

Return of the Caliphate: The Impact of the Concept of Caliphate in Modern Terrorism

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The former leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) or Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (TQJBR), Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi released a video on 8th April 2013 announcing the merger between Jabhat Al-Nusra (JN) and AQI. He declared that the union of the two groups to be called as 'Islamic State of Iraq and Al – Sham' (ISIS). However, the leader of JN, Ahmed Hussein al-Shar'a, a.k.a Abu Mohammad al-Julani rejected the union with AQI and pledged allegiance to Al Qaeda. From April 2013 to June 2014, ISIS progressed by launching campaigns such as 'Harvest of Soldiers', which hunted the Iraqi soldiers and captured territory. Besides, the cities of Syria and Iraq (Fallujah, parts of Ramadi, Raqqa, Mosul, Tikrit etc.), one by one, fell under the control of the so-called mujahedeen of ISIS. With the success of conquering territory in Syria and Iraq, on the 29th of June 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi a.k.a Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim Ali Muhammad al-Badri al-Samarrai proclaimed himself as the Khaliph and stated the establishment of the Caliphate or the Islamic State. Nevertheless, ISIS is not the only transnational Salafi Jihadi organization which had the idea of establishing the Caliphate. Prior to ISIS, Al Qaeda (AQ) fantasised the establishment of the Caliphate but Ayaman al Zawahiri, the leader of AQ explained it as a long-term goal of the organization. Both ISIS and AQ emphasize the establishment of the Caliphate or the Islamic State, which makes the Caliphate as an important goal to be achieved through jihad. As a result, this research is conducted to 1) understand the evolution of the Caliphate 3) elaborate on the importance of the Caliphate to the Ummah (Muslim population) 3) examine why the concept of the Caliphate is being utilized by terrorist organizations like ISIS and AQ for their advantage. 4) understand how the concept of the Caliphate has fulfilled the goals of ISIS and AQ. This research will be based on primary and secondary data. Primary data will be collected through interviews and questionnaires while secondary data will be accumulated from books, reports, journal articles, statements, videos etc. Case studies are also being utilized to analyse and emphasise concepts and circumstances.

Keywords: caliphate, Islamic state, Al Qaeda, jihadism, modern terrorism