



Terrorism Monitor

In-Depth Analysis of the War on Terror

VOLUME XII, ISSUE 16 ♦ AUGUST 8, 2014

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Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the ‘Caliph’ of the Islamic State, in a public address in Mosul

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THE HEZBOLLAH WILD CARD IN THE CONFLICT IN GAZA

Andrew McGregor

The ongoing Israeli military operations in Gaza have benefitted from the knowledge that Israel’s northern border with Lebanon is not being threatened by the Shi’a Hezbollah movement of Lebanon, the senior partner in the anti-Israel “Resistance” movement. With Hezbollah occupied with its own military operations in Syria and Lebanon’s Beka’a Valley (and possibly now in Iraq), the frontier has remained largely quiet throughout Israel’s “Operation Protective Edge” in Gaza, with the Lebanese Army and UN peacekeepers working to prevent rockets from being fired into Israel from southern Lebanon. In late July, Hamas’ political bureau deputy chief, Musa Abu Marzuk, appealed to Hezbollah to intervene in the Gaza conflict: “We hope the Lebanese front will open and together we will fight against this formation [Israel]... There’s no arguing that Lebanese resistance could mean a lot” (RIA Novosti, July 30).

Hezbollah was once able to present itself as the defender of Lebanon and the champion of the anti-Israeli Resistance, but circumstances prevent Hezbollah leader Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah and the rest of the Hezbollah leadership from resuming these roles. Lebanon is now experiencing severe economic problems while hosting over a million refugees from the Syrian conflict. Hezbollah fighters are deeply engaged in the Syrian conflict and have assumed an important role in preventing Sunni jihadists from Syria from operating in the hills surrounding the Beka’a Valley in northeastern Lebanon (al-Arabiya, July 26; for Hezbollah attempts to reposition itself as an anti-terrorism force, see Terrorism Monitor, April 18). Other factors working against Hezbollah support for Hamas include local suspicion and resentment arising from Hezbollah’s Syrian intervention and the current strained relations between the two groups. There are also perceptions within Lebanon that Hezbollah has a controlling influence over the Lebanese military and security forces. These forces are currently overstretched and awaiting the supply of \$1

billion worth of new French weapons in a deal financed by the Saudis (*Daily Star* [Beirut], August 5).

Nasrallah's first public remarks on the current Gaza conflict were not made until July 25, when the Hezbollah leader warned Israel against going to the level of "suicide and collapse" by continuing its campaign in Gaza, while assuring "our brothers in Gaza" that "we will do everything we can to support you" (AP, July 25). Nasrallah elaborated on his remarks in an interview a few days later:

We in Hezbollah will be unstinting in all forms of support, assistance and aid that we are able to provide. We feel we are true partners with this resistance, a partnership of jihad, brotherhood, hope, pain, sacrifice and fate because their victory is our victory and their defeat is our defeat... As far as the situation on the battlefield goes, we are winning. Yes, the correlation of forces is beyond comparison, but we have men who are capable of stopping and vanquishing the aggressor (RIA Novosti, July 30).

Nasrallah had earlier made calls to both Hamas chief Khalid Mesh'al and Palestinian Islamic Jihad leader Ramadan Abdullah Shalah to express his support for their struggle against Israel (*Daily Star* [Beirut], July 22). Despite an increasing political distance between the Sunni Hamas movement and the Shi'a Hezbollah movement due to growing sectarian tensions throughout the Middle East (particularly in Syria) and Hamas' ties to the now-deposed Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, there are claims that the military arms of the two movements continue to cooperate (Al-Monitor, July 24).

The northeastern Lebanese border town of Arsal has been the scene of bitter fighting in recent days as Lebanese troops of the mechanized 5th and 6th Brigades and the light 8th Brigade move into the region to combat an estimated 4,000 Sunni gunmen of the Nusra Front, most of whom arrived from Syria (al-Manar [Beirut], August 4). Also operating in the Qalamoun region are Islamic State forces under the command of local amir Abu Hassan al-Filastini (*al-Akhbar* [Beirut], August 4). Hezbollah is working alongside Lebanese Army troops around Arsal while also working with the Syrian Army to destroy Islamist forces (particularly the Nusra Front) operating in Syria's Qalamoun region. Hezbollah is reported to be aided in the region by a group of advisors from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps who arrived there in mid-July (*Daily Star* [Beirut], July 22).

The anti-jihadist operations are intended in part to preempt a planned Islamist offensive (Laylat al-Qadr – "Night of Power") against Lebanese border villages intended to

abduct hundreds of Lebanese citizens to give the jihadists a bargaining chip in obtaining the release of dozens of their comrades from Lebanon's Roumieh Prison. Other residents of the region were to be slaughtered in order to provoke a sectarian conflict within Lebanon (*Daily Star* [Beirut], July 22; July 26; July 27). The planned operation came after an earlier scheme to enable a jailbreak by blasting the Roumieh Prison gates open with a car bomb was foiled by Lebanese intelligence (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, July 5). Lebanon's Sunni Prime Minister, Tammam Salam, has ruled out any kind of political deal with the Sunni gunmen on the frontier (Reuters, August 4).

Fighting in the area began following the arrest of Imad Juma'a (a.k.a. Abu Ahmad Juma'a), leader of the Sunni militant Fajr al-Islam Brigade (allied to the Islamist Nusra Front). Juma'a recently declared his allegiance to the Iraqi-Syrian Islamic State and its leader, the self-declared "Caliph," Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (*al-Akhbar* [Beirut], August 4).

Hezbollah has cut the jihadists' supply lines in the region between Qalamoun and Arsal while the Syrian Air Force conducts airstrikes against concentrations of gunmen in the mountains in anticipation of a major joint Hezbollah-Syrian Army-Lebanese Army operation to flush out the gunmen and eliminate their presence in the border region. While likely to be militarily effective, the prospect of Hezbollah operating closely with the officially secular Lebanese Army has alarmed many Sunni leaders within Lebanon. In addition, Arsal is predominantly Sunni and generally in sympathy with the Syrian jihadists, leading to the possibility of a joint operation as described sparking a sectarian confrontation within Lebanon (*Daily Star* [Beirut], July 31).

With most of its best fighting cohorts operating in Syria or northern Lebanon, Hezbollah is reluctant to renew hostilities with Israel at this time. A war on two fronts would not be sustainable and Hezbollah is well aware that the Israeli Defense Forces have been using their repeated ground offensives into Gaza to develop the new methods and tactics necessary to avoid a repetition of their failure to overcome Hezbollah forces in 2006.

MALI'S PEACE TALKS: DOOMED TO FAILURE?

July 17).

Andrew McGregor

Mali's disaffected minority northerners are now at least equal in military power to the state. Outside of a few tribal units drawn from loyalist Tuareg and Arabs, Mali's military (drawn largely from the nation's southern population) finds itself severely outclassed when fighting in the unfamiliar terrain of northern Mali. Every Tuareg rebellion has seen a marked improvement in arms and tactics over the last and it was ironically only al-Qaeda's intervention that prevented the utter defeat of the state military by encouraging foreign intervention. If this pattern continues, Bamako clearly cannot expect to survive another rebellion and continue to retain sovereignty over the north. This creates a certain urgency for the success of upcoming peace negotiations to be held in Algiers beginning August 17, a situation the armed opposition will attempt to use to its advantage.

Improved military training does not appear to provide an answer to this dilemma – indeed, it was American-trained troops that led the military coup in 2012 that overthrew Mali's democratically elected government and then refused to fight in the north. Mali's military remains badly divided and in dire need of reform before it can do more than pretend to be a stabilizing force in the north. Without an effective military presence, a Bamako-appointed civil administration will be reduced to giving suggestions rather than implementing policy. For now, however, the Tuareg and Arabs of the north do not trust the army, while the army does not trust its own tribal Tuareg and Arab militias. Until this situation changes, meaningful disarmament will be impossible and development initiatives unable to proceed regardless of what agreements might be made in Algiers.

The Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad (MNLA – National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad) claim to represent northern Mali's Arab, Songhai and Peul/Fulani communities is open to challenge. While individuals from these groups may belong to the MNLA, most members of these groups view Tuareg intentions with suspicion. Even though the Mouvement Arabe de l'Azawad (MAA – Arab Movement of Azawad) sits side-by-side with the MNLA at the Algiers talks, recent clashes between the two groups in northern Mali suggest this unified front may not last long (Reuters, July 14; July 24). The Tuareg themselves are badly divided by class, clan and tribe, something reflected even within the senior ranks of the MNLA, with some leaders prepared to accept some form of autonomy, while others demand nothing less than complete independence (Inter-Press Service/Global Information Network, July 23; Xinhua,

France has complicated negotiations through its new redeployment of French military forces in Africa under the rubric Operation Barkhane, which establishes a series of French bases in sensitive areas of their former colonies in the Sahel (see Terrorism Monitor Brief, July 24). In Kidal, anger is growing in some quarters against the prolonged and now apparently permanent French military presence, while in the south, France is popularly perceived as a destabilizing element suspected of secretly backing Tuareg independence movements. The question is whether Bamako will now deal sincerely with the armed opposition in negotiations if it senses it now has French muscle behind it in the form of a permanent French counter-insurgency force. President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta came to power on a platform of dealing firmly with the north but must obviously shift from the status quo without alienating his southern supporters.

While the inclusion of the three Islamist groups (Ansar al-Din, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb [AQIM] and the Movement for Unity and Justice in West Africa [MUJWA] in the talks could not be expected, they have increased their activity in northern Mali as talks get underway in order to remind all parties of their continued presence in the region. Again, this inhibits the creation and implementation of development projects, particularly if foreign nationals continue to be a target of the Islamists.

Bamako has laid out "red lines" it insists it will not cross with relation to Mali's territorial integrity and republican system of government, but will have difficulty taking a firm stance given its weakened state and the defeat of its forces in Kidal in May (*Echourouk al-Youmi* [Algiers], July 19; All Africa, July 16). While it may be possible to persuade the opposition to settle for a robust form of autonomy, Bamako must be prepared to retain authority for little more than defense issues and foreign affairs. The northern opposition must, in turn, keep in mind that greater local authority will mean little without a budget. Mali is one of the poorest states on earth, and the more autonomy the north gains, the less likely it will be for Bamako to devote limited resources to its success. If development promises continue to be ignored as soon as the ink dries on yet another Malian peace agreement, then we are likely in for another round of phony disarmament campaigns, failed military integration and local discontent leading to rebellion.

Terrorism Now Targeting Civilians in Egypt

Zack Gold

The ouster of Muhammad Mursi from Egypt's presidency a year ago and the violent roundup of his supporters that followed have led to a wave of terrorism across Egypt. Organized groups from the Sinai Peninsula and Egypt's interior exacted revenge against police, military and Interior Ministry officials they viewed as arresting, murdering and silencing their coreligionists. Such revenge attacks could be considered the first stage of post-Mursi terrorism. When Sinai-based militants resumed the regular bombing of the peninsula's pipeline, they referred to such operations as "economic warfare" against the state, forming the second stage of post-Mursi attacks. [1] Following the election of a new president, Abd al-Fatah al-Sisi, the former defense minister who ousted Mursi on July 3, 2013, Egypt has entered its third stage of post-Mursi terrorist attacks: those targeting civilians.

On June 25, a coordinated attack simultaneously targeted four Cairo metro stations during the rush hour commute (*Ahram Online* [Cairo], June 25). The bombs were rudimentary, causing no deaths and only six injuries. However, this was the first attack that did not target security forces, the state or those believed to be collaborating with them. No group claimed credit for the attack, but despite the primitive assembly of the improvised explosive devices (IEDs), the coordinated action suggested some degree of organization.

Indeed, this was not an isolated incident. Three nights later, an IED set off in a building still under construction in Giza killed a girl and her mother (*Aswat Masriya* [Cairo], June 28). Then, on the night of July 3 – the one-year anniversary of the coup that removed Mursi – a bomb ripped through a local train in Alexandria, which had not experienced the same level of anti-state violence as Egypt's capital (*Ahram Online* [Cairo], July 4). Nine were injured.

At the moment, it is unclear who is behind these attacks, or even if all three were carried out by the same organization. Egypt's Ministry of the Interior immediately blamed the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamist group of which Mursi was a leading member and which the state has blamed for all terrorism in the country since his removal (*Daily News Egypt*, July 7; Middle East News Agency [Cairo], April 6).

Interior Ministry spokesman Major General Hany Abd al-Latif called the metro bombings "a failed attempt by

the terrorist organization of the Muslim Brotherhood to endanger and threaten the state of national solidarity and stability the country is witnessing" (*Daily News Egypt*, June 25). As proof of the Brotherhood's involvement, Abd al-Latif said the security services were investigating one of the injured, whose phone contained pictures of the *Raba'a al-Adawiya* salute (*al-Masry al-Youm* [Cairo], June 25). The four-fingered salute (*Raba'a* means "fourth" in colloquial Egyptian Arabic) is used by the Brotherhood and its affiliated anti-coup alliance to represent their rejection of Mursi's ouster and to memorialize the brutality of Egypt's security forces in breaking up the pro-Mursi sit-in at the *Raba'a al-Adawiya* mosque in Nasr City in August 2013 (*Daily News Egypt*, August 16, 2013).

The problem with officially blaming all terrorism on the Brotherhood without evidence is that the credibility of the claim is questioned when members of the group are actually behind attacks. There is growing evidence that Brotherhood members and supporters are involved in terrorism, but little to suggest they are receiving orders from a central leadership.

On July 4, a blast at a poultry farm owned by a Brotherhood supporter in Egypt's Fayum governorate killed four people assembling an IED (*Ahram Online* [Cairo], July 4). Police announced the retrieval of roughly 20 armed explosives from the site (*Daily News Egypt*, July 4). The Brotherhood admitted its activists were in the house, but incredulously blamed the explosion on an "unknown person on a motorbike [that] threw a bomb into their house" (Ikhwanweb, July 4).

Whether these latest attacks are being carried out by Brotherhood members, Mursi supporters or anti-state militants, they are the first acts of terrorism targeting civilians since last summer.

Egypt's most active, most capable and most deadly terrorist group over the past year is the Sinai-based Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM – Supporters of Jerusalem). ABM has been active in Sinai since 2011, attacking Egypt's gas pipeline and attempting to degrade Egyptian-Israeli relations, but its broader threat to Egypt began after Mursi's ouster with attacks west of the Suez Canal (see *Terrorism Monitor Briefs*, March 6, 2012; December 3, 2013). ABM attempted to assassinate Egypt's interior minister in September 2013 and successfully attacked a number of security directorates around Egypt (*al-Masry al-Youm* [Cairo], September 5, 2013; *Ahram Online* [Cairo], December 24, 2013). In its statements, ABM has continuously threatened Egypt's security forces while claiming to be on the side of the Egyptian people. [2] As ABM's terror campaign continued into 2014, the group broadened its targeting to include not only the security

services but also the economic drivers of the state, including natural gas and tourism.

The Giza-based Afnad Misr (Soldiers of Egypt) organization also targets police, security forces and the state using increasingly sophisticated IEDs (see Terrorism Monitor Brief, July 10). The group's early attacks used very primitive devices (*Aswat Masriya* [Cairo], February 7). However, in its most recently claimed attacks, Afnad Misr targeted the presidential palace with explosives it claimed were rigged to go off when specialists attempted to defuse the devices (*Ahram Online* [Cairo], June 30). Although Afnad Misr identifies itself as a jihadi group, its rhetoric is similar to that of a radical revolutionary group. The organization named its terror campaign "Retribution is Life" as it sets out targeting "criminal" state forces (*Ahram Online* [Cairo], April 17).

The latest attacks in Cairo and Alexandria are not the first civilian casualties in Egypt's current confrontation with terrorism. ABM did target civilians in its February 2014 attack on a tour bus of South Koreans in Taba, South Sinai (*Ahram Online*, February 18, 2014). However, the group framed this attack not as one targeting civilians but as targeting state revenue (i.e. the tourist industry) [3]. Other direct attacks on civilians have included those on tribesmen that Sinai's militants accuse of collaborating with the Egyptian army (Ma'an News Agency, March 24). Over the past year, especially in the summer of 2013, there were also a large number of incidents of sectarian violence in which Mursi supporters and Salafi-Jihadists attacked churches, Christians and Christian-owned property out of antipathy for Coptic Christian support of the July 2013 coup (*Mada Masr* [Cairo], August 14, 2013). Of course, civilians were also occasionally killed during attacks targeting security forces (*al-Masry al-Youm* [Cairo], March 4). These latest incidents are, however, the first incidents in which civilians are targeted.

Groups like Afnad Misr and Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis use their attacks against security forces to gain support from the segments of society that feel marginalized by the events of the past year: especially Muslim Brotherhood members and supporters. In their statements, these organizations present themselves as both defenders and avengers of Egypt's Muslims and they emphasize the care they take to avoid civilian casualties.

Attacks targeting civilians are different. Following the inauguration of a new president whose popularity is based on his tough image and security background, these attacks are not meant to gain followers among disgruntled Egyptians; they are carried out by disgruntled Egyptians as a warning to the supporters of Egypt's new government. The message

being sent is clear: al-Sisi cannot keep you safe.

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Notes

1. Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, "Statement of taking responsibility for targeting the gas pipeline which leads to the armed forces cement factory in central Sinai," January 19, 2014, <http://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/jamc481at-ane1b9a3c481r-bayt-al-maqdis-22announcement-of-our-responsibility-for-targeting-the-gas-line-leading-to-a-cement-factory-of-the-armed-forces-in-central-sinai22-en.pdf>.
2. See Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, "A Message to the conscripts of the army and police and their families," December 22, 2013, <http://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2013/12/jamc481at-ane1b9a3c481r-bayt-al-maqdis-22message-to-the-conscripts-from-the-army-and-policy-and-their-families22-en.pdf>.
3. Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, "Declaration of responsibility for targeting the tourist bus in the port of Taba," February 17, 2014, <http://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/jamc481at-ane1b9a3c481r-bayt-al-maqdis-22declaration-of-the-responsibility-for-the-targeting-the-tourist-bus-in-the-port-of-e1b9adc481bc48122.pdf>.

The Islamic State's Strategic and Tactical Plan for Iraq

Murad Batal al-Shishani

Since the announcement of the Islamic State, Iraq's Sunni jihadist movement has been obsessed with controlling geographical space in order to declare an Islamic caliphate, a move that, in addition to its symbolic importance, would help raise recruits and secure the movement's logistics. The group was shocked by the armed opposition of the Sunni Awakening Councils in 2007 and started planning for the post-U.S. occupation era in Iraq in 2010, when Iraq's jihadist movement published an important booklet with direct relevance to the strategy and tactics used by the Islamic State today: *Khoutah Istratigya li Ta'aziz al-Moqif al-Siyasi al-Dawlat al-Islamiyah fi al-Iraq* (A Strategic Plan to Improve the Political Position of the Islamic State of Iraq).

The booklet was published in a time when the Iraqi jihadists were in difficulty, appearing only months before Abu Omar al-Baghdadi (Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's successor as leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq) and the movement's defense minister, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, were killed in April 2010. The contents of *Khoutah Istratigya* outlined a strategic plan to "improve the position of Islamic state; therefore it will be more powerful politically and militarily... so the Islamic [State] project will be ready to take over all Iraq after the enemy troops withdraw." [1]

The Islamic State is a linear descendant of al-Zarqawi's *Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn* (The Organization of Jihad's Base in the Country of the Two Rivers – more commonly known as al-Qaeda in Iraq), formed in 2004 to fight the American invasion of Iraq.

The group, which is a splinter of al-Qaeda as a result of differences over practices and ideology (especially in Syria), has built its legitimacy around a number of concepts and ideas such as *al-shawkat* (power, intensity) and *al-taghloub* (overcoming), components of the belief that if a group has the power, it will have the legitimacy to rule.

Since 2005, the movement has engaged in a sectarian war considered by the Sunni jihadists as being as important as fighting the invading *kafir* (infidel) forces, most specifically the Americans (*al-Hayat*, July 3). The war has been justified by presenting Iraq's majority Shi'a population as a "fifth column" for the Americans or the Shiite-dominated central government in Baghdad. After 2007, the jihadists began to present themselves as an alternative to the existing Sunni

leadership in Iraq. Their attempt to announce an Islamic State proved premature, with the Sunnis of Anbar governorate forming the anti-jihadist *Majalis al-Sahwat* (Awakening Councils), whose subsequent military campaign forced a jihadist retreat.

Iraq's jihadists noted in the 2010 booklet that the state they are aiming to create should not bind itself with international commitments: "Creating an Islamic state which has no commitments towards the international community is not a fantasy, dream or illusion as some might imagine or fancy, rather it's a clear-cut issue built on an obvious strategy." [2]

In order to establish an Islamic state that controls Iraq, the jihadists set out a clear five-point agenda served by their tactics and strategies:

- **Unification:** This agenda urges jihadists to unify their efforts in Iraq and prove that the Islamic state is a reality. Efforts by the jihadists to run day-to-day management of the cities of Fallujah and Mosul after the Islamists took control may be considered as part of attaining this goal. [3]
- **Balanced Military Planning:** This agenda is divided into three tactics:
 1. "Nine Bullets against Apostates and One against Crusaders," referring to a campaign to "increase the rate of fear amongst Iraqis who join the army and security forces";
 2. "Cleansing," in which the movement aims to occupy places where the Iraqi army and security forces are located and keep them busy trying to retake these places. [4] To achieve this goal, jihadists in Iraq resort to a tactic involves holding hostages, killing dozens of them and then engaging in an open clash with security forces. This kind of attack has been dubbed "Mumbai-style" after the storming of the historic Taj Hotel in Mumbai by the Kashmiri jihadist group Lashkar-e-Taiba in 2008. Although the preferred jihadist tactic in Iraq is suicide bombings, mostly due to the damage they cause, their lower cost, the ability of the perpetrators to bypass security checks and the increased media coverage they attract. [5] Although they are not cheap compared to suicide bombings, Mumbai-style attacks achieve other goals in addition to media coverage. Most importantly, they undermine confidence in the security services in the targeted country, according to the assessment of the jihadists themselves. In October 2010, jihadists used a Mumbai-style attack on Our Lady of Salvation Church in Baghdad, killing more than 50 worshippers (Natio-

nal Iraqi News Agency, November 1, 2010). The group used the same tactic five months later at the provincial council building in Tikrit, where another 56 people were killed (al-Shorfa, May 30, 2011);

3. Targeting influential military and political leaders by assassination. [6]

- **Formation of jihadist “Awakening Councils”:** Jihadists admit that the formation of Awakening councils in Anbar was a “clever idea,” therefore, they have urged local Sunnis to form groups to protect their areas from the army and security forces, take control of day-to-day security in those areas and implement Shari’a. According to the jihadists, the aim is to integrate locals into the project to establish Shari’a and avoid the alienation of local people. All these groups are to be overseen by a jihadist religious *amir*. [7] Progress towards these goals was seen in the increasing numbers of Iraqis joining the jihadists as well as the alliance created with some local tribes in Fallujah in January. [8]
- **Political Symbolism:** The jihadists believe that advancing a political and religious leader is an essential step in establishing an Islamic state. [9] At the time of the booklet’s publication, jihadists thought it would be difficult to find such a symbol, but when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi became the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) several months later, it was clear he was assuming this symbolic role by combining the necessary political and religious credentials. This symbolic role was displayed when al-Baghdadi delivered the Friday sermon at Mosul’s Great Mosque of al-Nuri (built 1172-1173), which was traditionally used by the early Muslim Caliphs.
- **Assuring Non-Muslims:** This refers to a just ruling by the Islamic State to assure non-Muslims that the jihadists are able and willing to protect them and their interests, a stance the jihadists view as important in light of ongoing efforts to misrepresent jihadists in the media. [10] However, after the jihadists took the city of Mosul in June, hundreds of Christian families fled after the jihadists demanded they convert, submit to their rule and pay a religious levy (*jizyah*) or face death by the sword. The Islamic State does not see this as a contradiction since their concept of justice involves implementing Shari’a as the group understands it.

and Syria, the Islamic State has actually engaged in more fighting with Kurdish militants, the Free Syrian Army rebels and even other jihadists than with the troops of the Assad regime. The announcement of a caliphate has benefited the Islamic State in terms of attracting fighters from all over the world. European citizens are reported to have carried out suicide attacks and even jihadists in Jordan who once opposed ISIS have now changed their position in support of the caliphate (*al-Ghad* [Amman], July 23). [11] These developments reflect the ideological foundations presented in the plan presented in 2010.

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Notes

1. *Khoutah Istratigiya li Ta’aziz al-Moqif al-Siyasi al-Dawlat al-Islamiyah fi al-Iraq* (A Strategic Plan to Improve the Political Position of the Islamic State of Iraq), January 2010. The booklet can be accessed at: <http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=158433>. See also Terrorism Monitor, April 23, 2010.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Author’s interview with an eye witness who fled from Fallujah in Erbil, Iraq, June 30, 2014.
4. *Khoutah Istratigiya li Ta’aziz...*, *Op. Cit.*
5. According to the ISIS released statistics for its attacks in Iraq for 2012-2013 for example, suicide bombings as tactic was used more than 230 times. For full access to the ISIS military report (2012-2013), see <https://archive.org/details/al-naba2>.
6. *Khoutah Istratigiya li Ta’aziz...*, *Op. Cit.*; see also the ISIS military report, *Ibid.*
7. *Khoutah Istratigiya li Ta’aziz...*, *Op. Cit.*
8. Author’s interview with a source close to Sunni tribal forces in Iraq in Erbil, Iraq, June 30, 2014.
9. *Khoutah Istratigiya Li Ta’aziz...*, *Op. Cit.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. The ISIS announced the first Norwegian suicide bomber in Iraq in June 2014 (*al-Hayat*, July 3).

Since it started to operate in Syria in 2013, the ISIS/Islamic State organization has been obsessed with controlling geographical space to support its plans to establish a caliphate. To achieve aims such as securing the border between Iraq

Libya's Ansar al-Shari'a Declares the Islamic Emirate of Benghazi

Andrew McGregor

Only weeks after Sunni jihadists in Iraq declared the establishment of an Islamic caliphate covering parts of Syria and Iraq, Libya's Ansar al-Shari'a movement has declared an Islamic emirate in eastern Libya after driving government forces and their allies from the city of Benghazi. The defeat of the strongest pro-government forces in eastern Libya has provided the Islamists with an impressive victory, but Ansar al-Shari'a and its allies are still struggling to obtain the support of Benghazi's urban population and the powerful tribes dwelling in its hinterland.

The Libyan Emirate in the Modern Era

As the provinces that eventually formed modern Libya began to fall to British and French military forces following a string of defeats suffered by Italy, the colonial power in Libya, there were several abortive attempts to create a modern emirate in eastern Libya. In anticipation of post-war independence in return for supporting the Allied cause, the Libyans agreed to the formation of a joint Tripolitanian-Cyrenaican Emirate with Sayyid Idris al-Sanusi as leader in 1940 (the third province, Fezzan, remained under French military administration from 1943 to 1951). This plan, however, began to disintegrate after liberation from Italian occupation in 1943 as the two Libyan provinces jostled for control of the new state. Sayyid Idris foresaw the emergence of Britain as the main power broker in a post-colonial Libya (unlike the Tripolitanian leaders, who had incorrectly foreseen an Axis victory) and raised five battalions of the "Libyan Arab Force" to assist Allied operations in the North African desert campaign. A 1945 U.S. plan for a Cyrenaican emirate under British and Egyptian supervision failed to gain support, but in 1949, Britain decided unilaterally to create a Cyrenaican emirate under the leadership of Sayyid Idris, with foreign affairs, defense issues and military bases all remaining under British control. By the time independence arrived in 1951, plans for an emirate had been abandoned in favor of a federal constitutional monarchy with a bicameral parliament. [1]

Ansar al-Shari'a in Libya

The Islamist militia, established in post-revolutionary Libya in 2012, has a power base in the eastern cities of Derna and Benghazi. It was in the latter city that the movement was deeply implicated in the September 11, 2012 attack on the American Consulate. Ten days later, the group was driven

from Benghazi by mass protests, but by March 2013, it was back in Benghazi, this time with a greater emphasis on providing social services to city residents.

New tensions began to arise in June, when Major-General Khalifa Haftar's forces began launching attacks on armed Islamist militias in Benghazi and Derna and preliminary results of the parliamentary election revealed a massive rejection of Islamist candidates (all seats were contested on an individual rather than party basis). Afraid of being shut out of the political process, the Islamist militias in Benghazi (including Ansar al-Shari'a, the Libya Shield Brigade no. 1, the 17 February Brigade and the Rafallah Sahati Brigade) united under an umbrella structure known as the Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries (*Daily Star* [Beirut], August 1). Many of these groups are affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood stronghold in Misrata. The restructuring at first helped limit Haftar's successes in the region before allowing the united Islamists to push back against Haftar's outnumbered "National Army" and its allies.

In June, Ansar al-Shari'a leader Muhammad al-Zawahi reasserted his movement's opposition to both the government and democracy in general, while warning the United States to forget about military intervention in Libya in view of America's "despicable defeats in Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia," promising it would "face worse from Libya" (BBC, June 13).

Expelling al-Sa'iqa

On July 29, Ansar al-Shari'a and its allies in the Shura Council mounted a bold attack on the Benghazi base of the pro-government al-Sa'iqa (Thunderbolt) Special Forces, an elite unit led by Colonel Wanis Bu-Khamada that is allied to General Haftar, but not under his direct command. Haftar's ongoing Operation al-Karamah (Dignity) is an attempt to eliminate Islamist militias in Libya and restore order in the lawless cities. The Islamist attack succeeded in taking the main camp of al-Sa'iqa, located in the Bu-Atni district of Benghazi.

With the capture of most of the city (excluding a part of the airport still controlled by Haftar's forces), Ansar al-Shari'a leader Muhammad al-Zahawi declared on July 30 that "Benghazi has now become an Islamic emirate" (Radio Tawhid, July 30; al-Jazeera, July 31). Haftar insisted that his forces had only conducted a "tactical withdrawal" from parts of Benghazi and that the Islamist claim to control the city was "a lie": "There is a difference between control and looting and thefts. After the Special Forces withdrew from the Special Forces' camp, [the Islamists] tried to steal what

they could steal” (al-Arabiya, July 30; July 31). Since mid-July, the Shura Council has taken five military bases in the Benghazi region, including the main Special Forces camp in Benghazi, overcoming strikes from Libyan jet fighters and helicopters in their advance (al-Jazeera, July 31). Benghazi’s main police station was also abandoned after being shelled by Shura Council forces.

Losses were heavy, with at least 78 soldiers killed in the assault on the base. Large quantities of arms, rockets, ammunition and even armored vehicles were seized from the stockpiles of the Special Forces (AFP/*al-Akhbar* [Beirut], July 30; *Daily Star* [Beirut], August 1). A video released soon after the battle showed Ansar al-Shari’a commander Muhammad al-Zawahi touring the battered Special Forces camp with Libyan Shield Brigade commander Wissam Bin Hamid, who declared: “We will not stop until we establish the rule of God.” [2] Bin Hamid no doubt took satisfaction in having expelled al-Sa’iqah, having been driven from his own headquarters in June 2013 by Special Forces units.

A Libyan National Army spokesman, Colonel Muhammad Hijazi, denied rumors of differences between Colonel Bu Khamada and General Haftar, adding that the withdrawal of al-Sa’iqah from its Benghazi base was “a military strategy. We are fighting against international intelligence organs like the Qatari and Turkish intelligence services” (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, August 1). There is a general belief in the forces allied to Haftar that the Islamists are materially and politically supported by Qatar and Turkey. However, despite the defeat, Special Forces commander Wanis Bu-Khamada insisted that his forces “still have the capacity to repel any attack on state institutions” (al-Ahrar TV, August 2).

Following the Islamist victory, Muhammad Sawwan, the leader of Libya’s Hizb al-Adala wa’l-Bina (Justice and Construction Party, the political arm of Libya’s Muslim Brotherhood), condemned Haftar’s Operation Dignity as armed interference with the political process and insists the poor showing by Islamists in parliamentary election results has nothing to do with the violence in Benghazi and Tripoli: “The parliamentary elections were held on the basis of the individual system. Therefore, talking about progress of one current and the defeat of the other is baseless” (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, August 1).

The Fallout

The Shura Council’s offensive forced the cancellation of a meeting of the new parliament to be held in Benghazi on August 4, forcing it to meet in Tobruk instead (BBC, July 30; AP, August 6). The new parliament immediately issued an

order for an unconditional ceasefire in Benghazi and Tripoli (where similar clashes are underway) and promised, without the force to carry it out, that action would be taken against any group that failed to observe the ceasefire (Libya Herald, August 7).

While Haftar’s ground troops failed to reoccupy military facilities that had been abandoned after looting by the Islamists, his air assets launched strikes against the compound of a Chinese construction company in Ajdabiya that had been taken over by Ansar al-Shari’a forces (Libya Herald, August 1). Haftar’s National Army has offered to protect further civilian demonstrations in Benghazi, though it is not clear how this would be possible without a presence in Benghazi (Libya Herald, August 1).

While there is some consensus that foreign jihadists are arriving in Libya in substantial numbers, exact figures are impossible to obtain. According to General Haftar, the Islamists “are aided by renegade groups like them from all around the world. Unfortunately, in the absence of a government or police, those groups use this opportunity to come from Algeria, Mali, Niger, and even elsewhere. They even come from overseas. Many of them came from Afghanistan and many other areas” (al-Arabiya, July 30).

For now, the oil-fields of eastern Libya remain in production, but as part of a much diminished national rate of 500,000 barrels per day (b.p.d.), as opposed to a normal 1.4 million b.p.d. (Reuters, July 29). Oil accounts for some 95 percent of state revenues in Libya.

Conclusion

Ansar al-Shari’a’s declaration of an emirate was met with popular anger rather than acclaim, with large crowds of angry civilians taking to the streets of Benghazi. The protesters ignored a pair of warning volleys from Ansar militiamen and forced the gunmen from the Jala’a hospital they occupied in Benghazi, tearing down the black-and-white *rayat al-uqab* banner also used by the Islamic State and al-Qaeda and replacing it with a Libyan flag (Libya Herald, July 30). There were also reports that the demonstrators torched the home of Ansar al-Shari’a leader Muhammad al-Zahawi (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, July 31). The failure of forces belonging to Haftar’s Operation Dignity to capitalize on this unexpected civilian triumph allowed the Islamists to reassert themselves in an even stronger position in Benghazi by July 31.

Haftar’s National Army, still without official recognition from the government, has managed to gain the allegiance of a number of pro-government armed groups (some of which are probably reconsidering their position at this point), but

has failed to get the all-important support of Libya's tribes, which continue to withhold their commitment to one side or the other of the ongoing conflict. For now, both Ansar al-Shari'a and Haftar's National Army claim to be receiving new weapons, promising another round of the urban warfare that is beginning to inflict severe damage on some neighborhoods of Benghazi (Libya Herald, July 29). Unless and until General Haftar and/or the new Libyan government can bring both trained troops and the nation's influential tribes on board with the anti-Islamist program, Libya will remain a gathering point for international jihadis and Libyan fighters returning from the battlefields of Syria and Iraq, something the defeated forces allied to the national government may find themselves powerless to prevent.

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Notes

1. Alison Pargeter, *Libya: The Rise and Fall of Qaddafi*, Yale University Press, 2012, Chapter 1; John Oakes, *Libya: The History of a Pariah State*, History Press, Stroud, Gloucestershire, 2011, Chapter 6.
2. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHUDbffjloo>.