

HOW STABLE IS THE CALIPHATE OF THE ISLAMIC STATE?

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1. Background: Proclamation of the Caliphate by the Islamic State

1.1. The Suspension of IS Membership from Al Qaeda Following Disputes about When to Proclaim the Islamic Emirate

In 2013 the Al Qaeda brigades in Syria succeeded in making extensive territorial gains and attained the preeminent position among the rebel groups.¹ The moderate Free Syrian Army fell apart. This provided the opportunity for Al Qaeda to found an Islamic state. As early as the early summer of 2013 the Free Syrian Army was already reporting that Al Qaeda was seeking to found a state of its own in the north of Syria which would also control the border crossing points to Turkey.²

However, a fierce controversy arose within Al Qaeda about the timing of when to proclaim the Al Qaeda state in the north of Syria. Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi, the emir of the “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant ISIL”, wanted to proclaim the “Islamic State of Iraq and Damascus” as early as late July 2013. However, Ayman as-Zawahiri, the leader of Al Qaeda, and Al-Fateh Abu Muhammad al-Julani, the emir of the Al Nusra Front, felt that this was too early.³ This controversy was one of the primary causes of the struggle for power between ISIL⁴ and Al Qaeda’s Strategic Level of

¹ For an overall review of Al Qaeda in the autumn of 2013 with an overview of its global structure, see **Krech, Hans** 2014a. Al-Qaida im Herbst 2013 – Der Versuch einer Bestandsaufnahme. – Reader Sicherheitspolitik 1/2014. Online: <<http://www.bmvg.de/portal/a/bmvg/!ut/p/c4/bU0xDoJAEHwRu3ed2Ekw0dZGsTEHr>>, (9 January 2014).

² See **Free Army Official: Al-Qa’idah planning to establish a state in north**. – Asharq al-Awsat, 16 July 2013; **Ballout, Mohammad ad** 2013. Kilo to Al-Riyadh & Bandar to Europe: confronting Al-Qa’idah in North Syria. – As-Safir (Lebanon), 18 July 2013.

³ See **State and An-Nusra: agreement on strategy and disagreement over priorities**. – Asharq al-Awsat, 1 August 2013.

⁴ As to the history of ISIL (Al-Qaeda in Iraq), see **Krech, Hans** 2014b. Has Al Qaeda in Iraq been destroyed? Reasons for the power struggles in Iraq after the withdrawal of US forces. – Saumets, Andres; Mölder, Holger; Värk, René (eds.). Operation “Iraqi Freedom” ten years later, ENDC Proceedings, 18/2014, pp. 25–39.

Command, which initially resulted in the suspension of ISIL's membership in Al Qaeda on February 3rd, 2014.⁵ It was the intention of ISIL to establish an emirate that would extend through the Euphrates valley from Aleppo to Baghdad.⁶

In the subsequent months, fierce engagements occurred between the Al Nusra Front and ISIL in Syria, with the Al Nusra Front and its many allies (in particular Ahrar ash-Sham and the Islamic Front) initially prevailing. Subsequently, however, ISIL managed to consolidate, and then proceeded to launch a counter-attack. The fight to gain control of the oil fields and refineries in Deir Az Zor province were especially intense and saw the two adversaries engaging each other for weeks on end.⁷

On April 9th, 2014 a split from Al Qaeda in Khorasan occurred. Nine emirs from Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Iran and Sudan renounced their allegiance to Ayman as-Zawahiri and pledged their allegiance to Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi, the emir of ISIL. They acknowledged Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi as Emir of the Faithful, i.e. as leader of Al Qaeda. In a statement, they accused Zawahiri of abandoning Osama bin Laden's tenets.⁸ The defection of these nine emirs, i.e. nine high-ranking commanders, from Al Qaeda to ISIL, was presumably, the most decisive factor in ISIL's decision to proclaim the Caliphate on June 29th, 2014 rather than establish an Islamic emirate. Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi was hoping that the global terror organization Al Qaeda with its 40,000 fighters would put itself under his command.

1.2. Despite the Proclamation of the Caliphate, IS Continues to Be a Maverick in the Jihadist Global Movement

In the beginning of July 2014, the balance of power in Syria tipped in the favor of ISIL, whose forces managed to take the Iraqi city of Mossul on June 10th, 2014, and then Takrit, by storm shortly thereafter. ISIL captured the weapons and equipment of two Iraqi divisions and in Mossul expropriated some 300 million Euros in cash.⁹ They were also able to capture Humvees,

⁵ See *Al Jazeera TV*, 3 February 2014.

⁶ See *Bodansky, Yossef* 2014. The Khorasan Pledge. – Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy, 4/2014, p. 8.

⁷ See *Deir al-Zor: ISIL is nearing the oil fields.* –As-Safir (Lebanon), 16.4.2014; *Oil and Gas: A Struggle Between “Warlords” and Jihadists.* – Al-Hayat, 28 April 2014.

⁸ See *Bodansky* 2014, p. 9; *The “Khorasan Pledge” and Sunni Jihadist Rivalry.* – Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy, 5–6/2014, p. 20.

⁹ See *ARD-Brennpunkt*, 12 June 2014; *Al Jazeera TV*, 12 June 2014.

M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks¹⁰, armored personnel carriers and artillery. This provided ISIL with superior offensive firepower which it subsequently also used in Syria against the Al Nusra Front.

The proclamation of the Caliphate occurred on June 29th, 2014, and was followed by the redesignation of ISIL into Islamic State IS.¹¹ This proclamation of the Caliphate elevated the struggle for power between IS and Al Qaeda to a new level. Obviously IS hoped that the remaining 13 Al Qaeda regional organizations would join it. But as of 2014 this hope has not yet been fulfilled. The followers of Al Qaeda refer mockingly to the IS Caliphate as the “Twitter caliphate” since it mainly spreads its propaganda via Twitter. Al Qaeda’s Strategic Level of Command has referred to IS as a maverick within the jihadist global movement. And while thousands of jihadists from all over the world have joined IS, at present no Islamist terror group of importance has done so. They have by and large stayed loyal to Al Qaeda.¹²

Figure 1. Accession to or Support of the IS Caliphate after Its Proclamation on June 29th 2014 (As of October 2014).

Date	Group	Accession	Support	Status
June 30 th , 2014 via youtube	Mujahidin Indonesia Timur MIT	Oath of allegiance		Not a member of Al Qaeda
Late June 2014	Free Sunnis of Baalbek/Lebanon	Oath of allegiance		Not a member of Al Qaeda
June 30 th , 2014	A Group of AQIM ¹³ members led by Sheikh Abou Abdallah Othman al- Asemi, the chairman of the Sharia Com- mittee	Oath of allegiance		14 July 2014 Emir Drudkal of AQIM pledges allegiance to Ayman as- Zawahiri, and calls for reconciliation between IS and Al Qaeda

¹⁰ The Iraqi Army had 140 M1A1 Abrams MBTs, the composite armor of which, unlike the Abrams MBTs of the US armed forces, does not include a depleted uranium layer. Between January 1st, 2014 and June 18th 2014 five Abrams MBTs were destroyed and 28 Abrams MBTs were damaged in the course of the battles against IS. Many M1A1 Abrams MBTs were captured by IS. See **Binnie, Jeremy** 2014. Iraqi Abrams MBT, helo losses revealed. – Jane’s Defence Weekly, 25 June 2014, p. 19.

¹¹ See **ISIL and the Islamic Caliphate.** – Al-Quds al-Arabi, 1 July 2014.

¹² See **Khalil, Ezzeldeen** 2014. Caliphate question: Islamic State’s impact on the jihadist community. – Jane’s Intelligence Review, 8/2014, p. 15–16.

¹³ AQIM = Al Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb.

Date	Group	Accession	Support	Status
On June 30 th , 2014 via Twitter	Ansar al-Sharia (Tunisia)		Acclaims the establishment of the Caliphate	Member of AQIM
June 30 th 2014	Ansar al-Sharia (Yemen)		Acclaims the establishment of the Caliphate	Member of AQAP ¹⁴
July 6 th , 2014 via youtube	Ansar al-Islam/Iraq	Oath of allegiance		Subsequently denied via official Twitter account, not a member of Al Qaeda
July 30 th , 2014 via Twitter	A TTP ¹⁵ group led by Sheikh Abu Yazid Abd al-Qahir Khorasani	Oath of allegiance		Not applicable to entire TTP
July 23 rd , 2014	Salafist group from Jordan led by Sheikh Abu Muhammad at-Tahhawi	Oath of allegiance		Not a member of Al Qaeda
On August 6 th , 2014 in video message	Ansar Dine		Acclaims the establishment of the Caliphate	Member of AQIM
September 14 th , 2014	Jund al-Khilafa	Oath of allegiance		Split from AQIM
October 5 th , 2014	TTP		Declares its support for IS	Closely allied with Al Qaeda in Khorasan

1.3. The IS Caliphate: Salafist Facade – but Arab-Socialist Baath in Actuality

In early September 2014, IS in Iraq had conquered 37 cities and was more powerful than it had ever been at any point in its history.¹⁶ According to CIA estimates, as of September 2014, IS, with its total strength of approx. 20,000–31,500 fighters, almost matched its personnel strength of 2006. This included

¹⁴ AQAP = Al Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula.

¹⁵ TTP = Pakistani Taliban/Tehrek-e Taliban Pakistan.

¹⁶ See **Hezbollah officers training Iraqi volunteers.** – Al-Rai al-Aam (Kuwait), 4 September 2014.

about 13,500 foreigners (non-Syrians and non-Iraqis): 5,000 North Africans, 4,000 fighters from the Middle East (predominantly from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon), 3,000 Europeans and 1,500 fighters from the territories of the former Soviet Union.¹⁷ About 6,000 IS fighters had undergone the kind of excellent military training that is typical of Al Qaeda.¹⁸

Additionally, almost all the Sunni Arab underground groups in Iraq had joined IS more or less voluntarily.

In this context, the strategic alliance between IS and the Nakshbandi, the militia of the prohibited Baath, is of extreme significance. In terms of its propaganda, IS appears as a Salafist terror group. But it is not the Salafists who exercise military command within IS; it is rather the generals of Saddam's former regime. The facade of IS is Salafist, but it is Arab-Socialist Baath in actuality. The majority of the Iraqi fighters are former Baath officials, secret service officers, officers, and fighters of the Al-Bu Nasir tribe (Saddam Hussein's tribe) from the Takrit region.

The Salafist facade attracts jihadists from all over the world, and thereby offers the strategic alliance of the Nakshbandi and IS, which has existed for many years, what may be the last opportunity to seize power in the Sunni Arab provinces of Iraq. The operational priority of IS is within Iraq and not in Syria.

Figure 2. Oath of allegiance of Sunni Arab Terror Groups to IS in Iraq in mid-July 2014

Group	Oath of Allegiance
Jaysh al-Muhammad	Yes
Nakshbandi	Yes
Islamic Army of Iraq	Yes
Islamic Movement of the Iraqi Mudjaheddin (Mudjaheddin Army)	Yes
1920 Revolution Brigade	Yes
Hamas (Iraq)	Yes
Jameh Group	Yes
Ansar al-Sunna	No

Source: **Nehme, Wa'el** 2014. *ISIL worried about its Sunni competitors.* – *Al-Mada (Iraq)*, 24 July 2014.

¹⁷ See **Deutschlandfunk**, 12 September 2014; **Al Jazeera TV**, 12 September 2014.

¹⁸ See **Gebauer, Matthias; Repinski, Gordon** 2014. *Koalition der Willigen.* – *Der Spiegel*, 37/2014, p. 33.

2. What Factors Have a Promotive effect on the Caliphate?

- The strategy of IS, in an alliance with the Nakshbandi of the Baath, is based on the Balad plan of 2008,¹⁹ and is designed to provoke a religiously and ethnically motivated civil war in Iraq by means of attacks against the Shiites and Kurds as well as the national minorities such as Christians and Yezidis, which would result in the successful foundation of a separate state that would unite the three Sunni Arab provinces of Iraq. This includes the annexation of the oil wells in the Mossul area, the refineries in Beiji²⁰ and of hydropower plants near Mossul; all of these would enable the state to survive economically. By employing savage tactics towards the non-Sunni Arab population, fear and terror are deliberately spread to achieve “ethnic-religious cleansing” in the three Sunni Arab provinces of Iraq. From a strategic perspective, the successes of IS in Syria are of greatly subordinate importance.
- Presumably, this is the last major struggle of the Baath for power in an area of Iraq. Thus, many followers of Saddam and the Al-Bu Nasir tribe (Saddam Hussein’s tribe) will switch sides in favor of IS. Some groups of the Sunni Arab tribes also support IS.
- The operational level of command of IS is very difficult to detect by electronic means. Since 1998, in Iraq, the entire system of communication at the strategic and operational levels of command has employed a system of 1,000 messengers in order to circumvent the surveillance by the NSA. The messengers all come from Saddam’s tribe and belonged to the Amn Al-Khass (Special Security Organization – SSO) secret service. Presumably these messengers are transmitting orders within IS at the present time.
- IS has an extensive arsenal of captured weapons from the stockpiles of the Iraqi and Syrian armies. Its military combat effectiveness provides for the capability of conducting conventional operations with main battle tanks, armed personnel carriers and artillery. Some helicopters have been captured, too. The stocks of ammunition are enormous.
- In Mossul IS seized about 300 million Euros. Additional financing methods are: oil exports, gasoline sales, renting houses and apartments, charging levies and collecting taxes, demanding ransoms for hostages, and the slave trade for girls.

¹⁹ See **Media source: documents reveal Al-Qa’idah plan to divide Iraq**. – Aswat al-Iraq news agency, 17 April 2008.

²⁰ The refinery in Beiji produces 300,000 b/d of fuel. See **France24**, 19 June 2014; **Deutschlandfunk**, 19 June 2014.

- Other promotive factors of the IS Caliphate are: the lack of combat power of the Iraqi Army; the simmering conflict between the Peshmerga and the government in Baghdad (The Kurd provinces plan to secede from Iraq and to found a Kurd state in North Iraq); the intra-Shiite struggle for power that began in October 2014 between Nouri al-Maliki and Haidar al-Abadi²¹; the extent of corruption in the Iraqi Army, the infiltration of the government's security forces by IS agents and suicide attackers (insider attacks).
- The high potential of attacks in Baghdad where many IS cells exist in the Sunni neighborhoods. IS can create fear and mutual distrust between ethnicities in Baghdad with simultaneous multiple attacks at almost any time.
- The potential number of scientists available to produce weapons of mass destruction. For example, an IS research cell that had begun the production of sarin and mustard gas was discovered on June 1st, 2013 in Baghdad. The intention was to use model aircrafts to spray the poison gas in the EU and in the US.²²
- IS will try to recruit and train fighters with EU or US passports in order to carry out attacks in their home countries.
- The decapitations of hostages from NATO nations are designed to deter these nations from military action against the Caliphate. In October 2014, about 15 hostages from NATO nations were presumably still at the mercy of IS.

3. Which Factors have a Destabilizing Effect on the Caliphate?

- The borders of the IS Caliphate are overstretched and too long to be successfully defended.
- The coalition of adversaries of the IS Caliphate is too big; it is comprised of local adversaries (the Iraqi government, Iraqi Peshmerga, Al Qaeda organizations, and other rebel organizations in Syria, as well as Assad's regime), regional adversaries (Saudi Arabia, Iran, Jordan, the UAE, Turkey and others) and international opponents (USA, the Coalition of the Willing comprising 40 nations, and the UN).

²¹ See **Al-Maliki and his supporters planning revolution the Houthi way.** – Al-Mustaqbal (Lebanon), 28 September 2014.

²² See **Al-Qaida-Zelle plante die Herstellung von Giftgas.** – Welt am Sonntag, 2 June 2013; **Al Jazeera TV**, 1 June 2013.

- Its air defense is barely operational, i.e. its operations are always being threatened by air attacks from bombers, cruise missiles, combat helicopters and drones.
- The financial resources of the Caliphate are insufficient to sustain it. IS has to finance all salaries and all public services. The more the Caliphate expands, the more the costs grow. If the salaries cannot be paid any more, the population will turn away from IS.
- After the bombing of the twelve refineries under IS control in the Deir Az Zor province on September 24th and 25th, 2014, the increasing fuel shortage will limit the IS units' mobility.²³ An Abrams MBT, for instance, must be refueled every 30 miles.
- The jihadists who arrive from all over the world and many of the tribal fighters are mere cannon fodder. Their military training is poor. Al Qaeda offers eight training modules. Only about 6,000 IS fighters have completed these modules and are able to fight efficiently against the Iraqi Army. Moreover, the morale of the jihadists and tribal fighters is at a lower level than that of the seasoned IS fighters.
- Conflicts within the mostly Sunni Arab tribes are impending. It is uncertain whether they will stay loyal to IS if fortunes change on the battlefield and financial subsidies begin to dry up.
- As a result of the isolation of the IS Caliphate by the Al Qaeda leadership, IS does not receive any funds, logistics and well-trained fighters from the 13 Al Qaeda regional organizations, either. This embargo imposed by Al Qaeda affects IS quite severely.

4. Experience: Previous Experiences of the Founding of States by Al Qaeda

4.1. Al Qaeda's Three Types of States

Al Qaeda envisions three types of states: The Islamic Emirate, the Islamic State and the Caliphate.

According to the 7 Stages Strategy Plan, the proclamation of the Caliphate is planned to be implemented in 2016 at Stage 6. The Strategy Plan presumably dates from 1998. In 2009, an original copy of the 7 Stages Strategy Plan was captured by the Saudi Arabian domestic secret service.²⁴

²³ See **BBC World News**, 25 September 2014; **Al Jazeera TV**, 25 September 2014.

²⁴ See **Al-Qaeda State in 2016: The stages include provoking the US.** – Al-Watan (Saudi-Arabia), 6 October 2009.

After Osama bin Laden was killed in Abbottabad on 2 May 2011, Al-Qaeda's new Strategic Level of Command proceeded to expedite the process of state-building. All 14 regional organizations were requested to do more to establish emirates that should then be defended. The emirates would then develop into Islamic states. It is on this basis that the Caliphate was to be founded in 2016.

The aim is to use the establishment of Islamic emirates as a means of drawing the US and its allies into a variety of conflicts with the Islamic world. As is well known, Al Qaeda considers itself to be involved in an unlimited world war to gain control over all Muslims and to reestablish the Caliphate within the borders that existed the early Middle Ages. In this war of attrition, the US and its allies are to be weakened enough in economic and military terms to force them withdraw completely from the entire Near and Middle East region. Only when the US is no longer capable of defending its allies in the Near and Middle East, will Al Qaeda be able to topple the regimes there and then permanently assume power.

This means that Al Qaeda is quite deliberately creating targets for the US military and seeking their intervention by establishing Islamic emirates in order to then involve the US in a long war of attrition. This strategy is very effective. Therefore, the US and NATO should avoid a military intervention with ground forces, if possible.²⁵



Figure 3. Al Qaeda's Three Types of States

²⁵ See **Riedel, Bruce** 2008. *The search for Al Qaeda: Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, p. 7/8.

4.2. Lessons From The Founding of Al Qaeda's Most Important States

So far Al Qaeda has founded four states: three Islamic emirates were founded in the countries of Somalia, Mali and Yemen, and Boko Haram proclaimed an Islamic caliphate in the federal state of Borno in the north of Nigeria. In addition there are many smaller emirates that are often comprised of only a city or village and its surroundings, for instance in Syria or in Libya. The process used to establish the four most significant states can be applied to the Caliphate of IS; therefore, they are of particular interest.

Figure 4. States Founded by Al Qaeda's Regional Organizations

Organiza- tion	Date of Proclama- tion/ Type of State	Territory	Miscalculation	Outlook in November 2014
Al-Shabab	Proclama- tion of an emirate in Septem- ber 2008	South of Somalia and ap- prox. 75% of the capital Moga- dishu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibition of relief efforts of interna- tional relief organiza- tions during the fam- ine in 2011 resulting in the death of 200,000 people • Granting the right to rape any woman in the area of operations for all fighters as part of their pay • Poor medical care for Al-Shabab fight- ers which resulted in struggles for power among the commanders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Night of the 5th of August 2011 withdrawal from Mogadishu. • February 22nd, 2012 loss of Baidoa • August 27th, 2012 loss of Merca • September 29th, 2012 loss of Kismayo • Night of the 4th of October 2014 withdrawal from Barawe • Trend: disintegration of the emirate
AQAP/ Ansar al-Sharia (Yemen)	Proclama- tion of an emirate in late May 2011	Abyan Province with pro- vincial capital Zinjibar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Ban on Qat • A Ban on female labor in the fields • Insufficient funds for the payment of all expenses in the Abyan province 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawal from Zinjibar and areas of Abyan province enforced by means of the operation "Golden Swords" from May 11th, 2012 to June 17th, • Trend: reestablishment of an emirate in the south of Yemen

Organiza-tion	Date of Proclama-tion/ Type of State	Territory	Miscalculation	Outlook in November 2014
AQIM/An-sar Dine/ MUJAO ²⁶ / Boko Haram/ Ansar al-Sharia (Mali), Ansar al-Sharia (Libya), Ansar al-Sharia (Tunisia)	Proclama-tion of the Sahara Emirate in July of 2012	North of Mali; with Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, Al Qaeda for the first time controls three big African cities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of compatibility between AQIM's Salafism and the regional popula-tion's Sufi Islam (the destruction of three Sufi shrines in Timbuktu, a severe application of Sharia, a ban on music, the destruction of Timbuktu's library) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The loss of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu and a partial withdrawal into neighboring countries after the operation "Serval" which began on January 11th, 2013 • Return to Mali and control of extensive areas of the north including Kidal but without Gao and Timbuktu on May 17th, 2014 following the insurgency of the Tuaregs • Trend: reestablishment of an emirate
Boko Haram/ Ansaru	Proclama-tion of the Caliphate on 24 August 2014	Areas of the fed-eral state of Borno, Nigeria, the cit-ies of Bama and Gwoza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cruel massacres of the Christian civilian population • Attacks against mod-erate Muslims • Attacks against schools • Abduction of pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trend: expansion of the Caliphate

4.3. The Lessons Learned Thus Far from Al Qaeda's Founding of States

1. A purely Salafist state conflicts with the Islamic population because Salafists only represent a minority among the Muslims. Therefore the new Al Qaeda leadership opened Al Qaeda to all Muslims after 2011, i.e. to the followers of Sufi Islam (this is very important in the Sahel region and also in West Africa), as well as to Shiites and even to non-Muslims. They are allowed to fight for Al Qaeda in exchange for pay. Since mid-September 2013, Al Qaeda fighters have been forbidden to attack Shiites, Christians and followers of Sufi Islam or carry out attacks against Muslim civilians. Only

²⁶ MUJAO = Jama'at Tawhid wa'l-Jihad fi Garbi Afriqiya/Unification and the Jihad Group in West Africa.

in NATO nations may civilians be attacked by Al Qaeda. In Islamic nations, Al Qaeda is only allowed to fight against the military, the security apparatus and enemy politicians and parties. In the medium run, the aim is to win over the majority of the Islamic population in the area of operations.²⁷ The Al Nusra Front has attempted to implement this approach in Syria. IS, however, has refused to obey Ayman as-Zawahiri's order not to attack Christians, and this was also a reason for the suspension of its Al Qaeda membership. Opening Al Qaeda to non-Salafists, however, has also meant letting women labor in the fields, permitting Qat (the majority of the population of Yemen chews the drug from noon onward, it is also common in Somalia), allowing music (important in Al Qaeda's West African areas of operations) and, finally, tolerating the shrines of the Sufis or the veneration of the martyrs in Shiite mosques. Since 2011, Al Qaeda has claimed to represent all Muslims whereas IS only champions the interests of the Sunni Arabs in Syria and in Iraq as well as Saddam's followers.²⁸

2. An Islamic emirate creates immense costs due to the fact that each individual Al Qaeda regional organization must assume all the functions of a state, otherwise it will fail. The salaries for all government personnel must be paid, and all public services, from the courts to the public transportation system, to the schools and universities, to the police, the health system, the operation of bakeries, power plants, telecommunication companies and road construction must be financed. AQAP in the Abyan province in Yemen was unable to fulfill these requirements in financial terms. AQAP had to spend 300,000 dollars/month for the administration of Abyan province and its defense in the spring of 2012.²⁹

3. Al Qaeda is extremely bad at organizing medical care for its own fighters and for the civilian population in the area of operations. Severely wounded Al Qaeda fighters are shot dead by their own comrades. Al Qaeda relies on medical care provided by the hospitals and physicians that are available in the area of operations (Al-Shabab, for instance, the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya

²⁷ See **Al Jazeera TV**, 12 October 2013; **Zu viel Gewalt**. – Der Spiegel, 39/2013, S. 93.

²⁸ For an overview of the reforms initiated by Ayman as-Zawahiri since 2011, see **Krech, Hans** 2014c. Die direkte Einflussnahme der strategischen Führungsebene von Al Qaida auf interne Konflikte in den Regionalorganisationen. – ÖMZ = Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift ÖMZ, 4/2014, S. 438–442.

²⁹ See **Swift, Christopher** 2012. Arc of Convergence: AQAP, Ansar al-Shari'a and the Struggle for Yemen. – CTC Sentinel, 6/2012, p. 3f.

is operated by the UN). IS however, tried in the summer of 2014 to build up a medical system of its own called the “Houses of the Wounded” where medical care for the civilian population, and for combatants was provided by physicians from Saudi Arabia.³⁰

4. The Al Qaeda regional organizations have always switched to guerrilla warfare when their state foundations have been threatened by massive military attacks; this has thereby prevented their destruction. Combat then continues for years, allowing the Al Qaeda emirates in Mali and in Yemen to re-establish themselves.

Conclusion: An Islamic emirate led by Al Qaeda has to pass the principal litmus test in the domain of civil administration. Ultimately, this is the decisive front in the struggle for the population’s support. This is where AQIM in Mali and Al-Shabab in Somalia failed (they did, on the other hand, gain years of administrative experience and were able to develop a civilian administration structure of their own). Massacres among the civilian population (Boko Haram), the severe enforcement and application of the Sharia (Al-Shabab, AQIM), the sexual abuse of girls (Al-Shabab, Boko Haram), the prohibition of the activities of UN relief organizations (Al-Shabab) also contributed to the destabilization of the Islamic emirates.

5. The Outlook for the IS Caliphate in the Context of US Field Manual FM 3-24 “Counterinsurgency”

The estimated timeframe for counterinsurgency operations amounts to an average of five to ten years. It is not possible to resolve the problem by military means alone. The insurgency theater must be stabilized through a combination of economic, social and political measures. This way the guerrillas can be separated from the people.

90 percent of the military effort involves training and equipping the armed forces and security forces in the theater. This also requires a timeframe of several years.

³⁰ See **Al-Juhani... carries out a suicide attack – on KSA suicide bombers.** – Al-Hayat, 29 August 2014.

The Pentagon estimated that, as of October 2014, for example, the Iraqi military would presumably need one year to liberate Mosul.³¹ The establishment of a National Guard in Iraq with Sunni Arab tribal warriors will take time, as will the training of moderate rebels from Syria in Saudi Arabia for combat against IS.

The US Field Manual FM 3-24 “Counterinsurgency” has proven its effectiveness. It is astonishing that there have been – and still are – discussions among politicians about a strategy in the struggle against IS. Both the measures and the strategy that can be used are to be found in FM 3-24. Air strikes and the deployment of NATO ground forces cannot solve the IS problem; they can only contain it on a short-term basis.³²

6. Conclusion

The Caliphate relies on a strategic alliance that has existed since at least 2006 between IS (known at that time as ISI) and the Nakshbandi, the militia of the prohibited Baath. The political leader of the Nakshbandi is Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, Saddam Hussein’s former deputy. He is the present leader of the Iraqi Baath. The military leader of the Nakshbandi is Mohammad Junis al-Ahmad. The Nakshbandi have brought Baath followers, former officers and soldiers of Saddam’s army and Saddam’s secret services into the alliance as well as the Al-Bu Nasir, which was Saddam Hussein’s tribe. IS brings its powerful brigades from Iraq and Syria as well as the poorly trained jihadists who have joined it from all over the world.

The two groups are united by the common goal of establishing an Arab-Sunni state in the three Arab-Sunni provinces of Iraq as laid down in the Balad plan of 2008. Baghdad could also be integrated into such a state. As long as the strategic alliance between IS and the Nakshbandi continues to exist, the Caliphate will be able to prevail for quite some time.

Therefore, from the perspective of IS, Syria is only a sideshow, albeit one of considerable importance for the Caliphate’s logistics and funding.

The proclamation of the Caliphate is part of the power struggle that has been going on since 2004/2005 between IS (Al Qaeda in Iraq) and Al-Qaeda’s

³¹ See **Washington worried about incapacity of Iraqi army to benefit from raids.** – Al-Rai al-Aam (Kuwait), 2 October 2014.

³² See **The U.S. Army & Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual** 2007. U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24/ Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5, Chicago/ London.

Strategic Level of Command over who has the power of command and who defines the areas of operations. Originally IS had only planned to proclaim an emirate. Encouraged by the change of sides of nine emirs from Al Qaeda in Khorasan to IS on 9 April 2014, however, IS tried to seize command of the global terror organization Al Qaeda and thereby topple Ayman as-Zawahiri by proclaiming the Caliphate on 29 June 2014. So far IS has miserably failed in these aims; it has remained a maverick within the global jihadist movement. No important Islamist terror group has joined IS so far.

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