

Islamic State's rejection of Al-Qaeda as a Salafi Jihadi group

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In Dabiq 9 the online publication of IS in an article titled: “In the words of the enemy” the author is stating IS's case against Al Qaeda as a Salafi Jihadi group but the evidence against Al Qaeda is buttressed by analysis of a discourse that appeared in the US media in 2014 and thereafter. IS's case against Al Qaeda consists of Al Qaeda's strategy on the ground in Syria and its implications for IS in Syria and the strategy of the discourse articulated in the US media that involves IS and Al Qaeda and a new US strategy to deal with IS in Syria. IS presents the conclusion that Al Qaeda is now a tool of US foreign policy in Syria and Yemen and in every theater of operation of IS the US will seek out allies from the ranks of Jihadi groups to stymie the advance of IS especially in Afghanistan and Libya.

The article in Dabiq 9 states: “One of the most despicable positions a jihad claimant can find himself in is that the crusaders and the Arab tawaghit begin to consider him a possible alternative to the Kilafah or a partial 'solution' to preventing its expansion.” These potential recruits for war against IS are only “jihad claimants” not Salafi Jihadi and these “jihad claimants” have had the fatwa of Takfir pronounced on them therefore they can be eliminated. For IS these “jihad claimants” are now viewed as a plausible deterrent to the hegemony of IS and the Kilafah. The article continues: “When one hears that the crusaders now consider this or that party of jihad claimants as a potential ally serving crusader interests' against the Islamic State, then wash your hands of that group and flee from them with your religion as you would flee from a leper!” This then is the key to the extensive analysis of the discourse unleashed in the US media in 2014 as this discourse is being used by IS as the indicator of the intention to divide the Salafi Jihadi community against IS. The article states: “The problem is not that the crusaders consider these jihad claimants to have a common enemy-one whom the Muslims pronounce Takfir upon...But rather, they consider their common enemy to be the Islamic State.” The jihad claimants have forsaken the tenets of Islam and have allied themselves with the enemies of Islam against IS which demands war between IS and these jihad claimants.

The discourse unleashed in the US that has the attention of IS merits analysis to expose the fundamental building blocks of this discourse as it seeks to become hegemonic. In the Dabiq article IS sums up the US discourse as follows: “Below you will find the words of crusader think-tanks, analysts, advisors, and journalists, suggesting to their American crusader leadership the necessity of preserving jihad-claimant heads and parties and the building of relationships with them because in doing so they would serve the crusade against the Islamic State.” For IS the discourse is calling for the preservation of the present leadership of jihadi organisations deemed threats to the US therefore entailing the halting of the programs to assassinate these jihadi leaders. The US must then build relationships with these jihadi groups towards waging a common war on the IS.

The Dabiq article quotes from an article published in Foreign Affairs of February 13, 2014 by Barak Mendelsohn which states: “The United States should also relax its conditions for cooperation with the Islamic Front and even consider a closer contact with JN as they both work to bring down Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.” The author is proposing a US embrace of the al Qaeda affiliate in Syria Jabhat an Nusrah (JN) and he reveals the reason for this embrace as follows: “Those ties would surely be valuable when it comes to reconstruct the country.” The author visualises a post civil war role for JN in the new Syria where Assad and IS are absent but this new Syria in which JN plays a role in support of the US agenda has to be a divided and partitioned Syria. The article in Dabiq 9 quotes from an article titled: “United against Islamic State” published on August 29, 2014 in the Wall Street Journal. The article states: “Fear over the spread of Islamic State means parties often at odds now share a common enemy...The greatest odd bedfellow of all: Islamic State threatens al-Qaeda as well as the West, meaning that, in fact al-Qaeda and the US now have a shared enemy.” The strategy of the US must now be driven by the axiom: an enemy of my enemy is my friend. The drone attacks on JN in Syria and other forms of military engagement must be used as leverage to establish a coalition of interests with JN on US terms of endearment. The Dabiq article quotes from an article published in the

Small Wars Journal on March 22, 2015 which states on al-Qaeda in Syria as follows: “our sworn enemy in Iraq and Afghanistan has somehow managed to be on our side in Syria.”

The Dabiq article quotes from an article by the Carnegie Endowment on March 24, 2015 as follows: “The West currently sees the Nusra front as a threat. But Nusra's pragmatism and ongoing evolution mean that it could become an ally in the fight against the Islamic State.” “Instead of putting Nusra and the Islamic State in the same basket, the West should look beyond the Nusra Front's ideological affiliation and encourage its pragmatism as it seeks an end to the Syrian conflict.” The West has then to look past the threat posed by Nusra's Salafi Jihadi worldview and embrace it simply because of its pragmatism as the West can use a pragmatic Nusra in the move to end the Syrian civil war and the construction of the post civil war Syria. The Carnegie Endowment states: “The Nusra Front's ability to deliver results is largely driven by its pragmatism. Nusra is threatened by IS in Syria, it is organically different from IS and most importantly Nusra delivers as a result of its pragmatism which proves its difference from IS and the Syrian Free Army is a non-entity in the terrain of war it is present in. The logical strategic move then is for the US to do the dance with Nusra. But where is the evidence that Nusra is willing after dancing with the US to forgo the attempt to replicate its Salafi Jihadi model in post civil war Syria? Is Nusra's pragmatism part of a strategy to limit its strategic limitations in Syria? With the end of the civil war will the US then launch its war to eliminate Nusra in Syria?”

The Middle East Eye of April 30, 2015 states: “Should IS be significantly dented by the Western backed campaign...Nusra looks best placed to fill the vacuum in the north, central and eastern parts of Syria.” “In the long term, Juma al-Qassem believes the Syrian's people's rejection of IS will push the opposition to embrace Nusra...And with any possible umbrella deal likely to include Islamist representatives, Nusra, better armed, funded and organised, would be best positioned to fill that role.” Unlike IS the Syrian people meaning Syrian Sunni Muslims are attracted to Nusra and this attraction is of use to the US in the post civil war Syria in the areas of north, central and east Syria. This reality on the ground merits the funding and arming of Nusra.

An article titled: “Accepting Al Qaeda- the enemy of the United States' enemy” published on March 9, 2015 in Foreign Affairs by Barak Mendelsohn states: “Destabilizing al Qaeda at this time may in fact work against US efforts to defeat ISIS.” “Washington's failure to balance these diverging interests became apparent when it made the mistake of coupling the bombing of ISIS targets in Syria with attacks on al Qaeda's Khorasan group.” The main tenet of the discourse is the grave importance of Nusra and al Qaeda to the US agenda for Syria which includes the expulsion of Assad and the containment of Iran's influence in the post civil war Syria. Washington's grave mistake is to attack both IS and al Qaeda in Syria simultaneously. The article continues: “Inadvertently, the administration's cautious approach to military intervention makes al Qaeda ...an important player in curtailing ISIS' growth.” The decision of the US not to intervene militarily on the ground in Syria creates the need for a proxy US fighting force on the ground that is opposed to IS and is effective. In the terrain of Syria the only such force is Nusra. A discourse that is simplistic and driven by racist arrogance as an inferior race, Arab, must bend to the will and agenda of the master race in control of the US. A discourse that has forgotten the lessons of the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan by the mujahidun and their use of the West to gain the strategic ascendancy necessary to replicate the Salafi Jihadi model of engagement with the West and again replicated in Bosnia with the complicity of the West. In both instances mujahidun supposedly proxies of the US used a special relationship to prosecute their Salafi Jihadi agendas with its impact on the West to this day. The discursive agents are yet to learn from these mistakes especially the reality that Muslims lie to the kafir. The article states: “It is certainly ironic that at this point, when the United States is the closest it has ever been to destroying al Qaeda, its interests would be better served by keeping the terrorist organization afloat and Zawahiri alive.” To assassinate Zawahiri can have disastrous impact on the US war on IS making Zawahiri a necessary evil and by

extension al Qaeda to a successful engagement with IS in Syria. Would Zawahiri and al Qaeda be beholding to the US as they were before in Afghanistan and Bosnia?

IS in the article in Dabiq 9 states their position on the discourse of dancing with al Qaeda in Syria as follows: “Whether the crusaders have followed the 'advice' is irrelevant. The fact it has been suggested so much by various crusader and apostate analysts should become a source of embarrassment for any jihad claimant.” For IS the issue is not whether those who wield power in the US state have accepted and act upon this discourse but the fact that the enemies of Islam have propagated this discourse any jihad claimant who dances with the US and its proxies are traitors and apostates. IS continues to state its position as follows: “This crusader interest is materialized best by the fact that the crusader backed secularists of the Free Syrian Army could not exist without the Jawlani front...” “This fact was demonstrated in the recent cooperation between the Jawlani front and the Free Syrian Army in Dara against the mujahidin there...” The reality on the ground in Dara is the close cooperation of the US proxy that failed in its task and the al Qaeda affiliate the Jawlani front. IS continues: “What tops this off is the call made by various crusaders ('Protected Zones for Syria', John Mc Cain, Lindsay Graham) and apostates (the Syrian National Coalition) for the establishment of 'protected zones' in Idlib, Dara, and Halab, areas currently inhabited by the Syrian al-Qaidah and its Gulf backed allies. These zones are to be protected by crusader and apostate jets.” The call for the creation al Qaeda dominated protected zones against IS by US Republican Senators is further evidence of the apostasy of al Qaeda in Syria. IS states further: “The Jawlani front and its likes will sooner or later find themselves between one of two choices. Either they merge into a single entity with the different taghut backed factions in a manner similar to 'the Libyan Dawn' or they await betrayal at the hands of their allies just as the Jawlani front had before betrayed the muhajirin and ansar of the Islamic State.” For IS the Jawlani/Nusra front is faced with one of two choices: immersion into groupings losing any semblance of their original Salafi Jihadi identity or betrayal eventually at the hands of the US and its apostate allies. Since publication of Dabiq 9 a third reality is the assault of the Russian military on Nusra, IS and other groups opposed to Assad which finished off the primary US proxy the Free Syrian Army on the ground in Syria. The ongoing Russian military intervention has ended the battlefield stalemate placing the momentum in the hands of Assad and his Shia allies. In this new reality a war between IS and al Qaeda in Syria benefits Assad and his Shia allies but IS can prosecute a war on al Qaeda outside of Syria and the prime area of engagement will be Libya and the Islamic Maghreb as the target will be AQIM and the battle will reach as far as Mali and the coast of West Africa. This battle in keeping with the strategic vision of IS involves making war on an enemy and seizing space on the trafficking pipeline from West Africa to North Africa thence to Europe simultaneously and in this enterprise IS has its affiliate on location Boko Haram as well as other affiliates in the Sahara.

In Dabiq 10 in the article titled: “In the words of the enemy” IS continues the discourse articulated in Dabiq 9 as follows: “So when the jets of the wicked kuffar come to strike and defend the wicked Sahwah Coalition-including the Jawlani front-and help the Sahwah Coalition advance against the Islamic State under the cover of the Crusader Coalition...” “And so, after the army of the Khilafah overtook Sawran Izaz and expelled the humiliated Sahwah Coalition from it, the Syrian National Coalition and the heads of the factions and councils in Turkey called for the help of America on behalf of the Sahwah Coalition...and the two Republicans John McCain and Lindsey Graham exerted pressure on the holder of the crusader banner, Obama. So Obama replied to their requests and the Islamic State was struck in Sawran Izaz, and adjacent areas on '7 June 2015' and '14 June 2015', as well as on other days and nights, all the strikes serving the interests of the Sahwah Coalition.” In June 2015 a new line was drawn in the sand as the US carries out air strikes in the north of Aleppo, Syria on the IS in favour of al Qaeda and its affiliate in Syria. For IS the discourse unleashed in the US was now bearing fruit in favour of al Qaeda and to its detriment. IS states on the US embrace of the Jawlani front as follows:

“the crusaders target the Khilafah in the interest of the Sahwah Coalition despite the presence of the Jawlani front in this coalition. This is from the mutual 'pragmatism' between the American administration and the Sahwah Coalition containing the Jawlani front. It is the politics of the carrot and the stick. This might be the beginning of the implementation of proposals made by crusader think-tanks, some of which were quoted in the last issue of Dabiq.” The US air strikes against IS in favour of al Qaeda and its affiliate in Syria is proof for IS of the complicity of al Qaeda with the enemies of Islam and of the influence of the discourse of pragmatic engagement on the levers of power in the US.

IS in the article insists that al Qaeda's complicity with the enemies of Islam commenced with Zawahiri's accession to leadership of al Qaeda. The article states: “Now just as the Taliban do not pose a threat towards the safety and security of the crusader homeland, al-Qaidah no longer poses a threat. This becomes the case after Dhawahiri adopted new policies opposing the policies of mujahid Shaykh Usamah Ibn Ladin. So Dhawahiri made the crusader land secure, the tawaghut secure, the post-'Arab Spring' tawaghut secure, the Ikhwani tawaghut secure, the armies of apostasy secure, and the rafidi mobs and savages secure (As in the Jawlani interview with Al Jazeera and as in 'General Guidelines for Jihadi Action') by Dhawahiri.” Al Qaeda under the leadership of Zawahiri has relinquished its task of attacking the West and is now willing to form alliances with the West and the Arab states to wage war on the last true holder of the Salafi Jihadi franchise in the world: IS. For IS al Qaeda has placed itself in the realm of apostasy and the final straw is stated as follows: “Rather the matter surpassed even this to the point that the 'clear cut maslahah (interest)' was in abandoning the implementation of the Shariah and its laws!” Al Qaeda has then breached the limits to Salafi Jihadi actions by refusing to implement the hegemony of Shariah law over spaces and humans under their control. For IS al Qaeda is now shirk a fallen premier franchise holder for Salafi Jihadi practitioners the world over. IS states: “And when will the 'rational minds' of al-Qaidah repair the condition of the organization before al-Qaidah-with all its branches-become a sahwah led by its spite, envy, partisanship, and by the sorcery of the media, in the war against the revived Khilafah?” A salafi divorced from jihad defanged and sting less a poor reflection of its former glory that is the fate of al Qaeda on the path it has chosen under the leadership of Zawahiri. But much worse than that is an al Qaeda outside the pale of Islam as its actions now mark it shirk to Muslims.

IS in both articles of Dabiq has revealed its strategic rationale for attacking the West: the West has attacked IS, the need to punish Muslims of the West who refuse to undertake hijrah to the Khilafah and Muslims leaving the Khilafah to travel to the West and to establish its premier position within the Salafi Jihadi movement today. Another strategic vision which was once the primary strategic vision is the assault on the political leaders and leaders of religious organisations within Sunni Islam opposed to IS in the Middle East. The signs are now apparent that in the face of the Western and Russian assault on IS in Syria and the Western assault in Iraq the primary strategic vision will now once again become paramount. IS intends to then once again embrace and act upon the apocalyptic vision revealed in Dabiq 1 and this vision calls for the vanguard by its actions and sacrifice precipitating the apocalyptic end times. Weapons of mass destruction anyone? Remember Shoko Asahara and Aum Shinrikyo and the quest for weapons of mass destruction to be unleashed to precipitate the end times?