The Islamic State and Libya

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Articles (1,2,3) published on the operation of the Islamic State (IS) in Libya all seek to refute the discourse of IS on Libya and present an alternate reality of Libya. This analysis will deal with the discourse of IS on Libya, its strategic content and the range of reasons that has ensured IS's entry into Libya.

In Dabiq 8 March-April 2015 an article titled: "The Libyan Arena" presented the first instalment of the discourse of IS on Libya. The article states: "This set the stage for the democratic 'Islamists' on the manhaj of the bankrupt 'Muslim' Brotherhood to take control of the government by fielding candidates to run in the shirki democratic elections. With the GNC under their control, the democratic 'Islamists' and their secularist allies put the rule of Allah to a vote, seeking to cut up and implement bits and pieces of 'Shariah' upon the filthy, conflicting, and hostile foundations of democracy…" The Muslims of the General National Congress (GNC) are apostates/murtadd as they are allied with secularists, have accepted and practice democracy and have refused to implement the rule of Shariah. The article continues: "the crusaders couldn't accept the distorted and diluted version of 'Islam' being practiced by the murtadd democratic 'Islamists.' So the crusaders set loose their more devoted allies…" "On one side, the secularist murtaddin rallied behind the crusaders' newest asset, Khalifa Haftar, who launched 'Operation Dignity' to take back control of the country and place it in the hands of the hardcore secularists," The crusaders and their instruments in Libya, the secularists, have moved to seize Libya effectively excising it from Islam. The discourse then deals with those who joined in the battle against Haftar for the GNC who claim they are Jihadis as follows: "Some of the factions belonging to the 'Libyan Dawn' are former jihadi claimants" "These former jihadi claimants apostatized and joined the religion of democracy by entering into its system and fighting for its upholding." The situation in Libya is then grave for the survival of Islam as the crusaders and their instruments are engaged in the task of militarily seizing Libya and establishing the hegemony of kufr over it, the murtadd/apostate Muslims are intent on establishing the hegemony of apostasy over Islam and groups which insist that they are jihad focused and driven have compromised Islam by joining with the apostates to do battle against the crusaders and

secularists. This grave situation then demanded the intervention of Almighty Allah (swt) and IS the instrument of Allah (swt).

The discourse has now established the nature of the grave situation in the Muslim land of Libya and then states the solution: "As the situation escalated and factions of riddah continued fighting one another, Allah facilitated the emergence of the Islamic State on the Libyan scene, with a number of mujahid groups across the three Libyan wilayat of Barqah, Fazzan, and Tarabulus declaring their bayah to Amirul-Muminin." Jihadis of Libya who refused to join the apostate factions engaged in battle for the control of Libya pledged their allegiance to IS thereby creating the IS in Libya and this is the will of Allah (swt). IS in then present in Libya to carry out the Muslim duty (Jihad) of protecting the Muslim lands from the crusaders and their minions and from the apostates of Islam. The article states: "Having unified their strength and rallied behind the banner of the Khilafah, the mujahidin of Libya intensified their campaign against both factions of riddah, after these factions had betrayed the religion and its people." The pledge of allegiance to the Khilafah brought unity, strength and purpose to its members in Libya as they were now members of the Khilafah waging war on apostasy to purge Libya of kufr returning it to the moorings of Islam a duty that is obligatory on all Muslims of the world. The article continues: "The mujahidin has no need to distinguish between those who betrayed Islam by adopting the kufr of secularism, and those who betrayed Islam by adopting the kufr of democracy, for both factions had entered the camp of kufr." IS has then pronounced the fatwa of Takfir on the Muslims of both factions for their apostasy and as such they are no longer Muslims and the Islamic prohibition on Muslims killing Muslims is suspended. It is now the duty of the soldiers of IS to slaughter members of both factions except those who repent of their apostate ways.

The IS discourse is insisting that the creation of IS in Libya is the creation of a new front to liberate Libya from apostasy and the hegemony of kufr and as such it will be successful and Muslims accepting the order of the Khilafah will prosper. The article states: "The hukm of Allah is established, the needs of the Muslims are cared for, and the armies of the Khilafah continue marching forward to liberate new regions." IS is then in Libya to liberate Muslims lands under threat from kufr emanating from Muslim apostates and the crusader quest to conquer Muslim

lands and in this process the order of Allah (swt) will be hegemonic and Muslims cared for.

The Islamic State cannot justify its entry into Libya with the timeline of the events and the geography of the apocalypse as it did in the case of Syria/Sham. The discourse formulated then calls for the need to obey the compulsory call for Jihad in a Muslim land against invading crusaders and Muslim apostates. IS discourse in the languages of the West especially English and French is formulated to resonate with Muslims of the West not the unbelievers of the West. Unbelievers of the West who choose to engage with these discourses of IS are working from a position of strategic disadvantage. But the question remains as to the strategic imperatives of IS in Libya.

The article states as follows at its end: "Libya has become an ideal land for hijrah for those who find difficulty making their way to Sham, particularly those of our brothers and sisters in Africa." IS by this statement has now indicated one strategic imperative for IS in Libya which is the creation of an operational base in Libya that connects its affiliates in West Africa, East Africa and North Africa to a single node. From this single node states that border Libya will become theatres of IS operations and states that are involved with military engagements with affiliates as Boko Haraam can be faced with an intensification of engagements driven by an international IS military force. But there are two economic opportunities that are possible as a result of the creation of the Libyan node which are: exploitation of the oil and gas resources of Libya by IS and use of the trans-Sahara trafficking pipeline from West Africa to Libya thence to Europe which moves illicit drugs, humans and other products to Europe. The stretch of coastline IS presently controls in Libya is one piece of the trafficking puzzle IS needs to collect to solve for sustainable entry into this pipeline. Libya is at present a major staging point for this pipeline and demand exists for utilization and the capacity of this pipeline from transnational trafficking organisations (TTOs). It is not simply coincidence that IS and Al-Qaeda are active in West African states that act as staging grounds for inputs into the pipeline and IS has publicly identified AQIM as an enemy to be dealt with. The decimation of AQIM is necessary for IS's hegemony over the pipeline as is an alliance with the ethnic groups of southern Libya who control access to Libya flow of the pipeline across the Sahara. The

vitally necessary input is a working agreement with the TTOs that utilize the pipeline.

In Dabiq 11 August/September 2015 an article was published titled: "An interview with Abdul-Mughirah Al-Qahtani the delegated leader of the Libyan Wilayat." In this article Al-Qahtani states that the territory under the control of IS was as follows: "The Islamic State is manifest with some control over neighborhoods in Darnah and Binghazi. In addition to its complete authority over the seacoast region stretching from Buqarin to Binjawad, which includes a number of cities and regions, most important of which is Sirte, al-Amirah, Harawah, Umm Qindil, and an-Nawfaliyyah." The control of this portion of the Libyan Mediterranean coastline and the city of Sirte at the time of writing enables IS in Libya to import foreign fighters via the Mediterranean Sea in addition to land routes and to be part of the trafficking pipeline to Europe specifically Italy. This stretch of Libyan coastline is the prized possession of IS in Libya at the moment and is in fact the beachhead of IS in Libya until the pipeline to the south across the Sahara to West Africa is up and running.

Al-Qahtani expresses the importance of IS in Libya to the Khilafah as follows: "Libya has a great importance for the Muslim Ummah because it is in Africa and south of Europe. It also contains a well of resources that cannot dry. All Muslims have a right to these resources. It is also a gate to the African desert stretching to a number of African countries. It is important to note also that the Libyan resources are also a concern for the kafir West due to their reliance upon Libya for a number of years especially with regards to oil and gas. The control of the Islamic State over this region will lead to economic breakdowns especially for Italy and the rest of the European states." Al-Qahtani presents the strategic imperatives driving IS's move to establish its hegemony over Libya. Libya lies to the south of Europe and it's in Africa not the Middle East thereby enabling the mobilization of the untapped resources of IS in Africa like Boko Haraam within striking distance of Europe. Libya is rich in natural and other resources especially its energy resources which IS must and has a right to exploit and if IS fails to exercise hegemony over these resources the crusaders will to the detriment of IS and its agenda as Libya's resources in the hands of the crusaders will be used as a weapon against IS. Libya is the gate to the Sahara and the Sahel which links West Africa to Libya making Libya the gate to the trans-Sahara trafficking pipeline which

traverses the overland route that links West Africa to Libya and Boko Haraam to IS in Libya. To control Libya and its resources IS delivers an economic blow with consequent impact on the social order of members of the EU especially Italy and it will more importantly place the Egyptian social order under grave pressure as the Egyptian oligarchy continues to rely on repression operationalized through the military to maintain its hold on the power it wields over the social order. This deepening repression will present extremism as a viable solution to the salient issue of the centralization of power especially in light of the oligarchy's obsessive fixation with destroying the only political organization with the ability to command mass support for a non-extremist Islamic agenda i.e. the Muslim Brotherhood. Therein lies the reason for the IS strategy to wage war on the Muslim Brotherhood as IS is fed by and emboldened by the embrace of extremism being assured by the Egyptian oligarchy and the prized plum IS must pick is Egypt for as Egypt falls so does the rest of the Middle East.

Al-Qahtani reveals the origin of foreign fighters undertaking hijrah to IS in Libya when he states: "The muhajirin come from all places to the Islamic State especially from Africa, the Islamic Maghrib, Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula and occasionally from Western nations." The IS in Libya is then attracting fighters from Africa and Egypt which is decisive to accomplishing the strategic agenda in addition Muslims undertaking hijrah from the West are now heading to Libya as an alternate destination to Syria. Source countries in the West must now add Libya to the list of destination countries and a source of returning fighters to the West. The fact that IS controls a stretch of coastline in Libya enables the smuggling of Muslims into IS much easier than in Syria as there is now no need to congregate to use the bottleneck that is Turkey as travelers can be dispersed through a range of jump off points including EU members with Mediterranean coastlines. This jump is especially easy for EU citizens seeking to enter IS in Libya.

The trans-Sahara trafficking pipeline moves illicit drugs especially cocaine and humans to Europe among other illicit products. Cocaine is moved into a number of states with Mediterranean coastlines via the sea voyage to Europe from North Africa. Cocaine to Italy is moved predominantly from Libya and the smuggling of migrants (4) to Italy is strategically necessary to cocaine smuggling to Italy that is why the cocaine smuggling organisations (5) dominate human smuggling into Italy. As Italy is faced with a tsunami of humans moving from Libya

towards Italy Italian naval resources are outstripped and fully occupied with dealing with the human wave which affords the cocaine smuggling organisations space to move their product into the landing points on Italy's southern coastline. This illicit trade will then ensure the expansion of human smuggling out of Libya headed to Italy as long as cocaine trafficking from Libya to Italy is viable.

The strategy of the Islamic State in Libya creates an operational context where access to the trans-Sahara pipeline and hegemony over the pipeline in its Libyan expression will become an issue. To enjoy access IS has to negotiate and settle on working agreements with groups that dominate the pipeline from West Africa to Libya and to create similar agreements with the Libyan ethnic groups that dominate access to southern Libya for the pipeline. In the context of the flow of the pipeline international borders mean very little to daily operations as ethnic and other alliances do that transcend these borders. IS is now venturing into territory where its leadership will be tested to its core and failure will result in the outbreak of clan, ethnic and economic interest groups hostilities including the transnational trafficking organisations who use the pipeline against IS in the areas through which the pipeline flows. This conflict will in fact destroy IS's strategy for its presence in Libya and result in a desperate holding action in the territory it now holds.

NOTES

1. https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/how-realistic-is-libya-as-an-islamic-state-fallback
2. http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=45269&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=829&no_cache=1#.VzmXu5ErLIU
3. http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/libya-descends-into-chaos-as-islamic-state-expands-a-1081874.html
4. http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/refugee-crisis-focus-shifts-to-north-africa-a-1089536.html
5. Daurius Figueira: "Mexican cartels in Africa" http://www.daurius.com/#!illicit-trades/qvibk