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The re-branding of Jabhat al-Nusra as Jabhat al-Fatah suggests the proliferation, the expansion, and the consolidation of the gains of the Islamic State.

By Edward H. Campbell

Bozeman, MT (ECM) Aug. 22, 2016—Al-Nusra Front commander Abu Mohammad al-Julani July 28, 2016 officially announced al-Nusra Front’s separation from al-Qaeda (AQ), re-branding itself from an organization known as Jabhat al-Nusra to that of Jabhat al-Fatah—a new organization. And, according to me, a future component to the Islamic State—a qualitatively higher development to the transnational Islamic jihad movement.

The Islamic State cannot properly be called a “pan-Islamic” movement because all Islamic movements are not permitted to join. Some Islamic movements, on the other hand, are rather to be killed outright for simply being in a hated minority sect, or are on the other side of the Sunni-Shia religious schism. Only Sunni Islam is permitted within the new Khilafah.

Not only that, all political factions are to likewise be abolished and placed under an all-encompassing “Khilafah”—the new Muslim Empire.

At any rate, the change of name from “The Front for the Support of the people of al-Sham” (Jabhat al-Nusra) to “The Front for the Conquest of al-Sham” (Jabhat al-Fatah) signifies a qualitatively higher development for al-Nusra organization itself, for it is no longer a revolutionary organization among many other revolutionary organizations (though Jabhat al-Fatah would like you to believe that it is), but the organization Jabhat al-Fatah (for al-Nusra no longer exists) has in fact begun the process of the transformation from being enclosed in an oppositional entity (al-Qaeda) to becoming part and parcel of a much larger and much more powerful organization—a state structure—called Islamic State.

For some rather pathetic psychological reasons, many people object to the use of them “state” to describe the Islamic State. They instead prefer acronyms such as ISIS, ISIL, and Daesh simply because it makes them feel better to pretend that America is not faced with a formidable enemy worthy of the term
“state” when there is far too much evidence to the contrary.

But for what it’s worth, the Islamic State having 35 regional authorities—Wilayat, 19 in Iraq and Sham and 16 located distantly—who pay taxes to, and follow dictates emanating from, the center—the Shura Council—which coins money and “supervises the branches of state” under the so-called “Delegated Committee,” all of which is headed by a solitary individual, a tyrant, and would be emperor, named Shaykh Abu Umar al-Baghdadi—“the Rightly Guided Believer.”

For those who might be inclined to believe that the 16 distant Wilayat could not be Wilayat bone fide because they are not contiguous with Iraq and Sham, I would like to point out that neither Alaska nor Hawaii are contiguous with the United States yet remain firmly under the control of Washington, D.C. In like manner, I would like to point out that Puerto Rico is not a state in the United States, but could become one.

In such a way, Jabhat al-Fatah, or al-Shabbab, or even al-Qaeda itself, are not Wilayat of Islamic State, but they each can, and may in fact become them. Boko Haram has objectively already undergone such a transformation.

“Islamic State said it appointed a new leader for Boko Haram, in a sign that the Nigerian Islamist insurgency is retooling under the command of the terrorist group.

“Sheik Abu Mossab al Bornawi was recently assigned to take command of the Nigerian insurgency, Islamic State’s weekly newsletter Al Naba said Tuesday.

“The article didn’t say what happened to Abubakar Shekau, the former face of Boko Haram, who hasn’t been seen in videos since early 2015. It also isn’t clear if Mr. Shekau’s followers support the change in management…

“There is no more Boko Haram,” a Nigerian counterterrorism official who works with detained terrorists said. “As far as they’re concerned, they consider themselves to be ISIS,” another term for Islamic State.”

The Islamic State seeks the consolidation of all jihadist movements. But not in the manner that one group agrees to operate under the general rubric of another larger group, because the Islamic State does not permit factionalism under its...

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banner. All Wilayat are completely fused with a central political core much in the same way all American states are subordinate to the central federal government. The Islamic State is a qualitatively higher development in the transnational jihad movement. The Islamic State is not, therefore, simply a “group” or an “organization” like any other we have ever seen before.

Not that those whose job it is to understand this conflict, and to defend America from its enemies, should need to be coddled, but for the sake of preserving their fragile egos while at the same time not losing the essential thread necessary for defending the American people, we can at least agree that Islamic State has established itself as a “corporate person.”

Not that such infantile measures should be necessary in time of war, but evidently are necessary, we should not forget to note that the United States is also, in like manner, “a corporate person” locked in a life or death struggle with another corporate person called “Islamic State.”

Click on the video link in the text box [center, page 2] to learn the corporate structure of the corporate person called “Islamic State.”

For what it’s worth the Islamic State’s true devotees do not call it “Islamic State” except when attempting to communicate with English speaking people who are not their followers, or to receive communication from non-devotees. Devotees to the Islamic State in fact call it “Khilafah”—or Caliphate, the Muslim Empire.

To tame all suspicions, and thereby to remove all doubts, I want to underscore my personal commitment to political correctness, inclusiveness, both to sameness and to diversity, and above all to every TOS out there (@twitter): Let it be known that I firmly believe that diapers are not just for children anymore, sometimes they are for adults. If Anthony H. Cordsman (CSIS) feels free to cast the image of a pig wearing...
lipstick† on the mind’s eye, then why shouldn’t I feel free to cast the image of a think-tanker wearing diapers, seeing that equal time is the foundation of all multiculturalism.

Having said all of that: Al-Julani said, “We declare the complete cancellation of all operations under the name of Jabhat al-Nusra, and the formation of a new group operating under the name ‘Jabhat Fateh al-Sham,’ noting that this new organization has no affiliation to any external entity.”

According to Al-Jazeera, this move was approved by al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. “The release of the video on Thursday followed earlier reports that the leader of al-Qaeda had approved the split, so the Nusra forces could concentrate on their fight against the Syrian government and other rebel groups.”†

For those of us in corporate person land, for those of us who understand the principle of corporate branding and re-branding, all re-branding is expected to represent a qualitative development; for better or for worse, re-branding is presupposed to be a qualitatively higher development of the corporate person involved.

Contrary to popular belief, this new development—the branding of Jabhat al-Fatah—strengthens the enemy’s hand, and shows that the Islamic State continues to steepen the learning curve for those who seek to resist it, on account of the fact that the re-branding from al-Nusra, Jabhat al-Fatah has begun the process of incorporating itself into the Islamic State. More such moves by organizations like al-Qaeda and al-Shabbab, et al, are likely to follow. At this point it would be appropriate for me to underscore al-Julani’s statement “noting that this new organization has no affiliation to any external entity.” So far, Jubhat al-Fatah has not made its


compete incorporation into the Islamic State, and, therefore, as yet remains an independent entity. But if I have read the tea leaves correctly, and I believe I have, it will only be a matter of time before Jubhat al-Fatah becomes yet another full-fledged Wilayat.

The Islamic State in fact not only expects other jihadist organizations to incorporate themselves into their state structure, but the Islamic State demands that they do it. The fact of the matter is all Muslims (save those already slated for destruction by the Islamic State) have effectively been commanded to swear allegiance to the new Muslim empire.

Any Muslim who does not recognize the Islamic State’s sovereign power to rule over them runs the risk of being killed for failing to do so. But more importantly do those organizations already committed to jihad run the risk, and they run the risk very much more so than anyone else. This mandate, as it were, most emphatically applies to al-Qaeda. At this time al-Qaeda has very little choice but to join the Islamic State voluntarily or to be destroyed for resisting. It will either join the Islamic State voluntarily or be forced to kneel before its throne.

That is the reason Ayman al-Zawahiri approved of al-Nusra’s separation from al-Qaeda. His approval of that separation is a strong indication that al-Qaeda has quietly agreed to incorporate itself into the Islamic State—into the Khilafah, and into the all-embracing Muslim Empire. But to once again underscore the main point, all Muslims run the risk for not submitting to the Khilafah. That’s why the Islamic State is killing other Muslims so cruelly and in such large numbers. The Islamic State is creating slave armies out of slave nations.

I furthermore would like to point out that the Islamic State cannot itself be re-branded as another organization if it is defeated, because the Khilafah is the Thule (Θούλη)—the ultimate political end, or ultimate political goal—which is led by the “rightly guided believer,” who, according to Islamic State ideology, comes only once every one hundred years.

If defeated, the Islamic State (the Khilafah) could break apart, and, in the going of their separate ways, its fighters could form other groups. It seems that such hive-minders would have difficulting living without being in a group. But those groups cannot be the Khilafah, none of them could ever be called “Islamic State.” To use a simile from the game of poker—this is an “all-in-bet.” It is either everything or nothing for the Islamic State. You simply must understand that the Islamic State is a qualitatively higher development over
everything that has ever come before, in terms of jihadist groups. And that this is its appeal—it is the ultimate jihadist organization. It is not their World Wide Web presence that makes the Islamic State, but the Islamic State which makes its presence felt through it.

I shouldn’t need to remind anyone, but larger mass movements for war have been created before mass communication even existed. The Islamic State can build itself without the internet believe you me. We should consider ourselves lucky enough that they are telling us so much about what they are doing, while RAND Corp. wants to drive them underground.

“Twitter should continue its campaign of account suspensions: This campaign likely harasses ISIS Twitter users, forces them to lose valuable time reacquiring followers, and may ultimately push some to use social media channels that are far less public and accessible than Twitter.”§

If you cared at all about what your children were seeing, you would pull the plug on your television set immediately and forbid them from going to movie theaters as well. But the internet is not the force multiplier it is being made out to be. It’s the thule—the Khilafah—that inspires its followers.

Since the announcement of the branding of Jabhat al-Fatah there has been far too much speculation as to the meaning of this split. About the move, the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) James Clapper July 28, 2016 at the Aspen Security Forum foolishly discounted it and said, “I think to some extent, it’s a PR move. I think they would like to create the image of being more moderate and in an attempt to unify and galvanize and appeal to other oppositionist groups in Syria.

“I think they are concerned about being singled out as a target particularly by the Russians, so I think this is much more as I say a PR move and whether or not they actually are separating from Al-Qaeda, I think that remains to be seen.”

Those remarks coming on the heels of much wiser remarks by the DNI to the United States Senate Jan. 29, 2014: “Looking back over my more than half a century in intelligence I have not experienced a time when we’ve been beset by more crises and threats around the globe. My list is long.”§

§ Op.Cit., Examining ISIS.

“ Remarks as delivered by James R. Clapper, Director of National Intelligence at the Worldwide Threat Assessment
Remarks to which Robert Jervis of Political Science Quarterly recently rebuffed: “These fears are exaggerated. The most dangerous thing most of us do every day is to cross the street; deaths from traffic accidents dwarf those from terrorism.”

[There is a] distinct possibility that this author is very likely more afraid of the germs on doorknobs than of having an eight-year-old terrorist assassin shoot him point blank in the forehead with a pistol.

Anthony H. Cordsman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in his all-of-one-page document “Defeating” ISIS: The Real Threats and Challenges Aug. 4, 2016 was more pointed in his claim that terrorism is an exaggerated non-issue. “We accept the fact that life has a wide range of risks, almost all of which are more serious than terrorism: Lightening, suicide, traffic, disease, home accidents produce more deaths...We all, however, are going to have to learn to live with a continuing low-level risk of sporadic terrorist attacks.”

By first observing the distinct possibility that this author is very likely more afraid of the germs on doorknobs than of having an eight-year-old terrorist assassin shoot him point blank in the forehead with a pistol, or having his legs blown off at a sporting event, or being run down by a truck at a fireworks display; the typical fault of these kinds of arguments advanced by this man is that those who use these kind of arguments make slippery equivocations between various terms such as, “terrorism,” “ISIS,” and “accidents.”

Although we could all agree with Mr. Cordsman that “terrorism” cannot be defeated. Nevertheless, his statement “Even the most effective counterterrorism efforts can contain and limit terrorism, but cannot ‘defeat’ it” is akin to suggesting that I believe we can eliminate crime. I am not suggesting that either crime or terrorism can be categorically eliminated as a social problem. What I am suggesting is that the Islamic State can be defeated, and most urgently must be defeated.

In the wake of James Clapper’s remarks, Media organizations and think-tankers alike have closely followed suit. About the branding of Jabhat al-Fatah, Brian Michael Jenkins, speaking for RAND Corp., in a recent article about the branding of Jabhat al-Fatah said: “What does it mean? Less than meets the eye, but, like any desert mirage, it tells us something about the local atmosphere.”

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In other words, it tells us nothing too telling besides which way the political wind is blowing and a little something about the relative humidity and barometric pressure of the local Middle East political climate. Well, it indeed does do that, but, all the same, it tells us—the proverbial more sophisticated—more important things as well, things more concrete than abstract. Far from blowing the whole matter off, he continued, “The names and composition of these groupings shift like dunes in a desert sandstorm.”

To say that these kinds of moves are a mirage is not to say that all of it really is a mysterious illusion, but that they really are incomprehensible to men like Jenkins. But I for one have not been so easily fooled.

The kinds of articles like the one quoted from above are short and easy to write, which is of great benefit for both regular internet commentators like Brian Michael Jenkins and yours truly, and for the consumers of that kind of media alike.

Every news item produces question a mark in the minds of consumers who have chosen to interact with it—What does so-and-so think about this-or-that? Every webmaster who seeks to maintain a presence on the internet and hopes to increase his or her bandwidth there, feels compelled to immediately tender their opinion on it—headline chasing as it were. And on account of consumer demand, he or she tries to satisfy the demand with all due haste and speed. And although both the format of internet journalism and the behavior of the consumers of internet media, demand this practice—indeed genre of internet journalism does itself demand it—for obvious reasons mistakes often made. I have made those kinds of mistakes, everyone who has engaged the public in this format has also made them.

The upside, then, is both the speed of communication, and the breadth of the audience. The length and breadth of internet journalism, on the other hand, like the genre of the novel, is, as it were, both incomplete and highly experimental. The downside is that when said journalism is branded by sophisticated organizations such as RAND Corp., CSIS, or Political Science Quarterly, et al the erroneous influence caused by mistaken opinion has unwarranted and damaging effects.

In this case, we have the confusion between causes and effects. The preponderance of the thinkers on the matter of defeating the Islamic State...
think that the organization’s internet presence causes its growth, when it is its growth which has caused its presence. One should keep in mind that the Islamic State is growing particularly fast in places where the internet is seldom available, if at all. They are simply attributing causes to things which are not causes. The Islamic State’s internet presence is a result, not a cause. And the longing for the historical Khalifa is not caused by poverty at home.

Does the image of a man being shot point blank in the forehead by an eight-year-old child, or the blowing up of three men in a car by a four-year-old, have such great allure that so many Somalis from Minneapolis, or Uzbeks from Moscow, should like to join? It’s more about communicating threats, both to us and to those Muslims in the immediate vicinity who they hope to conquer and enslave.

In terms of cause and effect we should also take note that Anthony H. Cordsman, and so many think-tankers like him, find the cause of the growth of the Islamic State to be in the conditions of poverty, and even illiteracy, in their nations of origin, but those kinds of thinkers persistently ignore the fact that Osama bin Laden, and very many other jihadists like him, have come from wealthy backgrounds. I submit that the pull, the allure, is in the thule—the existence of a Khilafah so earnestly yearned for, for oh so long.

Osama bin Laden didn’t want to fight for a Khilafah not because he didn’t want it, but because he thought it was not possible to do at the time. But having spent far too many years studying revolutionary movements I have distilled at least this much wisdom.

I. The success of a revolutionary movement depends on “psychological conditions and political line.”

Osama bin Laden, and his followers, objectively yearned for the return of the Khilafah, but he did not think it was possible to create it at the time. Therefore he urged his followers to attack the so-called “big enemy”—i.e., the United States.

Aside from earlier developments, the Islamic State, in opposition to the opinion of al-Qaeda leadership, was founded as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) in October 2006, but the as the United States began its withdrawal from Iraq the changing conditions enabled ISI to blitzkrieg into Syria in April of 2013.

With this qualitative new development the ISI re-branded itself as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIL). Since that time however, new distant Wilayat were added, for instance in Egypt and Libya. With this qualitative new development, ISIL once again rebranded itself Islamic State to the outside world, Khilafah to its followers.

The political line not only for Islamic State, but also for al-Qaeda, has always been the struggle of jihad for the
purposes of the re-founding of the historical Khilafah. Osama bin Laden, in his lifetime, did not believe it was possible to re-found the Khilafah, but the psychological conditions changed with America’s withdraw from Iraq, and what was thought not possible was suddenly thought to be possible—the unthinkable became the thinkable. But the Islamic State—the Khilafah—was the thing always aimed at, it was always their political line. With the changing conditions brought about by the American withdraw from Iraq, political line and psychological conditions converged.

II. Insurgencies, like people’s wars, rely principally on people, not weapons.

Weapons are certainly necessary to any kind of warfare, but superior weapons and superior technology are not the deciding factor in terms of victory or defeat for the insurgents involved. Social media therefore helps the group communicate its aims, but the media is simply a tool, even a tool as a weapon, but the pull for the organization is not on account of its “slick” use of the internet.

The pull, the allure, of the Islamic State is in its final aim—its thule. People want to join because of what the organization seeks, not because they are poor, or even discriminated against. The Islamic State aims at restoring the Khilafah, and that aim is most earnestly desired by a great many Muslims, and has been for a very long time. Many people seek to join the Islamic State because of its aims, but the social praxis of slavery enforced by the most savage methods is what makes them stay, and in many cases makes them fight.

Many commentators have underscored the necessity of attacking the overall ideology of “extremism,” or “radicalization,” or “terrorism,” which they maintain will take a great number of years to root out. I submit to you, on the other hand, that military defeats change ideologies a lot faster—as was shown by the defeat of Japan in World War II. The Islamic State is not going to be brainwashed out of existence, and it is not our prerogative to do so even if it could.

In terms of an ideological shift, we obviously need to inculcate the idea of the “separation of church from state” over and against political Islam. But the Muslim population “coming to clear,” as it were, on the need to separate church and state, and to abandon political Islam, is more likely to take place against the back drop of categorical annihilation. A population seeing just how bad things can really get, seeing just how serious the United States and the coalition partners are about eradicating radical Islamic terrorism, is more likely to exert pressure against political Islam than humanitarian gifts in lieu of it.

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