that controls vast territories and destroys longstanding borders in order to unite the areas under its influence in both Syria and Iraq. It has gained a sizable military arsenal, acquired mostly from its battles against the Iraqi and Syrian armies, and boasts effective combat capabilities and military experience, aided by an apparatus that commands the battlefield with potent warfare tactics. Today, it controls vast sources of wealth, including oil and gas fields, and has mastered the art of dealing with the "black market" in ways that circumvents strictly-imposed sanctions. Furthermore, it decisively and cunningly exploits the existing regional crises and the conflicting interests of countries in the region and the world and works them to its advantage. All the while, it continues to benefit from the social "Sunni" cover, which has been resulting from the spread of sectarianism, chaos, and the abysmal political vacuum in the Arab world.

Amid these developments, the United States decided to take action, mobilizing with it Western and Arab countries to form a military coalition aimed to declaw the Islamic State, so-to-speak. After years of practically denying the fundamental factors behind the rise of this organization, more real and in-depth discussions emerged at last; prompting the U.S. administration to finally acknowledge the existence of a real Sunni crisis in the region that is effectively paving the way for IS' forceful re-emergence. Subsequently, and through regional understandings (particularly with Iran and Saudi Arabia), the U.S. was able to reach a "deal" to get rid of former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, with the pretext that his policies worked to exacerbate sectarianism in Iraq and undermined the institutional legitimacy of Iraq's new political system.

However, this superficial solution shallowly undermined the gravity of the crisis, and overlooked the ongoing Iranian role in ingraining its influence not only in Iraq, but across the Arab region, particularly in Syria, where it has supported the regime of President Bashar al-Assad and pushed Hezbollah and Shiite militias into the midst of the civil war there in an attempt to save the Assad regime from collapsing.

There is irony in the fact that the coalition decided to strike IS in both Iraq and Syria, while continuing to ignore the underlying factors behind its rise and expansion, including the Syrian regime's violent suppression of peaceful protests and its continuous massive-scale use of various kinds of weapons against the opposition and civilians. Such policies led to the militarization of the peaceful uprising there and contributed to the emergence of Al-Qaeda in Syria (and the subsequent split into IS and Al-Nusra Front). Furthermore, these policies ultimately served in reinforcing the power and influence of

IS, which by now has mastered the art of the sectarian game, exploiting it and employing it in confronting its rivals. IS relies on a rigid and blatant identity-oriented discourse in mobilizing the large Sunni segment of society, which is growing extremely frustrated and despaired amid the absence of any peaceful political prospect for change, and the reluctance of the international community to intervene to put an end to the tragedy and massacres that have transpired in Syria, leading to hundreds of thousands of casualties and displacing millions.

Amid a climate that is witnessing the rise of reciprocal sectarian animosity; the gravitation of Shiite political forces towards Tehran as their regional ideological stronghold; the general weakness of the official Sunni political actors; and an overwhelming sense of political vacuum felt by Sunni communities in three major societies in the region (Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon), which poses a real threat to their identity and interests; the rise of the Islamic State is no longer a matter difficult to understand, asertain, and analyze. Although it is not necessarily a natural cultural and civilizational choice for the people of the region, it nonetheless became a tool for self-defense for some segments of the Sunni community, whether they accept it or reject it. In light of the extraordinary circumstances, chaos, and internal strife, these segments have found no alternative effective path for resistance today except this model.[1]

---

[1] This does not imply, in any way, a Sunni acceptance of IS, its discourse, or methods. It is evident that the battles occurring in Syria and Iraq between IS and other nationalist and Islamist factions are evidence of the existence of a real internal resistance against it, and a recognition of the threat it poses, politically and culturally, to the fate of the Sunni community and its interests. Nonetheless, the events and developments on the ground demonstrate that the current trajectory serves IS more than it serves its opponents within the Sunni community, who remain trapped between a rock and a hard place; between fear for the Sunni

Therefore, the Sunni crisis remains the Achilles heel of the Obama administration's strategy in confronting the Islamic State. Sunnis may be unwilling to, once again, wager on the partial and shorthanded solutions, which may lead to further deterioration and weakness of Sunni standing in the event that IS is debilitated or eliminated. Despite not expressing the organic Sunni option of choice; the Sunni population's toleration and even adoption of IS' approach simply reflects their sense of anxiety and outright panic from the prevailing conditions.

Based on the U.S.' conviction that the war against the Islamic State is a complex course (considering that the military dimensions are intertwined with the political ones), the U.S. and its allies have come to adopt a more long-term vision that links military progress with the essential condition of disengaging IS from its Sunni incubators in Iraq and Syria. In order to translate the results of airstrikes into real military achievements, the U.S. is increasingly relying on the ground efforts of Kurdish forces and the Iraqi Army, in addition to the Iraqi and Syrian Sunnis, whom the U.S. and its allies want to train and equip in order to confront Al-Qaeda and IS. Efforts were being made to form "National Guard" forces in Iraq to train and incorporate Sunnis tribal members in them, in addition to training the Free Syrian Army (FSA) in Syria.[2]

---

identity from the political sectarian threat on the one hand, and the growth of the IS model and what it carries with it of threats to the peaceful nature of this society and its lifestyle and interests, on the other hand.

[2] David Ignatius, "*Obama Faces Growing Pressure to Escalate in Iraq and Syria,*" The Washington Post, October, 14th, 2014, available at the following link: http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/david-ignatius-obama-faces-growing-pressure-to-escalate-in-iraq/2014/10/14/28b2ae56-53e1-11e4-809b-8cc0a295c773_story.html

This stirs a number of essential questions regarding the upcoming phase and the future of the Arab region: What are the prospective scenarios and possible outcomes of the war against the Islamic State? In this prospective context, will the United States and its allies succeed in militarily eliminating IS, both the organization and the 'state' that spans territories in Iraq and Syria? If that is so, what would be the fate of conditions in Iraq and Syria if the Sunni political problem is not resolved in both countries? Will the elimination of IS truly lead to restoring regional stability?

Before endeavoring to answer these essential questions, it is worthy to reiterate four main findings reached in the previous chapters of this book:

The rise of the Islamic State organization as an active regional, cross-border actor is linked to two main factors. The first is the sectarian inclination prevailing in the region, fueled by Iranian regional influence and interference, the Sunni political vacuum, and the eruption of internal conflicts on ethnic, religious, and sectarian lines in both Iraq and Syria. The second factor stems from the oppressive policies of authoritative regimes, violent repression of peaceful protests, and the state of political impasse, coupled with the counter-revolutions against the outcomes of the Arab Spring; in sum, this factor is mounted on the general Arab regional political crisis.

IS embodies one model among several cross-societal models, which consist of religious and sectarian groups that have grown to be main actors in the midst of the prevailing political and security state of chaos. Such models include Shiite Iraqi groups and militias, Hezbollah, Kurdish entities and forces, Jihadi Salafist movements and Al-Qaeda branches, and the Houthis in Yemen, among others. All these

models are founded upon the same political and societal conditions that led to the rise of the Islamic State.

The political, security, and military role of such organizations and groups is founded on the failure of the Arab nation-state in actualizing political integration, protection of the values of citizenship and the rule of law, and a prevailing climate of chaos, instability, and political vacuum.

The rise of the Islamic State, locally and regionally, is not coincidental or surprising, and its successful defeat exceeds the mere military and security solutions. There is dire need to address the substantive political and social conditions that underpin the emergence and influence of these organization and other similar models.

Two important conclusions may be drawn from the above summaries:

First, the real, long-term success of this current war on IS will not be achieved unless IS is disengaged and disconnected from its social incubator, and this is reliant upon the extent to which the Sunni community is prepared to rise, once more, against the organization, as they did in 2007 with the *Sahawat* (Awakenings).

And second, the entire region is undergoing a transitional phase where the 'nation state' and its political system are witnessing a dire collapse. This situation is not limited to Iraq and Syria, but extends to most countries in the region, where chaos and instability are prevailing, such as in Yemen, Libya, Lebanon, and Sinai and Egypt. This political collapse is matched with the rise of armed militias with sectarian, religious, or ethnic inclinations, identities, and objectives.

In light of these conclusions and findings, the answers to the question of future prospects for the war against the

Islamic State are found in the folds of the following three contexts: The international and regional coalition against IS, the structure and organization of IS itself, and the sociology of violence, which has become the model epitomized by IS.

1. The International and Regional Coalition

The international coalition against IS faces significant dilemmas, and its possible scenarios and next steps remain rather ambiguous.

Firstly, the U.S. administration recognizes that eliminating or weakening IS, without extending its goals to encompass the Syrian regime will not solve the problem. Indeed, such a shorthanded solution will not necessarily convince the Sunni community to change its stance and become an active participant in the war against IS. And, as long as President Obama does not utter the magic words; that is, extending the objectives to target the Syrian regime or force it to step down, the Sunni community in Syria will see no light at the end of the tunnel, and the factors behind the rise and strength of IS will remain in force. This approach was echoed by Turkey, which has firmly expressed that a pre-condition for its full engagement against IS is to extend of objectives to remove the regime of Al-Assad, an approach also supported by France.

But in contrast, any declaration by the U.S. administration that the war would target the regime of Bashar al-Assad would essentially drag it into a dual conflict; with Iranian influence and its extensions on the one hand, and IS

on the other. This approach may also lead to U.S. allies in the Iraqi government themselves to turn against it.

Secondly, in its effort to weaken IS, the United States is allying with the Iraqi government, which in its role supports the Iraqi militias that adopt and exhibit a sectarian approach that counters that of IS, and commits grave violations against Sunnis similar to IS' against Shiites and other factions. The Baghdad government is also allied with the regime of Bashar al-Assad and Hezbollah in Syria in confronting IS. Such cooperation, whether direct or indirect, in achieving the common goal between the U.S. administration and these factions, will not help reassure the Sunni community or give them any hope of changing the status quo so long as they continue to feel the existential threat to their identity and their survival in this climate.

Thirdly, in light of the slow progress towards a political solution, how can the U.S. administration convince the Sunni community that this war serves their interests and not those of their opponents, especially as the Sunnis themselves consider that the prime beneficiaries of the strikes against IS are the Iraqi and Syrian regimes? In the event that the coalition succeeds in eliminating IS, what guarantees do the Sunnis have that these two regimes will not again turn against them, as what has previously happened with the success of weakening the Iraqi organization through Sunni *Sahawat* (which are now being reproduced in the form of the "National Guard")? Without such guarantees, the U.S. and its coalition would lose a strong actor (in the potential for the National Guard) that may contribute to rebuilding the balance of power, not to mention the Sunni community's lack of faith in the necessity and political or sectarian agenda of the "National Guard" plan.

Fourthly, there are significant doubts about the strength and cohesion of the regional and international coalition against IS. Although dozens of countries are involved in the airstrikes, there are, nevertheless, different visions regarding the objectives and purposes of involvement expressed by various coalition members based on their own interests, particularly within the region. Turkey did not accept ground intervention to save the Kurdish city of Kobani, and during the initial phase of the airstrikes, did not allow coalition forces to use its airbases. Turkey's stance is based on its demand for an approach that includes the elimination of not only IS, but the Syrian regime as well. On their part, Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia, remain concerned about the growing Iranian influence and Tehran's relationship with the new Iraqi regime. Thus, the Arabs are taking a tough stance towards the Assad regime, and although they consider IS to be a main source of threat to their national security and regional stability, they also simultaneously look to Iran as a real and substantial threat. These varying perspectives, and interests, have indeed hindered the solid cohesiveness of the coalition, and are bound to create cracks in its ranks, especially if the war is prolonged, as the U.S. projects.

And fifthly, despite the importance of the airstrikes and their impact in the long term, they will not be able to completely eliminate IS without deploying troops on the ground. The dilemma facing the coalition is that plans to train Sunnis in Iraq or Syria to confront IS on the ground continue to face political and technical obstacles and complexities. The planned establishment of the "National Guard" in Iraq requires years of training and preparation in order for it to be fit for confrontation. Meanwhile, the Free Syrian Army in Syria remains weak, and unable to take advantage of the weakening of IS and the military and territorial siege against

it. It remains unclear how the war, along with its goals and paths, will unfold in the event that political efforts do not succeed in alleviating the effects of the Sunni crises in both countries.

These factors, indeed, raise doubts about the international coalition's ability to deal with the diverse effects of the prevailing state of disintegration and chaos, not only in Syria and Iraq and the role of IS there, but also throughout the region. These doubts are exacerbated considering the coalition's already manifested lack of cohesion and the lack of a comprehensive strategy in the region that would buttress military action with political and societal policy changes.

2. The 'Islamic State:' The Organization

The Islamic State has been able to minimize the effects and extent of the damages of the initial military airstrikes against it so far. However, it is likely to face real problems and considerable obstacles in the next phase. Despite the strength and firmness exhibited by its fighters in battles in Al-Anbar province and in the city of Kobani, the organization has failed to achieve further swift and easy victories, as it did in the beginning when it seized Mosul, Tikrit, and large portions of Sunni territory. Today, IS is surrounded on various boundaries, and is fighting multiple fronts that may exhaust it in the long run and reduce its financial, logistical, tactical, and mobilization capabilities, especially if the regional and international coalition maintains its momentum and its support for factions fighting IS on the ground.

Also, although IS has been able to maintain its cohesion and resolve thus far, and its members remain committed to the leadership, however, its recent substantial territorial expansion may prove counterproductive and backfire on it internally. According to Western reports, large numbers of fighters have joined IS in both Iraq and Syria especially after its military victories and its declaration of the Caliphate. This expansion and diversity among its ranks may produce a level of disparity in its members' commitments, and lead to wide sockets of vulnerability. And, in the event that it suffers substantial military losses and its influence declines during the next phase, it is likely to lose a large portion of its support base from members and tribes that have pledged allegiance to it. This loss of support base will ultimately be for practical and pragmatic rather than ideological reasons, and will have a major negative effect, as it did during the *Sahawat* phase in 2007 when the organization's influence declined and large numbers of its followers defected.

IS' weakest point, and perhaps its Achilles heel, remains its relationship with the Sunni community. If a large segment of this community turns against it, as they did before, whether for political reasons or in rejection of its religious and ideological dictates upon society, then the very factor behind its rise will turn into the factor behind its downfall.

For that matter, and in light of its recognition of its "Sunni incubator" and the heavy blow it suffered at the hands of the *Sahawat* in the past, the Islamic State has been keen to "purge," – and in its own words "cleanse" – the territories under its control by imposing its influence and eliminating the influence of other forces in the area, forcing them to merge under its banner and pledge their allegiance. It has also made

its struggle against rival Sunni factions a priority in its combat strategy, reflected in its adoption of the new maxim "Nine bullets in the heads of apostates (from among the Muslim factions) and one bullet in the head of Crusaders." However, this approach itself carries in its folds the seeds for failure and collapse because it stands on the premise of fear and power, rather than conviction and accord. It also reflects that IS' relationship with the Sunni community is conditional and temporary, compelled by necessity rather than stemming from a deep strategic and cultural choice.

3. The Sociology of Violence: The 'Islamic State' as a "Model"

Researchers and politicians often commit a cardinal error when they analyze the rise of IS in the region without considering the general political context in that region itself in which IS emerged. IS' vicious degree of violence and brutal behavior is not an oddity, but is rather part of the current climate of "structural violence" that is sweeping many Arab countries and societies.[3]

It is essential to analyze this new political actor from within the framework of authoritarian and repressive violence in the region, whether it is of a sectarian nature (as is the case in Iraq and Syria), or despotic and authoritarian (as in the case of Egypt, Algeria, and other Arab countries). Such analysis

---

[3] Aaron David Miller, "Middle East Meltdown," Foreign Policy, October 30th, 2014, available at the following link: http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/10/30/middle-east-meltdown/

should incorporate another parallel framework, that is, in the context of structural crises being experienced by Arab 'nation-states,' which is heightening feelings of marginalization and exclusion amongst the populations amid absence of peaceful prospects and the abysmal economic and social conditions affilicting them.

It is also necessary to consider the rise of IS within the context of endemic chaos throughout the region, such as in Libya which suffers from a political vacuum and the rise of Jihadi Salafist affiliated groups, in the Sinai Peninsula, in Yemen with the Houthis seizing control of the capital Sanaa, and in the domestic crisis in Bahrain, and other internal crises in other Arab countries. Today, there is a growing climate of disintegration of societies, collapse of the moral authority of the state, and a return to older forms of expression of identity, such as tribalism and sectarianism as opposed to nationalism.

Indeed, such climates make of IS an attractive "model" that may be duplicated and applied in many societies, as long as the alternative paths remain unfeasible thus far. The danger of this organization is not merely its successful territorial expansion and its ability to create a cross-border entity, and its vicious violence against its opponents, but also because it is a model that reflects the negative, miserable awareness of the conditions in Arab and Muslim societies.

IS has become a "model," as evident in the fact that other groups emerging in Libya and Yemen and elsewhere are seeking to join it, if not reproduce it. As long as the Sunni crisis is not solved, and the Arab authoritarian crises persist, this organization and the trends like it (whether sectarian, ethnic, or other) will continue to find fertile ground to emerge, grow, and adapt to the various pressures and circumstances facing them. Even if IS and its likes decline in

one area, they are bound to re-emerge elsewhere as long as these conditions remain.

During the war in Afghanistan starting in 2002, the United States and its allies managed to topple the Taliban regime and destroy Al-Qaeda's stronghold and safe haven and disperse its leadership. However, the problem quickly re-emerged only a few years later. In fact, various American circles today acknowledge that the political process in Afghanistan has not been able to bring stability to the country. Furthermore, they admit that Al-Qaeda, in its various versions and offshoots, including the Islamic State (which eventually split from the mother organization), have become more prevalent, widespread, and powerful, despite all the security, military, and economic measures taken to combat them.

To conclude and summarize, it is evident that eliminating the Islamic State militarily will not bring about regional stability, nor will it save the Arab 'nation state.' Realistic facts on the ground indicate that the region is facing a phase in which old balances of power are collapsing without creating alternative peaceful prospects, which could have been provided by the Arab democratic revolutions. However, the path the region is taking has become more complicated and tortuous, making the scenario of chaos, violence, and political and geographic fragmentation, on the basis of primitive identities and affiliations, the most likely scenario in the foreseeable future. As long as the national, democratic, unity and accord-based alternative remains absent in most Arab countries and societies; the region will remain embroiled in a vicious cycle of internal and regional conflicts and agonizing crises■

Appendices

Appendix 1

Brief Profiles of Leading Figures of the 'Islamic State'

1. Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi:

His real name is Ahmad Fadhil Nazzal al-Khalayleh. Born on October 20th,1966 in the city of Al-Zarqaa, Jordan. He belongs to the tribe of Al-Khalayleh, one of the tribes of the prominent "Bani Hassan" clan in Jordan. He left school towards the last stages of high school, and worked as an employee in the Al-Zarqaa Municipality in 1983. By 1984, he enlisted in the Jordanian Army per the conscription system for two years. During this time, he underwent a phase of unbalance and recklessness, followed by a phase of religious adherence. In 1989, he left to Afghanistan via Peshawar, Pakistan, but did not participation in the Jihad against the Soviets, who had withdrawn from Afghanistan shortly before his arrival. In Peshawar, he met Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi, and worked for a while in the Al-Bunyan al-Marsous Magazine. In Afghanistan, Al-Zarqawi received military training in several training camps, particularly in "Camp Sada."

After returning to Jordan in 1993, al-Zarqawi began to meet with Al-Maqdisi again. The two joined forces to propagate the calling (*da'wa*) to Jihadi Salafism, and established a Jihadi group that came to be known in the media as "*Bay'at al-Imam*" (Pledging Allegiance to the Imam). Soon the Jordanian security forces discovered the new organization and

arrested Al-Zarqawi (on March 29th, 1994). He, along with Al-Maqdisi and their group, were sentenced to 15 years. During his time in prison, Al-Zarqawi emerged as a commander, and imposed himself as an "emir" for the Jihadi Salafist group inside the prison. He was released from prison by a royal pardon on March 23rd, 1999, and left the summer of that year to return to Pakistan, then Afghanistan.

In the beginning of 2000, Al-Zarqawi settled in the Afghan region of "Herat," where he established a special training camp for Jordanians and Palestinians, but also attracted a number of Jihadists from various nationalities. After the events of September 11th, 2001, Al-Zarqawi moved between Iran, Iraq, and Syria. By 2002, he had established his own Jihadi network, and oversaw, in coordination with a number of his followers, the operation in which an American diplomat was assassinated in Amman. It is around this time that Al-Zarqawi's name became well-known.

After the American occupation of Iraq in March 2003, Al-Zarqawi, through his network, launched an extensive guerrilla militant war there, and adopted violent combat tactics. Large numbers of Arab and foreign fighters joined him, in addition to some Iraqis. With Abu Anas al-Shami joining forces with him, Al-Zarqawi's network developed into the *Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad* organization in September 2003. Al-Shami became the first religious official for the group. In October 2004, Al-Zarqawi and his organization officially joined the central Al-Qaeda organization.

Al-Zarqawi was killed on June 7th, 2006 in an American air strike.

2. Abu Hamza Al-Muhajir:

His real name is Abd al-Mun'im 'Ezz al-Din Ali al-Badawi, also goes by the nom de guerre Abu Ayoub al-Masri. He was

born in Sohaj, Egypt in 1968. He joined the Egyptian Jihadist group *Jama'at al-Jihad*, which was established by Ayman al-Zawahiri in 1982, where he worked as a personal assistant to Al-Zawahiri. He moved between Afghanistan and Yemen, and specialized in making explosives. He married a Yemeni woman in 1998, and went to Iraq with his family in 2002. Al-Muhajir joined Al-Zarqawi's network and became an assistant to Al-Zarqawi, and also participated in establishing Al-Qaeda in Iraq after the U.S. occupation there.

After Al-Zarqawi was killed in 2006, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir led the Al-Qaeda in Iraq organization, and was later appointed Minister of War and deputy to Abu Omar al-Baghdadi in the Islamic State of Iraq organization.

In 2006, the U.S. State Department announced a 5 million dollar reward for information that would lead to his arrest. He was later killed in a U.S. attack that targeted a meeting between Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi and Al-Muhajir with the Salafist Abu Bakr organization, aimed to merge the latter group to the Islamic State of Iraq, in the town of Al-Tharthar, south west of Tikrit on April 19th, 2010.

3. Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi:

His real name is Hamid Dawoud Muhammad Khalil al-Zawi. He was born in 1958 in the town of Al-Zawiya, near the city of Haditha in Al-Anbar Province, Iraq. He graduated from the Police Academy in Baghdad, and worked as a police officer. He was known for his religious commitment.

His Salafist tendency, however, began to crystalize after the second Gulf War in the early 1990s, and he experienced frequent harassment from the Iraqi regime. Due to his work in a security apparatus, the regime decided to fire him in 1993, albeit without arresting him, on charges of following Wahhabi Salafism.

He later worked in an electronic appliance repair shop near his home, and frequented the Al-Assaf Mosque in his neighborhood, where he led the prayers and gave lessons in the Salafist doctrine throughout the 1990s. However, he was not considered a "Jihadi Salafist" then, but his thoughts were closer to 'Ilmiyya (Scholarly) Salafism that seeks to spread Da'wa, focuses on reforming society through the purification of the doctrine and purging the Prophetic Sunnah of innovations, and spreading "genuine" Sunnah.

Following the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, his Jihadist interests began to solidify. He began training with a group of his friends in the town of Haditha, and established a Jihadi group with a number of other fighters. Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi began communicating with Al-Zarqawi's followers, including Abu Muhammad al-Lubnani and Abu Anas al-Shami. He eventually joined the Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad group upon its establishment in September 2003, and assumed various positions in the organization and moved between Iraqi provinces. He became a general commander overseeing the organization's Wilayat (provinces). He was known to be meticulous in choosing recruits, and according to Abu Osama al-Iraqi, "He would not accept any soldier joining the ranks until he personally judged and tested the recruit's doctrine.. May God have mercy on his soul; he would refuse any recruit who adopted nationalist thought or fighting for the cause of democracy."

After Al-Zarqawi was killed in June 2006, an alliance known as Hilf al-Mutayibeen (The Pact of the Perfumed/Exalted Ones) was established on October 12th, 2006. Three days later, on October 15th, 2006 the "Islamic State of Iraq" was declared, and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi was inaugurated as Emir of the State. Al-Baghdadi had been previously nominated to Bin Laden by Al-Zarqawi, and later by Abu

Hamza al-Muhajir, despite Bin Laden having not known him personally.

On January 30th, 2007, Osama bin Laden was asked to pledge allegiance to Abu Omar al-Baghdadi as Emir of the Islamic State of Iraq. The United States announced killing Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi, along with Abu Hamza al-Muhajir on April 19th, 2010 during armed confrontations in the town of Al-Tharthar, south-west of Tikrit.

4. Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi

His real name is Ibrahim bin 'Awwad bin Ibrahim Al-Badri al-Samarra'i, born in 1971 in Al-Jalam village in Samarra, Iraq. He hails from the Al-Bou Badri Iraqi tribe, and from a religious family that follows the Salafist approach in Islamic doctrine. He graduated from the Islamic University in Baghdad, where he earned a Bachelor's and Master's degrees, and prepared a doctoral thesis in Qur'anic recitation.

He then worked as a teacher, instructor, and preacher under the former Iraqi regime, and was an Imam and spiritual guide at the Ahmad ibn Hanbal Mosque in Samarra, then the Al-Kubaisi Mosque in al-Toubaji area in Baghdad, and later at a mosque in Fallujah in 2003. After the U.S. occupation of Iraq, he formed a Jihadi Salafist organization under the name Jaysh Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'aah, along with a number of Jihadists, and his organization became active in Baghdad, Samarra, Diyala and other Sunni regions. Coalition forces arrested and detained him from February until December 2004, and then released him because it did not consider him a high-level threat.

He, along with his organization, joined the "Mujahideen Shura Council" in 2006, and worked to form and administer the Council's religious committees. He later became a member of the Shura Council of the Islamic State of Iraq, and

was a close affiliate and right-hand man to Abu Omar al-Baghdadi. He soon became the third man in command of the organization.

Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi later served as Wali al-Wulaat (Chief Governor) and general supervisor of operations in 2008. He also served as the religious Emir of Al-Anbar, and later in Fallujah and Diyala. He was then appointed as Wali (governor) of Baghdad's northern section, and later as the religious Emir of Samarra. With all these various positions, Al-Baghdadi had worked throughout most of Iraq's western and central regions.

His wife was killed at the hands of Al-Bou Faraj tribes of Fallujah. Prior to his death, Abu Omar al-Baghdad had nominated Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi to succeed him in leadership of the Islamic Sate of Iraq. Abu Bakr was appointed Emir of the State in May 2010, less than a month after Abu Omar al-Baghdadi was killed in confrontations with U.S. forces near Tikrit.

With the proclamation of the State of the "Caliphate," Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was appointed Caliph of the Muslims. Five days later, on July 5th, 2014 (the 6th of Ramadan) he appeared publicly and gave the Friday prayer sermon at the Grand Mosque in Mosul.

5. Abu Abd Al-Rahman Al-Bilawi:

His real name is Adnan Isma'il Najm, also known as Abu Osama al-Bilawi and Abu Al-Baraa'. Born in 1971 in Al-Anbar Province, Iraq, he graduated from the Military Academy (77th), and joined the ranks of the Republican Guard. He rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel. Al-Bilawi was close to Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi and was his right hand man for three years. He also participated in establishing *Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*, and served as Head of the organization's

Military Council, in addition to being a member of the Shura Council.

He was arrested in 2007 in the city of Basra, and detained in the prison at Camp Bucca, which was administered by the U.S. Military at the time. During his time in prison, he was considered an Emir and responsible for managing the organization's prisoners. Five years later, he was turned over to the Iraqi authorities, who detained him at Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad. On July 21st, 2013, he was able to escape, along with a number of other prisoners who were members of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), during a coordinated ISI attack on the prisons at Abu Ghraib and Al-Taji.

Following his escape from prison, he left to Syria, and headed the ISIS operations against Syrian regime forces, then returned to Iraq after the Iraqi Army launched a military campaign against the organization in Al-Anbar province, in western Iraq.

He later settled in Mosul, northern Iraq under a fake name, and married a second wife in order to blend in and cover his tracks in overseeing ISI operations in his capacity as Head of the Military Council. After Haji Bakr was killed, he became second-in-command of the Islamic State.

The Iraqi Army announced his death on June 5th, 2014 in Nineveh Province, apparently by an explosive belt during a raid on his home, and the arrest of his driver. Spokesperson of the Islamic State Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani eulogized Al-Bilawi in an audio recording, stressing Al-Bilawi's major role in the seizure of Mosul. Al-Adnani said: "[Al-Bilawi], with God's grace, was the planner and commander of the recent battles in Al-Anbar, Nineveh, and Salahuddin, and was the mastermind behind the recent conquests and victories."

Several sources confirm that Al-Bilawi engineered the massive operation to seize Mosul and other Iraqi cities on June 10th, 2014. The Islamic State named the operation after him, calling it the "Ghazwat Assadu Allah Al-Bilawi Abi 'Abd al-Rahman" (The Battle of the Lion of God Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Bilawi).

6. Haji Bakr:

His real name is Sameer 'Abed Muhammad Nayel al-Khlaifawi al-'Ubaidi al-Dulaimi, and was known by several pseudonyms including Abu Bilal al-Mashhadani and Haji Bakr. He was Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's right hand man until he was killed in Syria in January 2014.

He was born in al-Khalidiya in Al-Anbar Province in Iraq in the early 1960s, was grew up there until he finished high school. He then joined the Military Academy and graduated as an officer. He rose to the rank of Colonel in the former Iraqi Army prior to the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

Haji Bakr, as he was commonly known, was one of the founders of Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad group, and pledged allegiance to Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi along with a number of other former military officers. He maintained strong relations with the "Islamic Army" movement in Iraq, and assisted them with his military experience.

He was arrested and detained for a period of time at the prison in Camp Bucca. Later, he was tasked with overseeing the production of chemical weapons and conventional weapons of the Islamic State organization. He then commanded the organization's Military Council, and in 2012, became Minister of Military Manufacturing. He also oversaw the military operations and administration of camps in Syria.

Haji Bakr was killed in Syria in January 2014 during clashes with Al-Nusra Front in the town of Atarib north of Aleppo.

He was known for his professional capabilities in military planning, supervision, and field command. His death at the hands of Al-Nusra Front and other factions there dealt a major blow to the Islamic State, considering his role in recruiting and integrating a large number of former Baathist military officers into the ranks of the organization. He is known to have supervised the formation and development of the military structure of the organization, in cooperation with Al-Bilawi, an apparatus that constitutes the core nucleus and strength of the organization.

7. Abu Ayman Al-Iraqi:

Also known as Abu Muhannad al-Suwaidawi, he was one of the most important Islamic State commanders in Syria. Born in 1965 in Iraq, he was an officer in the former Iraqi Army during the reign of former President Saddam Hussein, and rose to the rank of Lieutenant colonel. After joining the Islamic State, he became a senior member of the organization's Military Council (which consists of three members).

He became the Wali (Governor) of Al-Anbar, and managed the Northern Al-Karh section. He was arrested by U.S. forces in 2007, and then released from Camp Bucca prison in 2010. He oversaw the security operations of the Islamic State, and was later sent by Al-Baghdadi to Dair al-Zor in Syria in 2011 until 2012.

In Syria, he became the senior military official in the cities of Idlib, Mount Latakia, and the countryside of Aleppo. According to the Islamic State media reports, he played a major role in building the organization's branch in Syria, and was able to recruit more than 1,000 fighters while in Syria. He was also able to influence a number of non-Syrian factions

and attract them to join the organization, according to fighters from the Al-Mu'iz bin Abd al-Salam Battalion.

Abu Ayman al-Iraqi had at his disposal massive financial resources. According to narratives of some fighters, he himself killed a number of opposition fighters, including Abu Basir al-Tartousi (Kamal Hamami), Jalal Bayerli, and Yusuf al-'Ishawi. One Jihadist who met Al-Iraqi several times wrote "Abu Ayman considered anyone who deals with the [Syrian opposition] coalition, the Free Syrian Army, the secular opposition, or refuses to pledge allegiance to ISIS, or receives funding or arms from the region or the West to be an infidel."

His death was announced several times. The Syrian regime's army announced his death, along with Abu Hamza al-Sa'udi and others on October 4th, 2013. Later, a source from Al-Nusra Front announced his death in Al-Hasaka on April 24th, 2014. Also, on June 17th, 2014, an Iraqi security source announced his death in Mosul, however, none of these reports were verified, and it is more likely that he is still alive.

8. Abu Ali Al-Anbari:

He is the Head of the Islamic State's Security Council, and one of the most important security leaders of the organization. His real name is Ali Qardash al-Turkmani, he was born in Tal Afar to an Iraqi Turkmen family. He went by various aliases including Abu Jassim al-Iraqi, Abu Omar Qardash, in addition to Abu Ali al-Anbari. He previously worked as a Physics teacher, and was an active Baathist and headed a Baathist unit during the era of the former regime of Saddam Hussein.

With the U.S. occupation of Iraq, he joined the Ansar al-Islam group, but withdrew shortly afterwards to join Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Three months later, he was appointed as a delegate to coordinate between fighting groups, but was

removed from the position less than a year later. He became a prominent figure in the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) under the command of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

He served as the Religious Official, and while in Al-Raqqa, Syria, he gave religious lessons at the Imam al-Nawawi Mosque. He is considered one of the prominent leaders within the organization's hierarchy, and is close to Al-Baghdadi, especially after Haji Bakr was killed in Syria in January 2014.

He is considered Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's watchful and loyal eyes inside Al-Nusra Front before the disputes erupted and the two organizations officially broke off ties. He used to send regular reports to Al-Baghdadi regarding the actions of Al-Nusra Front and its leader, Abu Muhammad al-Jolani. He is reported to have prevented Abu Ayman al-Iraqi from killing Al-Jolani, claiming that the situation could not bear such strife.

He assumed various essential positions and tasks within the organization, especially after there became a general sense of dismay towards the actions of Abu Luqman, who commanded the organization's activities in Al-Raqqa, Syria. Al-Anbari is credited with planning the assassination of Sheikh Muhammad Sa'eed Ramadan al-Bouti and the attempted assassination of Riyad al-As'ad.

He led discussions and negotiations with Al-Nusra Front (which later proved to be futile), in the presence of Al-Nusra figures such as Abu Firas al-Suri, Abu Hassan Taqtanaz, Abu 'Ubaida al-Tunisi, and Abu Humam al-Shami.

9. Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani:

His real name is Taha Subhi Falaha. He goes by several nom de guerre, including Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani, Taha al-Banshi, Jaber Taha Falah, and Abu Sadiq al-Rawi. He was born in 1977 and hails from the town of Bansh in the

countryside of Idlib, Syria. He was heavily influenced by Jihadi Salafist discourse, and joined the ranks of militant groups in Iraq after the U.S. invasion and subsequent occupation. He joined Al-Zarqawi's network shortly afterwards.

His biography (published by Islamic State) notes that he received religious education at the hands of serval prominent Jihadi Salafist Sheikhs, including Abu Anas al-Shami, Maysara al-Gharib, and the "Caliph" Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. It also mentions that he was an avid reader in various fields, including Islamic Qur'anic Interpretation, language, literature, and history, and authored numerous Jihadi-oriented letters and poems.

According to his biography, Al-Adnani pledged allegiance to Al-Zarqawi prior to the U.S. occupation of Iraq. He then became active in the *Wilaya* (governorate) of Haditha in Al-Anbar Province, and was appointed by Al-Zarqawi as an Emir there. He was also a trainer at the Al-Jazeera camp, and a religious official in the Western Section in Al-Anbar Province. He then became the official spokesperson of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), alongside Muharib Abdullah al-Jubouri, who was killed in 2007.

Al-Adnani was arrested by coalition forces on May 31st, 2005 in Al-Anbar Province, where he was operating under a fake name (Yasser Khalaf Hussein Nazzal al-Rawi). He was later released in 2010.

Al-Adnani emerged most prominently with the beginning of the Syrian revolution, especially after the Iraqi organization sent Abu Muhammad al-Jolani and a group of fighters to Syria to establish a branch there. Al-Adnani became a deputy for Al-Jolani, but after the disputes between the two organizations heightened, Al-Adnani's rhetoric against the

central Al-Qaeda organization and Al-Nusra Front became very critical and hostile.

He is known as the official spokesperson for the Islamic State.

10. Omar Al-Shishani (or Abu Omar al-Shishani):

His real name is Tarkhan Batirashvili, born in 1986 in the village of Birkiani in the Pankisi Gorge in northeast Georgia. He served in the Georgian Army between 2006 and 2007, and later joined the special reconnaissance group. He rose to the rank of sergeant, and participated in the Russo-Georgian war in 2008.

In 2010, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis and was discharged from the military on medical grounds. He was arrested in September 2010 on charges of illegally buying and harboring weapons, and was sentenced to three years in prison. In early 2012, he was released after serving nearly 16 months on claims that his health was deteriorating.

He soon left for Syria and joined armed groups fighting against the Syrian regime. He led the *Jaysh al-Muhajireen wa al-Ansar* group (Army of Immigrants and Supporters), largely made up of Chechen fighters. In August 2013, he led a group of militants in major attacks on Syrian military bases in and around Aleppo, and played a pivotal role in capturing the Menagh Airbase in northern Syria.

In November 2013, he pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and the Islamic State, and in 2014, led the organization's attacks on rival armed groups in Dair al-Zor in Syria. He became ISIS' military chief after the death of Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Bilawi in Mosul in June 2014, and also became a member of the organization's Military Council.

11. Abu Luqman:

His real name is Ali al-Hmoud al-Shwakh, born in 1973 in Syria, and hails from the tribe of Al-Ojail (a branch of the Al-Kbeisat clan) in the village of Al-Sahl west of Al-Raqqa. He became the Emir of ISIS in Al-Raqqa in Syria, and is considered the most senior ISIS leader there.

He graduated from the University of Aleppo in 1999 with a Bachelor's degree in law. He taught for three years in the countryside of Al-Raqqa, and later went to join the fight in Iraq against U.S. forces. He was also often tracked and harassed by Syrian security forces because of his exhibited religious inclinations, and eventually arrested in 2004 by Syrian security forces. He was moved around between prisons before he was settled in the infamous Sidnaya prison. He was released in May 2011 by a presidential pardon that included the release of large numbers of Islamists and Jihadi Salafists including leaders of *Jaysh al-Islam*, *Suqour al-Sham*, and *Ahrar al-Sham* groups (such as Zahran Alloush, Issa al-Shaikh, and Hassan Abboud).

According to local activists, Abu Luqman was responsible for announcing military operations, appointing Emirs of regions, and deploying fighters to various fronts. He maintained direct communications with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and later became ISIS' Emir of Al-Raqqa, before becoming the senior-most leader of the organization in the area.

Rival Jihadist groups announced his death on January 7th, 2014; however, the claims were not verified. Al-Nusra Front and other Jihadist factions hold him responsible for assassinations carried out in Al-Raqqa, including assassinating Abu Sa'ad al-Hadrami, Emir of Al-Nusra Front in Al-Raqqa.

12. Abu Mus'ab Al-Halous:

His real name is Khalaf Al-Dhiyab Al-Halous, and known among his relatives as "Abu Dhiyab." He was born in the village of Kunaitra near the town of Salouk in Syria. He played a major role in establishing the stronghold for the Islamic State in the city of Al-Raqqa, and is one of the first to pledge allegiance to ISIS there, where he had hosted them in his home. He had previously pledged allegiance to Abu Abdullah and then to Abu Luqman.

13. Abu Omar Al-Mulakim:

An Iraqi national, he escaped from the prison of Tasfirat in Tikrit, and entered into Syria at the request of Al-Baghdadi. He became the senior "observer" of Al-Nusra Front in Syria for the Islamic State. He had lost one of his legs and uses a prosthetic leg. He was sentenced to death in Tunisia. Al-Mulakim is known for specializing in explosives, especially remote detonation explosive devices.

14. Mahmoud Al-Khadher:

His nom de guerre within the organization is Abu Nassir al-Amni (the security), he is the security official in Al-Raqqa in Syria, and works behind the scenes. He maintains the documents related to assassinations and security information.

He wears a mask, covered by another transparent mask to hide his identity to not be known from his eyes. He is also keen not to speak so his identity would not be exposed through his voice, and wears gloves so he wouldn't be known through his skin color.

15. Abu Abd Al-Rahman Al-Amni:

A Syrian national, his real name is Ali Al-Sahou, and hails from the village of Al-Jayef near Al-Raqqa in Syria. He was a student of Agricultural Engineering in Dair al-Zor. The Syrian armed opposition announced his death on April 30th, 2014 in clashes between ISIS and factions from the Free Syrian Army and Al-Nusra Front; however, his death was never confirmed.

16. Abu Ali Al-Shar'i:

His real name is Fawwaz Muhammad Al-Hassan al-'Ali, a Syrian national from the Al-Karamah region in the eastern countryside of Al-Raqqa, Syria. He was imprisoned in the infamous Sidnaya prison for years during the 1990s, and upon his release, he worked in Saudi Arabia before returning to work as a laborer in Syria.

He was not known to have any military or civil activities in the popular opposition movement. But he appeared after the declaration of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, and defected from Al-Nusra Front after Islamist groups took control of the city of Al-Raqqa.

In addition to his mysterious identity and the oddity of appointing him a religious judge (hence his nom de guerre Al-Shar'i, in reference to Islamic Shari'ah law), he was known for his bloody viciousness. His son is renowned for carrying the sword for his father upon carrying out death sentences. Al-Shar'i is also known for his extreme zeal and belonging to his tribe. He was removed from his position as part of a wave of structural changes carried out by the Islamic State in March and April 2014, and his tasks were handed over to the Iraqi Abu Ali al-Anbari ∎

Appendix 2

Brief Profiles of Leading Figures of Al-Nusra Front

1. Abu Muhammad Al-Jolani:

Al-Jolani's true identity is still unconfirmed. Iraqi intelligence sources believe his name is Adnan al-Hajj Ali, but Syrian intelligence sources say he is Osama al-Hadawi, from the town of Shahail, near Dair al-Zor in Syria. He worked in the Golan heights as an Arabic language teacher, and is hence known as Al-Jolani.

Al-Jolani is believed to be in his early forties, and was the original founder of Al-Nusra Front and is its current leader. He joined Al-Qaeda in Iraq during the leadership of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, but was arrested by U.S. forces and held at the U.S. prison at Camp Bucca. After his release in 2008, he resumed his Jihadist activities under Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and rose through the ranks of the Islamic State to become the head of operations in Mosul province. In August 2011, Al-Jolani moved to Syria and formed the Nusra Front.

With the eruption of the Syrian revolution, Al-Jolani proposed to Al-Baghdadi to launch fighting in Syria. In August 2011, he moved to Syria along with a number of fighters with Al-Baghdadi's support. In January 2012, Al-Nusra Front was officially announced, despite having been in operation for several months before. He later announced his split with the Iraqi branch and in April 2013 pledged his allegiance to Ayman al-Zawahiri, leader of the central Al-Qaeda organization. With his allegiance, Al-Nusra Front became officially a regional branch of Al-Qaeda, and its representative in the Levant (Syria).

2. Abu Humam Al-Shami (or Al-Suri):

Also known as Farouq al-Suri, Abu Humam was appointed as Al-Nusra Front's general military commander, succeeding Abu Sameer al-Urduni.

He travelled to Afghanistan between 1998 and 1999 and joined the Al-Ghurabaa' training camp, run by Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, for one year. He later joined Al-Qaeda's Al-Farouq training camp before moving on to the Airport camp for training special forces.

He pledged allegiance to Osama Bin Laden (personally, by hand, which is considered an indication of trust in the person), and was placed in charge of Syrian Jihadists in Afghanistan. He took part in Al-Qaeda's battles in Afghanistan at the time. After the U.S. and coalition war on Afghanistan, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid delegated him to operate in Iraq, prior to the 2003 U.S. invasion. He remained in Iraq for 4 months at the official request of the Al-Qaeda leadership in Khurasan. While in Iraq, he met Abu Hamza al-Muhajir and Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi.

According to his biography published by Al-Nusra Front, Abu Humam was arrested and imprisoned in Lebanon for five years. After his release, he joined Al-Qaeda in the Levant and become Al-Nusra Front's military commander.

3. Abu Firas Al-Suri:

His real name is Radwan Nammous, and is the official spokesperson of Al-Nusra Front. He was born in 1950 in the Syrian town of Madaya in the Damascus countryside. He joined the military academy and graduated with the rank of lieutenant but was discharged due to his Islamist leanings in 1979 after the Al-Madfa'iya (Artillery) incident. He was a military trainer for the *Al-Tali'a al-Muqatila* (The Fighting Vanguard) between 1977 and 1980.

He carried out several operations against the regime of Hafiz al-Assad, and then moved to Jordan in 1980, and then to Afghanistan in 1981, where he trained Afghan fighters and Arab volunteers there. In Afghanistan, he met Abdullah Azzam and Osama bin Laden in 1983, and helped form the Pakistani group *Lashkar-e-Taiba*, which was trained under his supervision, financed by Osama bin Laden, and commanded by Zaki al-Rahman.

During the American war in Afghanistan in 2001, he worked to secure the families of Mujahideen in Pakistan. He later moved to Yemen in 2003, and remained there until he returned to Syria in early 2013. Following the eruption of disputes between Al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State in Iraq, he, along with Abu Khalid al-Suri, attempted to heal the rift and reach reconciliation between the two groups. As the efforts proved futile, he sided with Al-Nusra Front, the new representative of Al-Qaeda in the Levant.

4. Abu Mus'ab Al-Suri:

His real name is Mustafa bin Abd al-Qadir bin Mustafa bin Hussain bin al-Shaikh Ahmad al-Muzayyak al-Jakiri al-Rifai'i. He also goes by the nom de guerre Omar Abd al-Hakim. He was born in Aleppo, Syria in 1958. His family is known as "Sit Maryam" in reference to the family's grandmother.

He studied at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Aleppo between 1976 and 1980. In 1980, he joined the *Al-Tali'a al-Muqatila* (The Fighting Vanguard) group, which was founded by Marwan Hadid in Syria. He then immigrated to Jordan following clashes between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Syrian regime. He worked as a military trainer for the organization at its bases in Jordan, and in its camps in Baghdad (between 1980 and 1982). He was known then as "Abu Al-'Abed." He underwent several military training courses at the hands of officers who defected from the Syrian army to Jordan, and also received military

training from the Iraqi Army in Baghdad, and also in Egypt. He specialized in explosives engineering, guerilla warfare, and special forces.

Because of his military capabilities, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood leadership (which was operating from Baghdad) appointed Al-Suri as a member of the Higher Military Leadership headed by Sa'id Hawwa, and deputy to the commander of the northwestern region of Syria during the battles in Hama in 1982.

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri later announced separating from the Muslim Brotherhood in protest against their signing of the "National Coalition" with secular and communist parties and the Iraqi branch of the Baath party. His withdrawal came for doctrinal religious and methodological reasons, and in protest of the corruption and mismanagement of the Brotherhood, in his perspective. He considered the Muslim Brotherhood responsible for the destruction of Hama and for aborting and failing the Islamic revolution project there. He later detailed his perspectives in his famous book "The Jihadi Islamic Revolution in Syria," in which he chronicled the Syrian Islamic revolutionary experience and its lessons.

Al-Suri immigrated to several places before settling in France, where he attempted to complete his studies between 1983 and 1985. However, he cut his studies short to participate in Adnan 'Oqla's attempt to re-wage Jihad in Syria. Upon this failed attempt, and the arrest of 'Oqla and the remaining members, Al-Suri attempted to establish a new Syrian Jihadist organization in 1985. He then moved to Spain and settled there, and married a Spaniard woman who converted to Islam. This endeavor led him to Afghanistan in 1987, seeking a safe haven to prepare and collect aid for that attempt, which ultimately failed.

In Peshawar, Pakistan, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri met Abdullah Azzam, who convinced him to join the Arab volunteers in the Afghan Jihad, and to benefit the fighters there with his experience in military training. He soon settled in

Afghanistan and worked to train the Afghan and Arab Mujahideen in various combat aspects, particularly in explosives engineering, shooting, and close-combat tactics (since he had earned the Black Belt in Judo while in France in 1984). He also worked as an instructor in Jihadist thought and discourse, and in training in guerilla warfare in the Arab Mujahideen training camps. Al-Suri also participated in the Afghan battles against Soviet and Russian forces from 1987 to 1991.

While in Afghanistan, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri met Osama bin Laden, and joined the Al-Qaeda organization since its inception in 1988. During the "Afghan Jihad" phase, he was a close companion of Bin Laden. Al-Suri was influenced by the writings of Sayyid Qutb and Abdullah Azzam, and while he was in Afghanistan and Pakistan, he studied at the Beirut Arab University via correspondence studies, in the Faculty of History, and received a License (Bachelor's) Degree in 1991 from the University's branch in Amman, Jordan.

He returned to Spain in 1991, and then he immigrated to Britain to help the Algerians at the invitation of Aqari Sa'id al-Jaza'iri, who returned from Afghanistan to Algeria to help establish an armed Islamic group there. Al-Suri remained in London between 1994 and 1997, and worked with the media and communications cell in support of the Mujahideen in Algeria.

He was a co-editor of "*Al-Ansar*" Bulletin for Algerian affairs and other Jihadist publications that were published in Europe, including the "*Al-Fajr*" Bulletin (for Libyan affairs) and the "*Mujahidun*" Bulletin (for Egyptian affairs). He later renounced his affiliation with the armed Islamic group in Algeria for what he considered their "deviations," and decided to dedicate his efforts, full-time, to literary writings and independent journalism. In London in 1996, he established the "Center for the Study of Conflicts of the Muslim World." He faced tremendous pressures from British security agencies, and decided to move back to Afghanistan

in 1997, after the Taliban movement established an "Islamic Emirate" there. He remained in Afghanistan until the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.

Between 1997 and 2001 in Afghanistan, Al-Suri established the Al-Ghurabaa' training camp in the famous military base Qargha in Kabul, in cooperation with the Taliban Ministry of Defense. He pledged allegiance to Mullah Muhammad Omar in Qandahar in 2000, and established a Jihadist group that worked in the field with Taliban forces. He also worked with the Ministry of Media and Communications, and wrote articles in the *Al-Shari'ah* newspaper, the official media outlet of the Taliban regime. He participated in preparing Arabic-language radio programs, and established the "Al-Ghurabaa' Center for Islamic Studies and Media," in addition to publishing a magazine there.

After the fall of the Taliban regime, Al-Suri retired and freed himself for writing theses and letters about what he called "The Call to Global Islamic Resistance," which became the title of his most famous book, along with a number of other research papers. In December 2004, he announced coming out of his "intellectual isolation" to resume his intellectual and field activities, and to oversee the dissemination of his "call" to Islamic resistance. In November 2004, the United States announced a 5-million dollar reward for information about him. He was later arrested in the capital of Pakistan's Baluchistan in 2005 and handed to Syrian authorities. He is believed to be still in Sryian detention.

Al-Suri authored numerous books and studies, including "The Jihadi Islamic Revolution in Syria," available in two volumes, under the titles: "*Al-Thawra al-Islamiyya al-Jihadiyya fi Suriya: Al-Tajruba wa al-'Ibra (Alaam wa Amaal)*," (The Jihadi Islamic Revolution in Syria: The Experience and the Lesson (Pains and Hopes) and the second volume entitled "*Al-Thawra al-Islamiyya al-Jihadiyya fi Suriya: Al-Fikr wa al-Manhaj (Abhaath wa Asasiyaat 'ala Tariq Jihadi Thawri Musallah)*," (The Jihadi Islamic Revolution in Syria: Thought

and Method (Research and Fundamentals on an Armed Revolutionary Jihadist Path), in addition to his most significant book in contributing to Jihadi Salafist discourse "The Call to Global Islamic Resistance."

5. Sami Mahmoud al-'Uraydi:

Also goes by the nom de guerre Abu Mahmoud al-Shami, the Jordanian national is Al-Nusra Front's religious *mufti* and was considered the organization's religious authority even before his official appointment to the position, in addition to being Al-Nusra's main ideologue.

Al-'Uraydi was born in Amman in 1973, and received a Bachelor's degree in Religious Shari'ah studies from the university of Jordan. In 1997 he received a Master's degree from the same university in Hadith studies, and in 2001, completed his PhD in the same subject. He authored a number of books about the Hanbali scholar and jurist Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328). In an interview with Al-Jazeera network, Al-Jolani encouraged people to read and follow the discourse of Al-'Uraydi.

He was appointed as the general religious official for Al-Nusra Front after the removal of Abu Mariah al-Qahtani on July 30th, 2014. Al-Nusra's media outlet, *Al-Basira*, published a video recording of an Eid prayer sermon he delivered, entitled "Dr. Sami al-'Uraydi, the General Religious Official of Al-Nusra Front," in an effort to settle the debates regarding Al-Nusra's restructuring and its new leadership in the new phase after it lost Dair al-Zor. The sermon also included the announcement of the project to establish the Islamic emirate and the launch of what it called the "Campaign to Deter the Corruptors" aimed to confront the factions accused of committing transgressions in the villages in the countryside of Aleppo and Idlib, near the borders with Turkey, and to conclude the campaign of arresting leaders and members of the Free Syrian Army in Dar'aa.
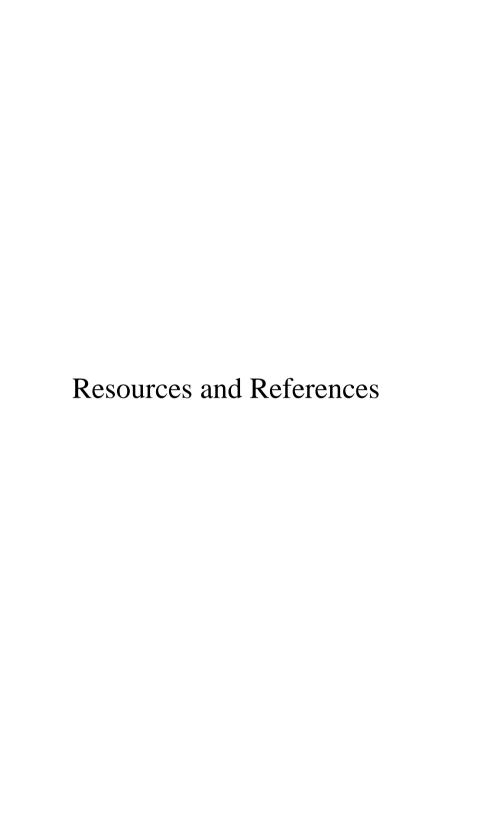
6. Abu Mariah al-Qahtani:

His real name is Maysara Ali bin Mousa bin Abdullah al-Jubouri. He previously held the position of Al-Nusra Front's General Religious Official and emir of the Eastern area. Al-Qahtani studied at the University of Mosul and received a diploma in management. He also worked as a police officer for a period of time, before leaving his work and joining the Jihadist movement in Iraq.

He was arrested in 2004 and jailed for several years. After his release, he was appointed by the Islamic State of Iraq as the religious authority in Mosul. He then worked in the *Al-Hisba* (moral accountability officers) and managed the organization's relations with local Iraqi tribes. He was arrested again and later released.

Al-Qahtani strongly supported the rejection of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's declaration of merging Al-Nusra Front with the Islamic State of Iraq, and played a major role in convincing Al-Jolani to reject the merger, and to pledge allegiance to Al-Zawahiri instead. He is believed to have received his religious training at the hands of religious Sheikhs in prison, including his mentor "Al-Mayahi." The United States' Treasury issued a decision in December 2012 to impose sanctions on some of Al-Nusra's leaders, including Maysara al-Jubouri (Al-Qahtani) and Anas Hassan Khattab (Abu Abd al-'Aziz al-Qatari), on grounds of their work as operatives for Al-Qaeda in Iraq.

Towards the end of 2011, Al-Qahtani moved from Mosul in Iraq to Syria. By mid-2012, Al-Qahtani became Al-Nusra Front's Religious Official and military commander of the eastern region of Syria, and oversaw training camps there. He was later sacked from his position after losing the region to the Islamic State. Al-Qahtani is suspected of having taken part in an attack in 2004 against a coalition check point in Nineveh province in Iraq, according to the US Treasury report.

Resources and References

Resources and References

* Arabic references are listed in alphabetical order according to original Arabic etymology/spelling.

Aaron David Miller, "Middle East Meltdown," Foreign Policy, October 30th, 2014, available at the following link: http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/10/30/middle-east-meltdown/

Abu Anas Al-Shami, *"Al-Shiʻa"* (Lit., The Shiites), Available [in Arabic] on the Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad site on the following link:
http://www.tawhed.ws/f?text=%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4
%D9%8A%D8%B9%D8%A9&in=title&author=&category=
&submit=%D8%A8%D8%AF%D8%A1+%D8%A7%D9%8
4%D8%A8%D8%AD%D8%AB

Abu al-Hassan al-Azadi, "*Mujibaat al-Indhimaam li al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-ʻIraq wa al-Sham,*" (Lit., The Provisions of Obligation of Joining the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham), available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=329431

Abu Hamza al-Baghdadi, "*Limatha Nuqatil? Wa man Nuqatil?*" (Lit., Why do We Fight? And who do We Fight?), available [in Arabic] on the Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad website on the following link:
http://www.tawhed.ws/r1?i=4342&x=juzn3cys

Abu ʻUbada al-Ansar, "*Mafhoum al-Hakimiyya fi Fikr al-Shaheed Abdullah Azzam,*" (Lit., The Concept of Sovereignty in the Thought of the Martyr Abdullah Azzam), The Abdullah Azzam Media Center in Peshawar, Pakistan.

Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir, "*Masaʼil fi Fiqh al-Jihad,*" (Lit., Issues in the Jurisprudence of Jihad), op. cit., pg. 8, available [in

Arabic] on the following link: http://ia601203.us.archive.org/19/items/kotobjehad/masael.pdf

Abu Mariah al-Qurashi, "*Nour al-Yaqin: Sharh 'Aqidat Tanthim al-Qaeda fi Bilad al-Rafidayn*" (Lit., The Light of Certainty: An Explanation of the Creed of Al-Qaeda in Iraq Organization), available [in Arabic] on the Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad, on the following link: http://up1430.com/central-guide/pencil/gimf/dar/old/Nor-ALyaqen/index.html

Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, "*Millat Ibrahim: wa Da'wat al-Anbiyaa' wa al-Mursalin, wa Asaleeb al-Tughaa fi Tamyee'iha*" (Lit., Abraham's Creed: And the Calling of Prophets and Messengers, and the Ways in which the Oppressors Dilute It), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.tawhed.ws/f.

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, "*Al-Thawra al-Islamiyya al-Jihadiyya fi Suriya: Al-Tajruba wa al-'Ibra (Alaam wa Amaal)*," (Lit., The Jihadi Islamic Revolution in Syria: The Experience and the Lesson (Pains and Hopes).

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, "*Al-Thawra al-Islamiyya al-Jihadiyya fi Suriya: Al-Fikr wa al-Manhaj (Abhaath wa Asasiyaat 'ala Tariq Jihadi Thawri Musallah)*," (Lit., The Jihadi Islamic Revolution in Syria: Thought and Method (Research and Fundamentals on an Armed Revolutionary Jihadi Path).

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri (Omar Abd al-Hakim), "*Da'wat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya al-'Aalamiya*," (Lit., The Call to Global Islamic Resistance), Dhul Qi'dah 1425 Hijri Edition, December 2004, available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://archive.org/details/Dawaaah Also on Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad on the following link: https://www.tawhed.ws/a?a=hqkfgsb2

Abu Humam Bakr bin Abd al-Aziz al-Athari, "*Mad al-Ayadi li Bay'at al-Baghdadi*," (Lit., Extending Hands to Pledge Allegiance to Al-Baghdadi), available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://archive.org/details/baghdadi-001

Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Fursan tahta Rayat al-Nabi*," (Lit., Knights under the Banner of the Prophet), published in Al-Sharq al-Awsat newspaper, December 2001. Also available online [in Arabic] on the following link: https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/ayman-al-zawahiri-knights-under-the-prophets-banner-first-edition.pdf

Bob Woodward, "*Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq*," Simon & Schuster publishers, 2004. This book was translated into Arabic by Fadhil Jatkar, Riyad: Al-'Obaykan Bookstore, 1ˢᵗ ed. 2004.

Jean Charles Brisard (collaboration with Damien Martinez), "*Zarqawi: The New Face of Al-Qaeda*", Other Press, 1ˢᵗ ed., 2005 [in English]. An Arabic version of this book is available under the title "*Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi: Al-Wajh al-Akhar li Tanthim Al-Qaeda*" (Lit., Abu Musab al-Zarqawi: The Other Face of Al-Qaeda), translated by Hala Salah al-Din Lulu, Beirut: Al-Dar al-'Arabiya li al-'Ulum and Ramallah: Dar al-Shuruq, 1ˢᵗ ed., 2006.

Gilles Kepel, "*Jihad: Intishar wa Inhisar al-Islam al-Siyasi*," (Lit., "Jihad: The Spread and Decline of Political Islam), translated into Arabic from French by Nabil Sa'ad, Cairo: Dar al-'Alam al-Thalith, 1ˢᵗ ed., 2005. The Book is translated into English by Anthony F. Roberts, Belknap Press, 2002, under the title "*Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*," from the original French version entitled "*Jihad: Expansion et Déclin de l''Islamisme*," first published in 2000.

Gilles Kepel, "*Al-Fitna: Huroub fi Diyar al-Muslimin*," (Lit., Strife: Wars in the Lands of Muslims), Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 1ˢᵗ ed., 2004. The book is an Arabic translation of the French version entitled "*Fitna: Guerre au Coeur de l'Islam.*" (2004). An English translation is also available under the title "*The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West*," Belknap Press, 1ˢᵗ ed. 2006.

David Ignatius, "*Obama Faces Growing Pressure to Escalate in Iraq and Syria*," The Washington Post, October, 14ᵗʰ, 2014, available at the following link: http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/david-ignatius-obama-faces-growing-pressure-to-escalate-in-

iraq/2014/10/14/28b2ae56-53e1-11e4-809b-8cc0a295c773_story.html

Ray Takeyh and Nicholas Gvosdev, "*The Receding Shadow of the Prophet: The Rise and Fall of Radical Political Islam*" Westport, Ct: Praeger, 2004. Also available in Arabic under the title "*Nushou' al-Islam al-Siyasi al-Radicaly wa Inhiyaruh,*" translated by Hassan Bustani, Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 1st ed., 2005.

Robert Taber, "*The War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare*," Virginia: Brassey's, Inc., 1st ed., 2002, originally published by L. Stuart, New York, in 1965. The book is available [in Arabic] with commentary by Abu Mus'ab al-Suri on the following link: http://alplatformmedia.com/vb/showthread.php?t=20998

Sayyid Qutb, "*Thalaath Rasa'il fi al-Jihad*," (Lit., Three Letters on Jihad), Amman: Dar Ammar, 1991.

Sayyid Qutb, "*Ma'aalim fi al-Tareeq,*" (Lit., Hallmarks in the Path), the book is widely known as "*Milestones.*" Cairo, Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 8th ed., 1982.

Saleh Sariya, "*Risalat al-Iman*," (Lit., The Letter of Belief), The Student Union of Dar al-'Uloom Faculty, University of Cairo, 1977.

Abd al-Bari Atwan, ""*Al-Qa'eda: Al-Tantheem al-Sirri*" (Lit., "Al-Qaeda: The Secret Organization"), 1st Edition, Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Saqi, 2007.

Abdullah Azzam, "*Al-'Aqida wa Atharuha fi Binaa' al-Jeel*," (Lit., the Doctrine and its Influence in Building the Next Generation), Peshawar, Pakistan: The Martyr Abdullah Azzam Media Center.

Othman bin Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi, "*'I'lam al-Anaam bimilad Dawlat al-Islam*" (Lit., Informing All of Creation of the Birth of the Islamic State), Al-Furqan for Media Production, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.jihadica.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/ilam-al-anam.pdf

Guido Steinberg, "*Jihadi-Salafism and the Shi'is: Remark about the Intellectual Roots of Anti-Shi'ism,*" in Roel Meijer, (ed.), Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement, London: Hurst, 2009, also available in Arabic under the title "Al-Salafiya al-Jihadiya wa al-Shi'a: Mulahathaat hawla al-Juthour al-Fikriya li Munhahadat al-Tashayyou'," in the Arabic translation of Roel Meijer book "Al-Salafiya Al-'Aalamiya: Al-Harakaat al-Salafiya al-Mu'asira fi 'Alam Mutaghayer," translated by Muhammad Mahmoud al-Touba, Beirut: Al-Shabaka al-'Arabiya li al-Abhaath wa al-Nashr, 1st ed., 2014.

François Burgat, "*Islamism in the Shadow of Al-Qaeda*," translated into English by Patrick Hutchinson, University of Texas Press, 1st ed., 2010. The French version is available under the title "L'islamisme à l'heure d'al-Qaida," Paris, La Découverte/Poche, 2010. An Arabic translation by Sahar Sa'id is available under the title "*Al-Islam al-Siyasi fi Zaman al-Qa'ida,*" Beirut: Al-Quds for Publishing and Distribution, 1st ed. 2006.

Kameel al-Taweel, "*Al-Qa'ida wa Akhawatiha: Qissat al-Jihadiyeen al-Arab,*" (Lit., Al-Qaeda and its Sisters: The Story of Arab Jihadis), Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 1st ed., 2007.

Mohammad Abu Rumman, "*Islamists, Religion, and the Revolution in Syria,*" published by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Amman, Jordan, 1st ed., 2013. Also available in Arabic under the title "Al-Islamiyun wa al-Din wa al-Thawra fi Suryia."

Mohammad Abu Rumman, "*I Am A Salafi: A Study of the Actual and Imagined Identities of Salafis,*" published by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Amman, Jordan, 1st ed., 2014. Also available in Arabic under the title "Ana Salafi: Bahth fi al-Hawiyya al-Waqi'iyya wa al-Mutakhayala lada al-Salafiyin."

Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh, "*The Jihadi Salafist Movement in Jordan after Zarqawi: Identity, Leadership Crisis, and Obscured Vision,*" published by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Amman, Jordan, 1st ed., 2009. Also available in Arabic under the title "Al-Salafiyya al-Jihadiyya fi al-Urdun ba'da Maqtal Al-Zarqawi: Muqarabat al-Hawiyya, Azmat al-Qiyada, Dababiyat al-Ro'ya."

Muhammad Ahmad Khalaf Allah, "*Al-Harakaat al-Islamiya al-Mu'asira fi al-Watan al-'Arabi*," (Lit., The Contemporary Islamic Movements in the Arab World), a seminar, and article entitled "Al-Sahwa al-Islamiya fi Misr," (Lit., The Islamic Awakening in Egypt), Beirut: Markaz al-Dirasat al-Wihda al-'Arabiya, 1st ed., 1987.

Muhammad 'Abd al-Salam Faraj, "*Al-Jihad: Al-Faridha al-Gha'iba*," (Lit., Jihad: The Neglected Duty), written in 1980, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://alkalema.net/algehad.htm

Maysara al-Gharib, "*Muqatalat al-Shi'a fi al-'Iraq: al-Hukm wa al-Hikma*," (Lit., Fighting the Shiites in Iraq: the [Religious] Ruling and the Wisdom Behind It), Al-Furqan for Media Productions, Vol I.

Maysara al-Gharib, "*Min Khafaya al-Tarikh: Al-Zarqawi Kama 'Ariftuhou*," (Lit., From the Hidden History: Al-Zarqawi as I knew Him), Al-Furqan Institute for Media Production, part 2.

Haytham Manna, "*Khilafat Da'ish min Hijrat al-Wahm ila Buhayrat al-Dam*," (Lit., ISIS's Caliphate, From the Phantoms of Illusion to Lakes of Blood), Part I, Geneva: Scandinavian Institute for Human Rights, August 2014, available [in Arabic] at the following link: http://sihr.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/DAEESH-first-part1.pdf

Walid al-Rawi, "*Dawlat al-'Iraq al-Islamiyah*," (Lit., The Islamic State of Iraq), Amman, Jordan: Dar Aminah for Publishing and Distribution, 2012.

Periodicals

*These references are listed in alphabetical order according to their Arab spelling; titles of Arabic magazines are transliterated and titles of articles within them are transliterated and translated into English.

Adam Roberts, "*The End of Occupation: Iraq 2004*," The International and Comparative Law Quarterly, Vol. 54, No.

1, Cambridge University Press, January 2005. This article was translated into Arabic under the title "Nihayat al-Ihtilal fi al-Iraq," in Al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi, Beirut, Vol. 307.

Anthony Cordesman, "*Iraq: What is to be Done*," Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington DC, May 5, 2004, original English version available at: http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/iraq_whatdone.pdf. This article was translated into Arabic under the title "Al-'Iraq: Ma al-'Amal," in Al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi, Beirut, Vol. 304.

Thomas Pickering, James R. Schlesinger, and Eric Shwartz, "*Iraq: The Day After*," The Council of Foreign Relations Press, Task Force Report No. 43, March 2003. This article was translated into Arabic under the title "Al-'Iraq ba'da 'Aamin Wahid," in Al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi, Beirut, Vol. 302.

Phyllis Bennis (and IPS Iraq Task Force), "*A Failed "Transition": The Mounting Costs of the Iraq War*," Institute for Policy Studies and Foreign Policy in Focus, September 2004. This article was translated into Arabic under the title "Intiqaal Fashil li al-Sulta: Al-Nafaqaat al-Mutasa'ida li Harb al-'Iraq," in Al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi, Beirut, Vol. 309.

The International Crisis Group, "*What Can the U.S. Do in Iraq*?" Middle East Report No. 34, December 22, 2004. Original English version available at http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq/034-what-can-the-us-do-in-iraq.aspx This report was translated into Arabic under the title "Matha bi Imkan al-Wilayat al-Mutahida an Taf'al fi al-'Iraq?" in Al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi, Beirut, Vol. 312.

Mohammad Abu Rumman, "*Min 'al-Salafiya al-Jihadiya' ila 'Ansar al-Shari'ah:' Al-Takayyuf ma'a Haqbat al-Thawrat al-Dimuqratiya al-'Arabiya wa al-Dawr al-Siyasi al-Jadid*," (Lit., From 'Jihadi Salafism' to 'Ansar al-Shariah': Adaptation with the Era of Arab Democratic Revolutions and the New Political Role), Majalat al-'Uloum al-Ijtima'iya (The Social Sciences Journal), Kuwait University, Vol. 42, No. 2, 2014.

Naomi Klein, "*Baghdad Year Zero: Pillaging Iraq in Pursuit of Neocon Utopia*," Harper's Magazine, September 2004, available at: http://harpers.org/archive/2004/09/baghdad-year-zero/. This article was translated into Arabic under the title "Al-Sana al-Sifr; Nahb al-'Iraq Sa'yan ila Yutoupia li al-Muhafitheen al-Judud," in Al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi, Beirut, Vol. 308, October 2004.

William R. Polk, "*American Options in Iraq*," November 2004, original English version available at http://www.williampolk.com/pdf/2004/Options%20for%20Iraq.pdf

This article was translated into Arabic under the title "Al-Waqi' wa al-Khayarat fi Harb al-'Iraq," in Al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi, Beirut, Vol. 311.

Reports

Anthony Cordesman, Adam Mausner, Sam Khazai, Peter Alsis, and Charles Loi, "*The Real Outcome of the Iraq War: US and Iranian Strategic Competition in Iraq*," Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 8, 2012, available on the following link: http://csis.org/publication/real-outcome-iraq-war-us-and-iranian-strategic-competition-iraq. An Arabic translation of the document is available through Dar Babil for Studies and Media, also available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.darbabl.net/show_tarjama.php?id=251

Charles Lister, "*Dynamic Stalemate: Surveying Syria's Military Landscape*," Brookings Doha Center Publications, No. 32, Policy Briefing, May 19, 2014, available on the following link: http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/05/19-syria-military-landscape-lister Also available in Arabic on the following link: http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2014/05/19%20syria%20military%20landscape%20lister/syria%20military%20landscape%20arabic.pdf

"*Revealed: The Islamic State 'Cabinet', From Finance Minister to Suicide Bomb Deployer*," The Telegraph, July 9th, 2014, available in English on the following link: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/10956193/Revealed-the-Islamic-State-cabinet-from-finance-minister-to-suicide-bomb-deployer.html An Arabic translation of the Telegraph's report was published on Al-Arabiya Net, July 11th, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.alarabiya.net/ar/arab-and-world/iraq/2014/07/10/%D8%AE%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%81%D8%A9-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%B4-%D9%88%D8%A3%D8%B9%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%88%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%87.html

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Kyle Dabruzzi, "*Is Al-Qaeda's Central Leadership Still Relevant?*," The Middle East Quarterly, Spring 2008, Vol. 15, No. 2. Available on the following link: http://www.meforum.org/1875/is-al-qaedas-central-leadership-still-relevant Also available in Arabic under the title "Hal la Tazaal al-Qiyada al-Markaziya li al-Qaeda Mutarabita?" translated by Sadiq Abu al-Sa'oud, Markaz al-Quds li al-Dirasat al-Istratijiya (The Jerusalem Center for Strategic Studies), available on the following link: http://alqudscenter.org/arabic/pages.php?local_type=128&local_details=2&id1=706&menu_id=10&cat_id=10

Felix Legrand, "*The Colonial Strategy of ISIS in Syria*," Arab Reform Initiative, June 2014, available on the following link: http://www.arab-reform.net/colonial-strategy-isis-syria Also available in Arabic under the title "Istratijiyat Da'esh al-Isti'mariya fi Suriya," available on the following link: http://www.arab-reform.net/sites/default/files/%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%8A%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%A9%20%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%B4%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9.pdf

Omar Ashour, "*Al-Qaeda in Iraq: Eliminating Leaders Will Not Necessarily Cut Lifelines*," The Carnegie Endowment for

International Peace, June 30, 2010, available on the following link: http://carnegieendowment.org/2010/06/30/al-qaeda-in-iraq-eliminating-leaders-will-not-necessarily-cut-lifelines/gboy Also available in Arabic under the title "Al-Qaʻida fi al-ʻIraq: Al-Qadhaa ʻala al-Qada lan Yaqtaʻ be al-Daroura Sharayeen al-Hayat," on the following link: http://carnegieendowment.org/2010/06/30/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%86-%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%B9-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B6%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%B4%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%A9/gbol?reloadFlag=1

F. Gregory Gause, III, "*Beyond Sectarianism: The New Middle East Cold War,*" Analysis Paper, Brookings Doha Center, No. 33, July 22, 2014, available on the following link: http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/07/22-beyond-sectarianism-cold-war-gause   also available in Arabic under the title "Ma Waraa' al-Taʼifiya: Al-Harb al-Barida al-Jadida fi al-Sharq al-Awsat," on the following link: http://www.brookings.edu/ar/research/papers/2014/07/22-beyond-sectarianism-cold-war-gause

The International Crisis Group, "*The Next Iraqi War? Sectarianism and Civil Conflict,*" Middle East Report No. 52, February 27, 2006, available on the following link: http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq/052-the-next-iraqi-war-sectarianism-and-civil-conflict.aspx

Also available in Arabic under the title "Al-Harb al-ʻIraqiyya al-Muqbila: Al-Taʼifiyya wa al-Siraaʻ al-Ahli," available on the following link: http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%

20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Iraq/Arabic%
20translations/The%20Next%20Iraqi%20War%20Arabic.pdf

The International Crisis Group, "*Make or Break: Iraq's Sunnis and the State*," Middle East Report No. 144, August 14, 2013, available [in English] on the following link: http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq/144-make-or-break-iraq-s-sunnis-and-the-state.aspx

The report is also available in Arabic under the title "Sunnat al-'Iraq wa al-Dawla: Fursa Kubraa aww Khasara Fadiha," on the following link: http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Iraq/Arabic%20translations/144-make-or-break-iraq-s-sunnis-and-the-state-arabic.pdf

The International Crisis Group, "*Iraq after the Surge I: The New Sunni Landscape.*" Middle East Report No. 74, April 30, 2008, available in English on the following link: http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq/074-iraq-after-the-surge-i-the-new-sunni-landscape.aspx

The report is also available in Arabic under the title "Al-'Iraq ba'da al-Hashd al-'Askari 1: Al-Mashhad al-Sunni al-Jadid," on the following link: http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Iraq/Arabic%20translations/Iraq%20after%20the%20Surge%201%20The%20New%20Sunni%20Landscape%20Arabic.pdf

The International Crisis Group, "*Tentative Jihad: Syria's Fundamentalist Opposition*," Middle East Report No. 131, October 12, 2012, available on the following link: http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Syria/131-tentative-jihad-syrias-fundamentalist-opposition.pdf

The report is also available in Arabic under the title "Hal Huwa al-Jihad: Al-Mu'aradha al-Usuliya fi Suriya," on the following link:

http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%
20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Syria/Arabic
%20translations/131-tentative-jihad-syrias-fundamentalist-
opposition-arabic.pdf

"*Mu'aradhat Suriya Tantaqid Wasm al-Nusra bi al-Irhaab,*"
(Lit., The Syrian Opposition Criticizes Stigmatizing "Al-
Nusra" as Terrorism), Al-Jazeera Net, December 13, 2012,
available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/2012/12/13/%D9%85
%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B6%D8%A9-
%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7-
%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%AF-
%D9%88%D8%B5%D9%85-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%B1%D8%A9-
%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B1%D9%87
%D8%A7%D8%A8

Corruption Perceptions Index 2011, By Transparency
International, available on the following link:
http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2011/results

Ned parker, Isabel Coles, and Raheem Salman, "*Special report:
How Mosul Fell - An Iraqi general Disputes Baghdad's
Story*," Reuters, October 14, 2014, available on the following
link: http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/14/us-mideast-
crisis-gharawi-special-report-idUSKCN0I30Z820141014

Articles

Ahmad Muhammad Abu Zaid, "Min al-Tabaru'at ila al-Nift:
Kayfa Tahawala Da'ish ila Aghnaa Tantheem Irhabi fi al-
'Alam?" (Lit., From Donations to Oil: How ISIS became the
Richest Terrorist Organization in the World), The Regional
Center for Strategic Studies, September 10th, 2014, available
[in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.rcssmideast.org/Article/2668/%D9%83%D9%8
A%D9%81-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%84-
%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%B4-

%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-
%D8%A3%D8%BA%D9%86%D9%89-
%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%8A%D9%85-
%D8%A5%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%8A
-%D9%81%D9%8A-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85-
#.VFguPfmUckY

Ahmad Hashim Al-Haboubi, "*Ghazwat Qahr al-Tawaghit..
Khatimat Khitat 'Hadm al-Aswar',*" (Lit., The 'Battle of
Crushing the Tyrants'.. The Conclusion of the 'Demolishing
Walls' Plan), September 2, 2013, available [in Arabic] on the
following   link:
http://www.kitabat.com/ar/page/02/09/2013/16209/%D8%B
A%D8%B2%D9%88%D8%A9-
laquo%D9%82%D9%87%D9%80%D9%80%D8%B1-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%BA
%D9%8A%D8%AAraquo%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%AA%
D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A9-
laquo%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%85-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%A7
%D8%B1raquo.html

Akram Hijazi, "Al-Thawra al-Suriyya wa Masarat al-Tadweel
(6), Kharitat al-Quwaa al-Musalaha" (Lit. The Syrian
Revolution and the Paths of Internationalization (6), A Map
of Armed Groups), available [in Arabic] on the following
link: http://www.almoraqeb.net/main/articles-action-show-
id-350.htm

Akram Hijazi, "*Al-Dawra al-Tarikhiya: Al-'Iraq ma bayna al-
Baghdadi al-Awal wa al-Baghdadi al-Thani (4)*," (Lit., The
Historical Cycle: Iraq between the First Al-Baghdadi and the
Second al-Baghdadi (4)), August 2, 2010, available [in
Arabic]   on   the   following   link:
http://www.almoraqeb.net/main/articles-action-show-id-
239.htm

Ely Karmon, "*Al-Qa'ida and the War on Terror: After the War in
Iraq,*" Middle East Review of International Affairs, Vol. 10,
No. 1 (March 2006). An Arabic translation by the Jerusalem
Center for Political Studies, under the title "Al-Qa'ida wa al-

Harb ʿala al-Irhab baʿda Harb al-ʿIraq," is available on the following link: http://www.alqudscenter.org/arabic/pages.php?local_type=128&local_details=2&id1=663&menu_id=10&cat_id=10

Andrew Gavin Marshall, "*Empire Under Obama, Part 4: Counterinsurgency, Death Squads, and the Population as a Target*," The Hampton Institute, October 31st, 2013, available on the following link: http://www.hamptoninstitution.org/empireunderobamapartfour.html#.VPmvfPnF-So An Arabic translation of this article is available under the title "Al-Imbiratouriya fi ʿAhd Obama: Mukafahat al-Tamarrud wa Firaq al-Mawt," on the following link: http://www.islamdaily.org/ar/democracy/11690.article.htm

Oliver Belcher, "*The Best-Laid Schemes: Postcolonialism, Military Social Science, and the Making of US Counterinsurgency Doctrine, 1947-2009*," Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Antipode, Vol. 44, Issue 1, 2012. An Arabic translation of this article is available under the title "Maa baʿda al-Istiʿmaar: Al-ʿUloum al-Ijtimaʿiya al-ʿAskariya wa Sunʿ ʿAqidat Mukafahat al-Tamarrud al-Amrikiya," on the following link: http://www.inbaa.com/%D9%85%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%8C-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%88%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7/

Basil al-Junaydi, "*Qissat Asdiqaa Sidnaya: Aqwaa Thalathat Rijal fi Suriyya al-Yawm!*" (Lit., The Story of "the Sidnaya Friends:" The Strongest Three Men in Syria Today,) October 16, 2013, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://aljumhuriya.net/19328.

Peter Neumann, "*Suspects into Collaborators: Peter Neumann Argues that Assad has Himself to Blame*," London review of Books, Vol. 36, No. 7, April 3, 2014, available on the following link: http://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n07/peter-neumann/suspects-into-collaborators An Arabic translation

of this article by Yasser al-Zayyat is available under the title "Al-Jihadiyun fi Suriya: La Yaloumanna al-Assad illa Nafsah," on the following link: http://aljumhuriya.net/26403

Tamer al-Smadi, "*Tantheem al-Dawla.. Qiblat al-Jihadiyeen al-Urduniyeen*," (Lit., The Islamic State Organization.. The Directed Destination of Jordanian Jihadists), Al-Jazeera Net, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2014/10 /25/%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%8A%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9-%D9%82%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AF %D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%86 %D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86

Toby Dodge, "*State and Society in Iraq Ten Years after Regime Change: The Rise of a New Authoritarianism*," International Affairs, Vol. 89, Issue 2, March 2013, pp. 241-257. This report was translated into Arabic by Shadi Abd al-Wahhab, under the title "Al-Dawla wa al-Mujtama' fi al-'Iraq ba'da 'Ashr Sanawat min Taghyeer al-Nitham: Su'oud al-Sultawiya min Jadid," available on the following link: http://www.baghdadcenter.net/print-149.html

Hazem al-Amin, "*Wathiqa 'an "al-Harb al-Marghouba" bayna "Da'esh" wa al-Nitham*," (Lit., A Document about the "Desired War" between "ISIS" and the Regime), Al-Hayat Newspaper, November 9, 2013.

Hassan Abu Hanieh, "*Rijaal Bin Laden wa al-Thawahiri fi Iran*," (Lit., Bin Laden and Al-Zawahiri's Men in Iraq), May 25, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://arabi21.com/Story/750932

Hassan Abu Hanieh, *"Al-Qaeda wa Indimaj al-Ab'aad: Waliada Thalitha wa Nash'a Mustanafa,"* (Lit., Al-Qaeda and the Integration of Dimensions: A Third Birth and a Resumed Emergence), August 24, 2013, available [In Arabic], on the following link: http://www.aljazeera.net/knowledgegate/opinions/2013/8/24/ %D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AF

%D8%A9-
%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%85%D8%A7
%D8%AC-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%A7
%D8%AF-
%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A9-
%D8%AB%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D8%A9-
%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%A3%D8%A9-
%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A3%D9%86%D9%81
%D8%A9

Hassan Abu Hanieh, *"Thahirat Ansar al-Shari'ah,"* (Lit., The Phenomenon of Ansar al-Shariah), Al-Islamion website, March 2nd, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://islamion.com/kotap/13407/sec.php?sec=9

Hassan Abu Hanieh, "*Al-Qaeda wa Iran: Intahat al-Mut'a wa al-Talaq Ba'in*" (Lit., Al-Qaeda and Iran: The Joy Marriage is Over and the Divorce is Irrevocable), December 27, 2013, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://arabi21.starware.net/Story/714567

Raphael Lefevre, "*The Syrian Brotherhood's Armed Struggle*," The Carnegie Middle East Center, December 14, 2012, available [in English] on the following link: http://carnegie-mec.org/2012/12/14/syrian-brotherhood-s-armed-struggle/exfu Also available in Arabic under the title "Al-Kifaah al-Musalah li Jamaa'at al-Ikhwan al-Suriyya," on the following link:

http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=50428

Steve Dobransky, "*Why the U.S. Failed in Iraq: Baghdad at the Crossroads,*" The Middle East Quarterly, Vol. 21, No. 1, Winter 2014. Available on the following link: http://www.meforum.org/3680/iraq-us-failure An Arabic translation of this article under the title "Limatha Fashilat al-Wilayaat al-Mutahida fi al-'Iraq?" Translated by Daar Babel for Studies and Media, January 15, 2014, on the following link: http://www.darbabl.net/show_tarjama.php?id=327

Sa'oud bin Saleh al-Sarhan, *"Qa'idat al-Yaman.. Bawadir Tassadu' wa Al-Baghdadi Yataqadam,"* (Lit., The Al-Qaeda

in Yemen.. Signs of a Rift, and Al-Baghdadi is Leading), Al-Sharq al-Awsat newspaper, October 13, 2014, available on the following link: http://www.aawsat.com/home/article/199751

Suhaib Anjarini, "Al-Dawla al-Islamiya: Min 'Al-Baghdadi al-Mu'assis' ilaa 'Al-Baghdadi al-Khalifa'," (Lit., The Islamic State: from Al-Baghdadi the Founder to Al-Baghdadi the Caliph), al-Akhbar Newspaper, July 10, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/210299

Abdullah Sulaiman Ali, "*Da'ish fi Darna al-Llibiya: Mahkamah Shar'iyah wa Istamalat Dhubbat,*" (Lit., ISIS in Libya's Darna: A Shariah Religious court and the Lobbying of Officers), published in the Beirut-based Al-Safeer newspaper, October 22, 2014.

Mujahid Diraniya, "*Khara'it Mutaharika: Al-Quwaa al-'Askariya fi al-Thawra al-Surriya,*" (Lit., Moving Maps: The Militant Forces in the Syrian Revolution), Al-Jazeera Center for Studies, December 23, 2013, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://studies.aljazeera.net/reports/2013/12/20131223111212549392.htm

Mohammad Abu Rumman, "*Qiraa'a fi Ab'aad al-Khilaf bayna al-Zawahiri wa al-Baghdadi,*" (Lit., A Reading of the Dimensions of Conflict between Al-Zawahiri and Al-Baghdadi), Al-Jazeera Net, May 22, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.aljazeera.net/home/print/6c87b8ad-70ec-47d5-b7c4-3aa56fb899e2/3bb731af-a559-441d-8d56-c76d09bed3a4

Mohammad Habash, "*Abu al-Qa'qaa' Thikrayat Al-Tariq ila Da'esh*" (Lit., Abu Al-Qa'qaa', Memories, and the Path to ISIS), *Judran* blog, October 17, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.judran.net/?p=2831

Aaron Y. Zelin, "*The Rise of Al Qaeda in Syria*," Foreign Policy, The Washington Institute, December 6, 2012, available on

the following link: http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-rise-of-al-qaeda-in-syria Also available in Arabic under the title "Su'oud Tantheem Al-Qa'ida fi Suriya," on the following link:http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/ar/policy-analysis/view/the-rise-of-al-qaeda-in-syria

Hisham al-Hashimi, *"Sahawat al-Fasa'il al-Sunniyya"* (Lit., The Awakenings of the Sunni Factions) [In Arabic], available at the following link: http://www.ynewsiq.com/?aa=news&id22=3155&iraq=%D5%CD%E6%C7%CA%25

Hisham al-Hashimi, "*Haykaliyat Tanthim Da'ish*: *Akhtar 18 Irhabiyan Yuhadiduna Istiqrar al-'Iraq*," (Lit., The Structure of ISIS: The 18 Deadliest Terrorists who Threaten the Stability of Iraq), Al-Mada Newspaper, June 15, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link:

http://almadapaper.net/ar/printnews.aspx?NewsID=466428

Haytham Manaa', *"Sijn Sidnaya: Bayna al-Haqiqa wa al-Tawtheef,"* (Lit., The Sidnaya Prison: Between the Reality and the Function), on Al Jazeera net, July 17, 2008, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.aljazeera.net/knowledgegate/opinions/2008/7/17/%D8%B3%D8%AC%D9%86-%D8%B5%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B8%D9%8A%D9%81

Walid Ramzi, "*Inqisam al-Qa'ida fi al-Maghrib al-'Arabi hawla Dawlat al-Khliafa,*" (Lit., The Schism of Al-Qaeda in the Arab Maghrib [North Africa] over the Caliphate State), The Maghaaribiya electronic website, July 18, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://magharebia.com/ar/articles/awi/features/2014/07/18/feature-01

Documents, Speeches, and Statements

Abu Anas al-Shami, "*Al-Radd 'alaa Shubuhaat hawla al-Jihad fi al-'Iraq,*" (Lit., The Response to Suspicions Regarding Jihad in Iraq), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.muslm.org/vb/showthread.php?369064-%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A9-

Abu Anas al-Shami, "*Yawmiyat Mujahid"* (Lit., Diaries of a Jihadi), available [in Arabic] at the Islamic al-Safinat network forum at www.al-saf.net

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, a speech entitled "*Baaqiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham,*" (Lit., It Shall Remain in Iraq and in the Levant/Syria), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://justpaste.it/gtch

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi "The Friday Sermon and Prayer at the Grand Mosque in the City of Mosul, by the Emir of Believers (May God Protect Him)," available [in Arabic] on the following link:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itu6NhED9Yk

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, "*Risala ila al-Mujahideen wa al-Ummah al-Islamiya fi Shahr Ramadhan,*" (Lit., A Letter to the Mujahideen and the Muslim Ummah on the Month of Ramadan), published by Al-Furqan for Media Productions, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ud_drSE2n0Q

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, "*Wa Bashshir al-Mu'minin,*" (Lit., And Bring Good Tidings to the Believers), an audio recording published by Al-Furqan for Media Production, available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MuZrcxvL_w

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, an audio recording entitled "*Wa Ya'ba Allahu Ila An Yatimma Nouruhu*," (Lit., And Allah Refuses Except to Perfect His Light), Ramadhan 1433 AH, July 2012. Al-Furqan for Media Production, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.ddsunnah.net/forum/showthread.php?t=153320

351

Abu Bakr Naji, *"Idarat al-Tawahhush: Akhtar Marhala saTamurru bihaa al-Ummah,"* (Lit., The Management of Savagery: The Most Dangerous Stage the Ummah will Face), undated, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.tawhed.ws/a?a=chr3ofzr

Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, an audio recording entitled "*Inna al-Hukm Illa Lillah*" (Lit., Governance is to Allah Alone), available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=511.

Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, A Speech entitled "*Sa yuhzamu al-Jam'u wa Yuwaloun al-Dubar*" (Lit., Their Multitudes will be Defeated, and They Will Turn their Backs), dated June 13, 2006, available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=1284

Abu Sa'ad al-'Aamili, "*Tanbih al-Anam li ma fi al-Tafriqa min Aathaam wa Ahamiyat al-Tawahhud fi Dawlat al-Islam,*" (Lit., Warning People against the Sins of Division and the Importance of Unity in the Islamic State), available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://archive.org/details/bayan_2013

Abu Sufyan al-Silmi Turki al-Ban'ali, A Collection of His Writings on Jihad, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.halgan.net/kutub/Abu_Mundir.pdf

Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, "*Inni 'ala Bayinatin min Rabbi,*" (Lit., And I am with Evidence from my Lord), dated March 13, 2007, from a collection of statements by leaders of the Islamic State of Iraq, Al-Furqan for Media Production, 1st ed., 2010.

Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, audio recording entitled *"Hassad al-Khair"* (Lit., The Good Harvest), dated March 11, 2009, available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=1245

Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, " *'Umalaa' Kathaboun*" (Lit., Lying Collaborators), dated May 13, 2009, from a collection of statements by leaders of the Islamic State of Iraq, Al-Furqan for Media Production, 1st ed., 2010.

Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, "*Fa Amma al-Zabad fa Yathhab Jafaa*'" (Lit., As for the Foam, it Vanishes, Cast off as Useless), a transcribed audio file, dated December 4, 2007, available [In Arabic] on the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=479

Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, "*Wa in Tantahu fa Huwa Khairun Lakum*" (Lit., And if You Desist From Wrong, It will be Best for You), from a collection of statements by leaders of the Islamic State of Iraq, Al-Furqan for Media Production, 1ˢᵗ ed., 2010.

Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, "*Wa Qul Ja'a al-Haqqu wa Zahaqa al-Batil*" (Lit., And Tell that the Truth has come and the Falsehood has been Destroyed), a transcribed audio file, dated December 22, 2006, available [In Arabic] at the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=493

Abu Qutada al-Filastini, A Declaration by a group of scholars entitled, "*Bayan Munasara li al-Mujahidin al-Murabitin fi Aknaf Bayt al-Maqdis*" (The Declaration of Support for the Mujahidin in the Folds of the Holy House (i..e Jerusalem)"; (no publisher or publishing date).

Abu Qutada al-Filastini (Omar Mahmoud Abu Omar), "*Thiyaabu al-Khalifa*," (Lit., The Garb of the Caliph), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://eldorar.net/sites/default/files/klefha.pdf

Abu Qutada al-Filastini, "*Riasala li Ahl al-Jihad fi al-Sham*," (Lit., Letter to the People of Jihad in the Levant), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=335311

Abu Mariah al-Qahtani, an audio speech entitled "*Ayuha al-Mutaradid,*" (Lit., Oh You who is Hesitant), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzFhOXwWsdU

Abu Mariah al-Qahtani, *"Taghridaat Jama'ahaa al-Thabaat"* (Lit., Tweets Brought Together by Perseverance), available

[in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=368821

Abu Mariah al-Qahtani, "*Hallaa Taraktum lana Umara'ana*," (Lit., Would you Leave for Us our Emirs), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://justpaste.it/fj1b

Abu Muhammad al-Azadi, "*Ahwaal al-Mu'aridheen li Dawlat al-Muslimeen,"* (Lit., The Conditions of those who Oppose the State of Muslims), available [in Arabic] on the following link:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/ozx8fflcxc4uki2/%D8%A3%D8
%AD%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%20%D8%A7%D9%84
%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B6%D9%8A
%D9%86.pdf

Abu Muhammad Al-Jolani, "*I'laan al-Bay'a li Tanthim al-Qa'ida wa Bay'at al-Thawahiri*," (Lit., The Announcement of the Pledge of Allegiance to Al-Qaeda Organization and the Allegiance to Al-Zawahiri), available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_eB3AfI3hgA

Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, "*Ameer Jabhat al-Nusra Al-Fatih Abu Muhammad al-Jolani Yubashshir bi Qiyam Imaraa Islamiyya fi al-Sham*," (Lit., The Commander of Al-Nusra Front, Al-Fatih Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, Bodes the Establishment of an Islamic Emirate in Syria), available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASrci6pH00s

Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, *"Ahlu al-Sham Fadaynakum bi Arwahina*," (Lit., People of Sham [Syria], We Sacrifice Our Souls for You), a transcribed audio speech, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://alplatformmedia.com/vb/showthread.php?t=17501

Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, "*Liqaa' al-Yawm: Al-Nusra wa Mustaqbal Suriya*," (Lit., Today's Interview: Al-Nusra Front and the Future of Syria), Al-Jazeera network, December 19, 2013, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.aljazeera.net/programs/today-interview/2013/12/19/%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%88-

%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7
%D9%86%D9%8A-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%B1%D8%A9-
%D9%88%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A8
%D9%84-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7

Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, an audio recording entitled "*Laytaka Rathaytani*," (Lit., Wishing You would have Eulogized Me), February 25, 2014, Mu'asasat al-Manarah al-Baydhaa', available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://bab-ul-islam.net/showthread.php?t=24119

Abu Muhammad Al-Jolani, "*Wa Qabilu al-Ayyami Khairun min Madhiha*," (Lit., And the Coming Days are Better than the Past Ones), a transcribed audio speech, available on the following link: https://www.alplatformmedia.com/vb/showthread.php?t=26070

Abu Muhammad al-'Adnani, spokesperson of the Islamic State of Iraq, audio speech entitled "*Al-Iqtihamat Afja*'" (Lit., The Onslaughts are More Catastrophic), dated July 23, 2012, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FdsJp1Rjcjg

Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, an audio recording entitled "*Al-Silmiyya Dinu Mann?*" (Lit., Peacefulness is the Religion of Whom?), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://bab-ul-islam.net/showthread.php?t=20110

Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, an audio recording entitled "*'Uthran Amiru al-Qa'ida*," (Lit., Excuse Me, Oh Emir [Leader] of Al-Qaeda), May 11, 2014, Al-Furqan for Media Productions, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrwvi5vqC_w

Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, an audio recording entitled "*Fa Tharhum wa maa Yaftarun*," (Lit., So Leave Them and their Fabrications Alone), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BK1XShwkPhw

Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, a transcribed audio recording entitled "*Lan Yadhurrukum illa Athaa,*" (Lit., They Will not

355

Harm You Except for Some Hurt), published by Al-Furqan for Media Production, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://babulislam.net/showthread.php?p=44980&langid=8

Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani, an audio recording entitled "*Wa maa Asabaka min Hasanatin fa Min Allah*," (Lit., Whatever Good Happens to You, It is from God), published by Al-Furqan for Media Production, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zpjlj5jqbt4

Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, "*Maa Kana Hatha Manhajuna wa lan Yakoun*," (Lit., This was not Our Approach, and Will Never Be), available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://alplatformmedia.com/vb/showthread.php?t=44901

Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, an audio recording entitled "*Hatha Wa'adu Allah,*" (Lit., This is God's Promise), published by Al-Furqan for Media Productions, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1qkBXKvs_A

Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, "*Al-Zarqawi: Munasara wa Munasaha, Aamaal wa Aalaam*" (Lit., "Al-Zarqawi: Advocacy and Advice, Hopes and Pains"; available [in Arabic] at the following link:
http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=dtwiam56

Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, "*Laysa Kaman Tardha bi Shaqqi Ibniha*," (Lit., It is not like She who Agrees to the Splitting of Her Baby), available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=17111301

Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, "*Haatha Ba'dhu ma 'Indi wa Laysa Kuluhu*," (Lit., This is Some of What I have [to Say] and not All of It), Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=01071401

Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, "*Ibn Ahl al-Muru'at*" (Lit., The Son of the People of Virility), found on the "Minbar al-Jihad wa al-Tawhid" website, available [in Arabic] on the following link:
http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=58sjkxbg.

Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, "*Ifadat Aseer: Ya Qawm Mali Ad'oukum ila al-Janna wa Tad'ouni ila al-Nar*" (Lit. "Affidavit of a Prisoner: O My People! What of Me, I Call You Forth to heaven and You Call Me Forth to Hell's Fire"); available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=ou3wjvb3

Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi's speech entitled "*Ummati al-Ghaliyah*" (Lit., My Precious Ummah), the Collection of Al-Zarqawi's letters.

Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, "*Ayanqus al-Deen wa Ana Hay?*" (Lit., Does the Religion Lack While I am Alive?), found on the "Minbar al-Jihad wa al-Tawhid" website, available [In Arabic] on the following site: http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=g4e8hfmy

Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, "*Bayaan wa Tawdheeh li maa Atharahu al-Shaykh al-Maqdisi fi Liqa'ihi ma' Qanaat al-Jazeera*," (Lit., A Statement and Clarification of what Sheikh Al-Maqdisi Stirred in his interview with Al-Jazeera Channel), dated July 12, 2005, from the Archived Collection of Statements and Speeches by Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, The Islamic Al-Buraq Network.

Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, "*Riasala min Abi Mus'ab al-Zarqawi ila al-Shaikh Osama bin Laden (Hafithahu Allah)*" (Lit., Letter from Abu Musab al-Zarqawi to Sheikh Osama bin Laden, May God Protect Him), [In Arabic], dated February 15, 2004, in "Majmou' Rasa'il al-Zarqawi" (Lit., A Collection of Al-Zarqawi's letters).

Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, "*Hal Ataka Hadithu al-Rafidha*" (Lit., Has the Discourse of the Rafidha [The Shiite "Rejecters"] Reached You?), Lecture series, June 1st, 2006, from the Archived Collection of Statements and Speeches of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, The Islamic Al-Buraq network, part 1.

Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, "*Wa 'Aada Ahfad Ibn al-'Alqami*" (Lit., And the Grandsons of Ibn al-'Alqami Return), dated May 18, 2005, a series of lectures, the Archived Collection of Statements and Speeches of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, The Islamic Al-Buraq network.

Resources and References

Abu Musʿab Al-Zarqawi, "*Abu Musʿab al-Zarqawi Yubashir bi Qiyaam Imara Islamiyya fi al-ʿIraq,*" (Lit., Abu Musab al-Zarqawi heralds the establishment of an Islamic Emirate in Iraq), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93oHYWxxi_Q

Abu al-Munthir al-Shinqiti, "*Nusra li ʿIlaan Dawlat al-Islam Mata Yafqahouna Maʿnaa al-Taaʿa,*" (Lit., Support for the Declaration of the Islamic State: When Will They Understand the Meaning of Obedience?), available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://justpaste.it/2dmr

Abu Yusuf al-Bashir, "*Al-Bayʿah thumma Al-Bayʿah thumma Al-Bayʿah,*" (Lit., The Pledge of Allegiance, then the Pledge of Allegiance, then the Pledge of Allegiance), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://thabat111.wordpress.com/2013/10/21/%D9%85%D8%AE%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%B1-

Announcement of the establishment of Al-Nusra Front, by Al-Manara al-Baydaa for Media Production, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fuh1cI9vlR0

Announcement of the establishment of *"Hilf al-Mutayibeen,"* (Lit., The Pact of the Perfumed Ones), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60mgEeNc7Z8

Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Ibtaal al-Damj wa Fasl al-Welaya al-Makaniya,*" (Lit., The Voiding of the Merger and Dividing the Territorial Governance), an audio recording published by Muʾasasat Al-Sahaab, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cax1C6ETCp0

Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Ila al-Amaam ya Usoud al-Sham,*" (Lit., March Forward Oh Lions of the Levant [Syria]), a video recording by Muʾasasat al-Sahaab, dated February 12, 2012, available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=2429

Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Tawjihaat ʿAamma li al-ʿAmal al-Jihadi,*" (Lit., General Instructions for Jihadi Work), Muʾasasat al-

Sahaab for Media Production, available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=4154

Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Rithaa' Shaheed al-Fitna al-Shaikh Abi Khalid al-Suri Rahimahu Allah,*" (Lit., A Eulogy of the Martyr of Strife Sheikh Abu Khalid al-Suri, May God Rest His Soul), April 5th, 2014, audio recording published by Mu'asasat Al-Sahaab, available [in Arabic] on the following link:http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0zk6OsjjdI

Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Risala ila Al-Zarqawi*" (Lit., Letter to Al-Zarqawi), dated July 16, 2005, available [in Arabic] at the following link: http://www.muslm.org/vb/showthread.php?407450-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%

Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Shahadah li Haqn al-Dimaa'*" (Lit., A Testament to Stop the Bloodshed), an audio recording published by Mu'asasat al-Sahaab, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rfvgCLq-BBY

Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Ezz al-Sharq Awaluhu Dimashq*" (Lit., The Glory of the East begins with Damascus), July 28, 2011, a video recording published by Mu'asasat al-Sahaab, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.shabakataljahad.info/vb/showthread.php?t=8431

Ayman al-Zawahiri, A photocopied version of Al-Zawahiri's letter to Al-Baghdadi and Al-Jolani, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://twecontent.org/amazing/box/oBCex6K5LR0/%D8%B1%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%AE-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B8%D9%88.html

Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Al-Waqi' bayna al-Alam wa al-Amal*" (Lit, Reality between Pain and Hope), a transcribed audio interview conducted by Mu'asasat al-Sahaab, in May 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=4630

Statement: *Announcement of the Establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq*, available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://nokbah.com/~w3/?p=536

Statement: *Announcement of the formation of the first cabinet of the Islamic State of Iraq*, April 19, 2007, The book is a "Collection of Speeches by Leaders of the Islamic State of Iraq," 1st ed., 2010.

Statement "*I'lan al-Harb 'ala Amrika*," (Lit., Declaring War against America), issued by the Global Al-Qaeda Organization, Afghanistan, 1998.

Statement: Announcement of "*Mithaq Sharaf Thawri li al-Kata'ib al-Muqatila*," (Lit., The Revolution's Code of Honor for Fighting Factions), issued by the Islamic Union for Jund al-Sham, Faylaq al-Sham, Jaysh al-Mujahideen, Al-Furqan Brigades, and the Islamic Front, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xPyM3bjgGw

Statement: "*Al-I'tilaaf Yasif Tanthim 'Da'esh' bel Irhabi 'Uqba Maqtal Mudeer Ma'bar Hudoudi.. wa Yad'ou al-Muqatileen li al-Insihab Minhu*," (Lit., The National Opposition Coalition Describes ISIS as Terrorist after the Killing of a Border Crossing Manager.. And Calls on Fighters to Withdraw from the Organization," January 1st, 2014, Syria News, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.syrianews.com/readnews.php?sy_seq=166221

Statement: "*Bayan bi Sha'n 'Alaaqat Jamaa'at Qa'idat al-Jihad bi Jamaa'at "Al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-'Iraq wa al-Sham*," (Lit., A Statement Regarding the Relationship between Al-Qaeda Organization and the "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria/Levant" Organization), by The General Command – Al-Qaeda Jihad Organization, February 2, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://justpaste.it/ea9k

Statement: "*Bay'at Jamaa'at al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad li Tantheem Qa'idat al-Jihad*," (Lit., A Statement regarding the Pledge of Allegiance of the *Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad* group to Al-Qaeda organization), Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad, available [in

Arabic] on Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad website at the following link: http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=dwww5009

Statement: "*Bayaan Ta'sees Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen fi al-'Iraq*," (Lit. A Statement on the Establishment of the Mujahideen Shura Council in Iraq, available [in Arabic] on Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad, on the following link: https://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=5cqkqf0o

Statement "*Bayaan Tawdheehi hawla maa Ushee'a 'an I'laan Jabhat al-Nusra li Imaara Islamiya*," (Lit., An explanatory statement on what has been rumored regarding the announcement of Al-Nusra Front of establishing an Islamic Emirate), issued by Al-Manara al-Baydhaa' for Media Production, July 12, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://justpaste.it/g7bl

Statement by Al-Nusra Front entitled "*Fatabayyanuu*" (Lit., Investigate or Verify the Truth), in response to the Islamic State's Statement entitled "*Hathaa Bayaanun li al-Naas*" (Lit., This is a Statement for People), February 10, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://justpaste.it/ed7l

Statement: *"Bayan Haqiqat 'Alaqat al-Baghdadi bi Amirina Al-Zarqawi*" (Lit., Manifesting the Truth of the Relationship of Al-Baghdadi with our Emir, Al-Zarqawi), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.sunnti.com/vb/showthread.php?t=15452

Statement by group of Syrian Jihadist groups, "*Bayan Al-Sheikh al-Qa'id Abu Khalid al-Suri fi Tahawwul Ba'd al-Mujahideen li Qutta' Turuq Sahwajiyah Mukhtaraqeen wa Nus-huhu lahom*," (Lit., The Statement by the Sheikh and Leader Abu Khalid Al-Suri regarding the Turning of some Jihadists to Infiltrated Thugs and Highway Robbers), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.muslm.org/vb/showthread.php?526745-

A Statement on the Battle of the "*Al-'Ashr al-Awakher*," (Lit., Final Ten Days). The statement came in response to the campaigns of displacing Sunnis. Produced by Al-I'tisam for Media Production, the Ministry of Media – The Islamic State

of Iraq and al-Sham, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=324265

A Statement regarding "*Ghazwat Qahr al-Tawaghit fi Sijnay Abu Ghraib and Al-Taji*" (Lit., The Battle of Crushing the Tyrants in the Abu Ghraib and Al-Taji Prisons), The Islamic State-Mu'asasat al-'Itisam, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://daawla.tumblr.com/page/18

Statement by the Mujahideen Shura Council (*Aknaf Bayt al-Maqdis*) in Syria, entitled "*La Tasubbu Ahl al-Sham wa lakin Subbu Thalmatahum*," (Lit., Do not Curse the People of the Levant, but Instead Curse the Darkness they are in), February 2, 2014.

A statement signed by a group of Jihadists "*Al-Munasarah al-Khurasaniya li al-Dawla al-Islamiya*," (Lit., The Khurasan Support for the Islamic State), February 18, 2014.

Statement: "*Nidaa' min al-Dawla Al-Islamiya fi Al-Iraq wa Al-Sham*," (Lit., An Appeal from the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham/Levant ISIS), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=344788

Statement: "*Haatha Bayaanun li al-Nas*," (Lit., This is a Statement for People), The Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham/Levant, the governorate of Al-Barakah, February 9, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://justpaste.it/ecx3

Statement: "*Al-Hay'at al-Islamiya bi Suriya: Solouk Da'esh Yad'ou li al-Fitna wa al-Shar*," (Lit., Islamic Associations in Syria: The Behavior of ISIS Calls for Strife and Evil), Al-Arabiya net, December 22, 2013, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://goo.gl/m9Ok4P

Statement: "*Wa Qad A'thara man Anthar*," (Lit., He who Issues a Warning is Relieved of Responsibility), Al-Nusra Front, February 7, 2014, available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://justpaste.it/ec4z

Statement: "*Khitta Istratijiyya li Ta'zeez al-Mawqif al-Siyasi li Dawlat al-'Iraq al-Islamiya*," (Lit., A Strategic Plan to Strengthen the Political Position of the Islamic State of Iraq),

available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=158433

Sami al-'Uraydi, Sermon on Eid Al-Fitr al-Mubarak 1435, published by Mu'asasat al-Baseera for Media Productions, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IChOHMGpOB0

Sami al-'Uraydi, "*Manhajunaa wa 'Aqidatunaa*," (Lit., Our Method and Our Doctrine), an interview with Al-Manara al-Baydhaa' for Media Production, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.shabakataljahad.com/vb/showthread.php?p=8715 9

'Aani al-'Alam, "*Radd al-Shubuhaat 'an al-Dawla al-Islamiya – Shar'iyyat al-Dawla wa Sihhatuha*," (Lit., A Response to the Suspicions about the Islamic State: The Legitimacy and Validity of the State), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://thabat111.wordpress.com/2013/07/01/%D8%B1%D8 %AF%D9%91%D9%8F-

All publications issued by the Islamic State organization are available on the following link: http://dawla-is.appspot.com

"*Al-Kitab al-Jaami' li Jamee' Bayanat Jabhat al-Nusra li Ahl al-Sham: Min al-Bayan Raqam 1 ila al-Bayan Raqam 199*," (Lit., The Collective Book of all the Statements of Al-Nusra Front in Support of the People of Syria: From Statement No. 1 to Statement No. 199), available [in Arabic] on the following link: https://archive.org/details/all-jn-press

Abdullah al-Muhaisini, "*Mubadarat al-Ummah,*" (Lit., The Ummah's Initiative), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=348225

Abdullah al-Muhaisini, "*'An Mubadarat al-Ummah, Ala Hal Ballaght,*" (Lit., Regarding the Ummah's Initiative: Have I Relayed the Message?), available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s08_Tm_Mbyg

"Al-Malaf al-Jaami' li Jum'at Kuluna Jabhat al-Nusra," (Lit., The Collective File of the Friday of "We Are All Al-Nusra Front"), December 21, 2012, available [in Arabic] on the following link:

http://shame210.wordpress.com/2012/12/21/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%84%D9%81-

"Hathihi 'Aqidatuna wa Manhajuna" (Lit., This is Our Creed and Our Method), Al-Qaeda in Iraq Organization, the Religious Committee, available [in Arabic] on the Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad, on the following link: http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=ygz0yz64

The Abbottabad Documents, available on the website of the Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, Arabic originals and English translations are available on the following link: https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/letters-from-abbottabad-bin-ladin-sidelined

Video Recordings

"Hamlat Fa's al-Khaleel," (Lit., The Axe of Hebron Campaign), a series of video recording of military operations, published by the Islamic State's Al-Furqan Institute for Media Production, available on the following link: http://3raq2589.blogspot.com/2010_04_01_archive.html

"Risaala ilaa Amreeka," (Lit., A Message to America), a video recording by the Islamic State, issued on September 2nd, 2014, available on the following link: http://dawla-is.appspot.com

"Risaala ilaa Hulafaa' Amreeka," (Lit., A Message to America's Allies), a video recording by the Islamic State, issued on September 13, 2014, available on the following link: http://dawla-is.appspot.com

"Risaa'il min Ardh al-Malaahim," (Lit., Messages from the Battlefields), a series of videos documenting the Islamic

State's operations and victories, a collection of nearly 50 publications, available on the following link: http://dawla-is.appspot.com

"*Saleel al-Sawaarim,*" (Lit., The Clanking of the Swords), a series of four parts issued by the Islamic State made available in July 2012, August 2012, January 2013 and May 2014 respectively, available on the following link: http://ansarkhelafa.weebly.com/15871604158716041577-1589160416101604-15751604158916081575158 51605.html

"*Sayaddou al-Sahawaat,*" (Lit., The Hunters of the *Sahawat* Awakenings), a series of videos issued by the Islamic State's Al-Furqan Institute for Media Production, available on the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMW4dNqkizM

"*'Alaa Minhaaj al-Nubuwwah*" (Lit., On the Path of the Prophetreleased July 28, 2014, available on the following link: http://dawla-is.appspot.com

"*al-Aseer 1*" (Lit., The Battle of the Captive 1), on the following link: https://archive.org/details/Aseer_0_0_1

Ghazwat al-Aseer 2" (Lit., The Battle of the Captive 2), on the following link: https://archive.org/details/gaseer-2

"*Ghazwat al-Aseer 3*" (Lit., The Battle of the Captive 3), on the following link:http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xepk29_%D8%A5%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B9-%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%BA%D8%B2%D9%88%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B1_news

"*Ghazwat al-Aseer 4*" (Lit., The Battle of the Captive 4), on the following link:http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xepk2w_%D8%A5%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B9-%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9-

[%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7
%D9%85-%D8%BA%D8%B2%D9%88%D8%A9-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B1
_news](#)

"*Ghazwat al-Aseer 5*" (Lit., The Battle of the Captive 5), on the following link:[http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xepk32_%D8%A5%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B9-%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%BA%D8%B2%D9%88%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B1_news](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xepk32_)

"*Fa Sharrid Bihim min Khalfihim*," (Lit., Displace and Scatter them from Behind their Backs), a series of videos with the first part covering the liberation battle of the 93rd Brigade in the Syrian province of Al-Raqqa (on August 23, 2014), and the second part cover the conquest of the Tabaqa airfield in Al-Raqqa on September 4th, 2014. Available on the following link: http://dawla-is.appspot.com

"*Kasr al-Hudud*," (Lit., Breaking the Boundaries), broadcasted through the Islamic State's media arm Mu'asasat al-I'tisam, available [in Arabic] on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yst8UgICCvc

"*Laheeb al-Harb*," (Lit., The Flames of War), Al-Hayat Center, September 17, 2014, available on the following link: http://dawla-is.appspot.com

This book seeks to answer a number of central questions regarding, on the one hand, the "Islamic State" (IS) as an organization, and, on the other hand, IS' relationship with Al Qaeda and Al Nusra Front.

- What are the main pillars of the ideology of the "Islamic State" organization?
- How can we explain IS' rapid expansion and their military victories in both Iraq and Syria?
- Are the conflicts between IS and the central Al Qaeda network linked to a struggle over power, influence, and control? Or are there fundamental ideological and political differences between the two organizations?
- How can IS' internal structure and assets be assessed?
- What are possible scenarios regarding the future of IS? What will be the impact of the international coalition?

The authors aim to dismantle the "aura of obscurity" surrounding the "Islamic State" organization as well as to examine the similarities and the differences between IS and the central Al-Qaeda organization. For this, they analyze the stages and transformations IS underwent in the course of its development, including the factors behind its previous retreat and behind its recent reemergence. The book examines Al Nusra Front within the context of the current war in Syria. It discusses the internal conflicts between Al Nusra Front and IS, which ultimately led to a schism within Al-Qaeda and a struggle between two competing currents. The authors outline the ideological differences between IS and Al-Nusra Front in particular, and the Jihadi Salafist current in general.