

The Discreet Charm of the Islamic Caliphate

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The Secret Charm of the Islamic Caliphate

A very good article from the American think tank Middle East Institute, about the secret charm of the Islamic Caliphate. See “The Shifting Definition of ISIS' Caliphate”, August 2016.

The article wonders why is it that more and more terrorist groups are pledging their allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), when ISIS is retreating, losing more and more ground, due to the attacks of the NATO bombings. What is the secret charm of the Islamic Caliphate, why it is losing on the ground but it is gaining in popularity in the world of terror?

Map The Dream of the Islamic Caliphate



http://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2014/06/30/article-2674736-1F46221200000578-100_634x381.jpg

Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al-Shabaab in Somalia, the Islamic State of Libya in Libya, are only some of the terrorist organizations that are pledging their allegiance to the Islamic State.

The article says that the notion of the Caliphate has been used in various ways in the past, sometimes to empower the Caliphs (Sultans) and sometimes to unite the Islamic World against the West i.e. against the Crusaders. According to the article ISIS is using the idea of the Caliphate in order to unite the Muslim World against the West. Fighting the Crusaders is a very popular idea in the Islamic World, and has been used many times by the Caliphates against the West during the previous centuries.

What is very interesting is that the Islamic State local branches operate independently from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. For example the Islamic State of Afghanistan and Pakistan was created by some ex-members of the Pakistani Taliban, who were not happy with the Taliban, and wanted to rebrand themselves. But they were operating more like the Taliban and less than the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. There is always the possibility of course that the Islamic States of Afghanistan and of Iraq were exchanging favors.

But witnessing the father of the modern Caliphate i.e. ISIS, to be shrinking in Iraq and Syria, and at the same time the project that was initially launched

by it in Iraq and Syria to gain in popularity, it is something that must be explained.

The Islamic State and Al-Qaeda

It is quite important that the Islamic State franchises are independent, because it means that they all have different financing. For example in Syria and Iraq the main source of financing for ISIS were the oilfields that were given to it by Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian dictator. Bashar al-Assad and Tayip Erdogan, the Turkish President, were buying the oil of the Islamic State in order to fund the group, obviously for very different reasons. See “How Putin and Assad Created the Islamic State”.

<https://iakal.wordpress.com/2016/07/28/how-putin-and-assad-created-the-islamic-state/>

With the oil that was given to the Islamic State by Assad, ISIS had an annual revenue between 1 and 2 billion dollars. And obviously NATO could not bomb the oilfields of ISIS. NATO was bombing the oil refineries of the Islamic State in order to hurt the ability of the group to generate revenues, which would force Assad, Putin and Erdogan to directly fund the group.

Remember that France bombed ISIS oil refineries in November 9th 2015, and in November 13th 2015 the Islamic State retaliated by slaughtering the French people in Paris. See Yahoo “French strike hits IS oil facility in Syria”, November 9th 2015.

See also Wikipedia “November 2015 Paris Attacks”.

Of course ISIS had also revenues from kidnappings, drug trafficking, prostitution, taxing the local populations etc. But the oil fields that were given to it by Assad was an important source of revenue.

Moreover, in Iraq, where Assad and the Arabs of the Persian Gulf were united against the Americans, the Islamic State was receiving financial support from the Arabs of the Persian Gulf too i.e. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait etc. See “The Architects of Al-Qaeda and ISIS”.

<https://iakal.wordpress.com/2016/07/31/the-architects-of-al-qaeda-and-isis/>

Obviously in Syria things were a lot more complicated because the Arabs of the Persian Gulf and the Turks were fighting Bashar al-Assad, Russia and Iran. Therefore in Syria Turkey and the Arabs of the Persian Gulf wanted the support of NATO to overturn Assad, and they knew that NATO could not support Al-Qaeda and ISIS.

I have said again that Al-Qaeda is the Sunni version of the Lebanese Hezbollah, and it is financed with Arab money, it is staffed with Arab fighters, but it was trained by Iran and Hezbollah, in order for the Iranians and certain Arab circles to jointly fight the Americans and the Saudi King. Obviously Turkey and Pakistan, which are the countries that have the ability to train Al-Qaeda could not have done it because they are American allies, and they are buying their weapons from the United States.

That’s why Iran and Hezbollah had to train Al-Qaeda, in order to jointly fight the Americans and the Saudi King, even though they are fighting each other too. And that’s why the Americans call the Hezbollah fighters class A

terrorists, while they call Al-Qaeda Class B terrorists. Obviously Iran and Hezbollah want to have an edge over the Arab fighters of Al-Qaeda.

It is very natural that Iran wanted a strong anti-Western Sunni terrorist organization, a Sunni version of Hezbollah, because Sunnis constitute 80-85% of the Muslim World. And since Turkey and Pakistan could not act like the headquarters of Al-Qaeda, Iran had to do it whether it liked it or not.

In the future Turkey or Pakistan might be able to act as the Al-Qaeda central if Turkey and Pakistan keep moving away from the Western World. Obviously Al-Qaeda was paying Iran and Hezbollah for the training, the logistics and the arms it was receiving, because money was the one thing Al-Qaeda was not lacking.

Obviously the alliance between Iran and Al-Qaeda was forged in Afghanistan, in the early 90s, when the Americans were trying to bring the oil and gas of Central Asia to the India Ocean. See “The Afghan Oil Pipeline and the US Negotiations with the Taliban”.

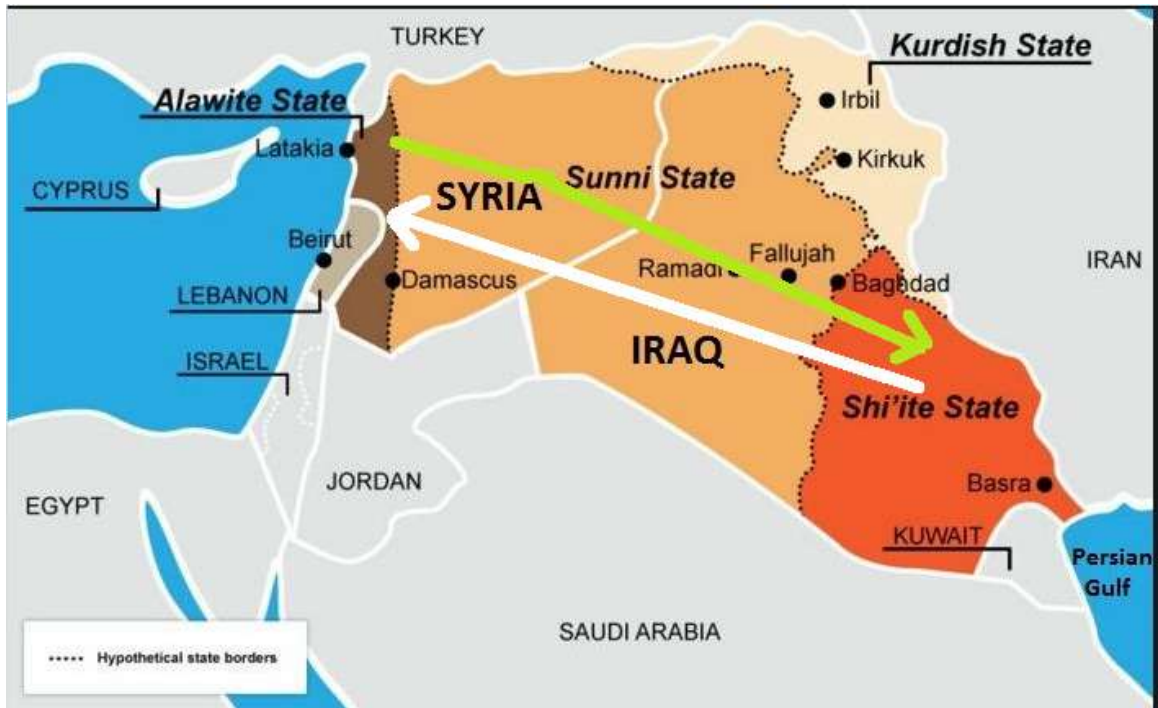
<https://iakal.wordpress.com/2016/07/01/the-afghan-oil-pipeline-and-the-us-negotiations-with-the-taliban/>

But there are many reasons and places where Al-Qaeda and Iran can fight together, and there are many reasons and places where Al-Qaeda and Iran can fight each other.

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is something very different from Al-Qaeda. It is the ex-people of Saddam Hussein, who launched the Islamic

State of Iraq and Syria with the support of Assad and Russia, in order to use the Syria-Iraq corridor to attack the Americans in Iraq, and also to prevent the Americans from using the Syria-Iraq corridor to attack Assad in Syria.

Map Assad VS United States

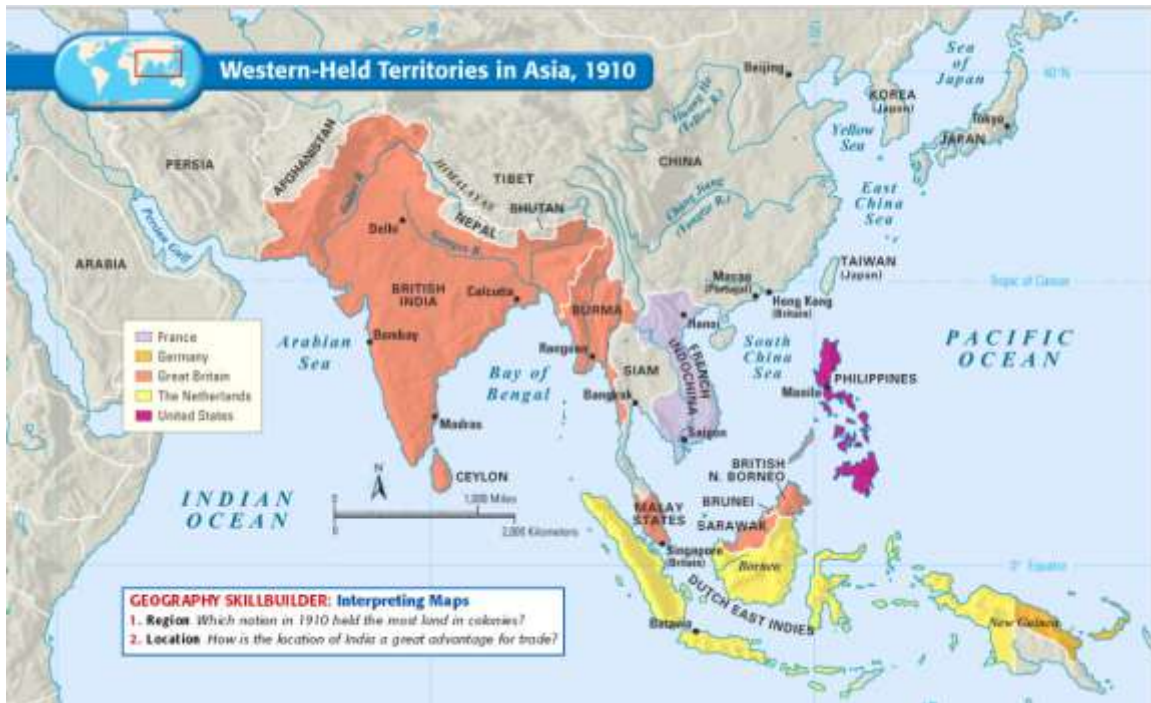


Map Iraq-Syria



Remember that Syria and Iraq are basically the same Silk Road. What today is Syria and Iraq during the Ottoman years was an Ottoman colony. And when the British and the French won the Ottomans in the First World War they made Syria a French influenced zone and Iraq a British influence zone, in order to construct two pipelines from Iraq to the Mediterranean Sea. And also to connect the colonies in South Asia with the Mediterranean Sea through the Persian Gulf. Note that Britain also took Palestine i.e. today's Jordan and Israel. See Foreign Affairs "Pipelines in the Sand", Μάιος 2016.

Map Colonies



http://www.31981782.com/uploads/4/2/2/0/42203051/imperialism_asia.jpg

You can see that during the First World War India was a British colony and Indochina was a French colony.

Assad and Russia were right to believe that NATO could use Iraq as a springboard to attack Syria, in order to clear the Iraq-Syria Silk Road. And that's why they used the Islamic State to block NATO from finding allies in the Sunni parts of Syria and Iraq, and in order to attack the United States in Iraq.

Erdogan had a motive to support ISIS because it was killing the Kurds in Syria, something that was forbidden by the American allies of the Kurds. And that's why Erdogan was allowing Jihadists to join ISIS by using the Turkish-Syrian borders, and that's why Erdogan was buying the oil of the

Islamic State. Erdogan was also accusing the West for supporting terrorism i.e. for supporting the Kurds of Syria.

At the same time Erdogan was also supporting Al-Qaeda, because Al-Qaeda was fighting Assad in Syria, and Al-Qaeda was also killing the Kurds of Syria. Erdogan was also supporting the Free Syrian Army (FSA) i.e. the Sunni rebels of Syria who were supported by NATO, but with a lot less enthusiasm, because the FSA was fighting Assad, but it was not allowing the killings of the Kurds who are American allies.

The Charm of the Islamic State Revisited

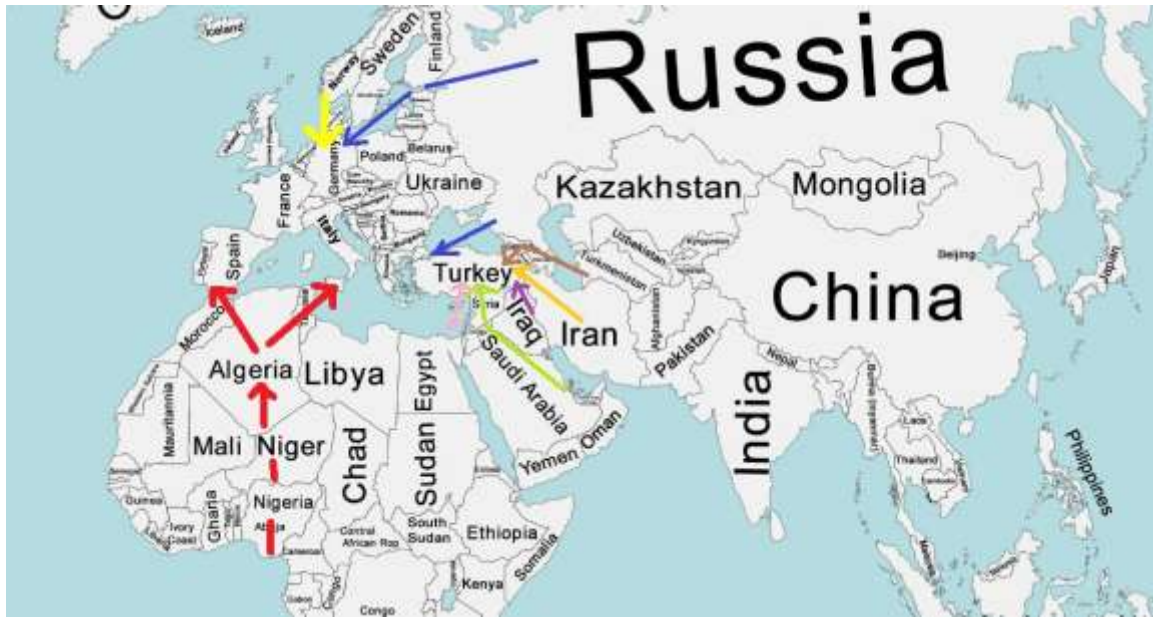
From all the above it is clear why many terrorist organizations are rushing to pledge their allegiance to the Islamic State even though ISIS is retreating in Syria and Iraq. The reason is that the idea of the Islamic State is promoted by the strongest military power of the Muslim world, i.e. Turkey, and it has the support of another great power i.e. Russia.

Moreover the notion of a united Muslim World which will protect Islam and will fight the Crusaders is a great bed time story for the low educated Muslims.

The idea of the Caliphate suits both Erdogan and Putin, obviously for different reasons. For Erdogan the Islamic State is a great idea because he is the ideal leader of the Caliphate. Who else could be the Sultan (Caliph) of the Caliphate?

For Putin the idea of the Caliphate is great because it really scares the Europeans, who will have no choice but to ask for Russia's protection. Until now the Europeans were trying to reduce Putin's influence by importing natural gas from the Middle East, the Caspian Sea and West Africa i.e. the Trans-Saharan pipeline (Nigeria-Niger-Algeria).

Map The War for Europe



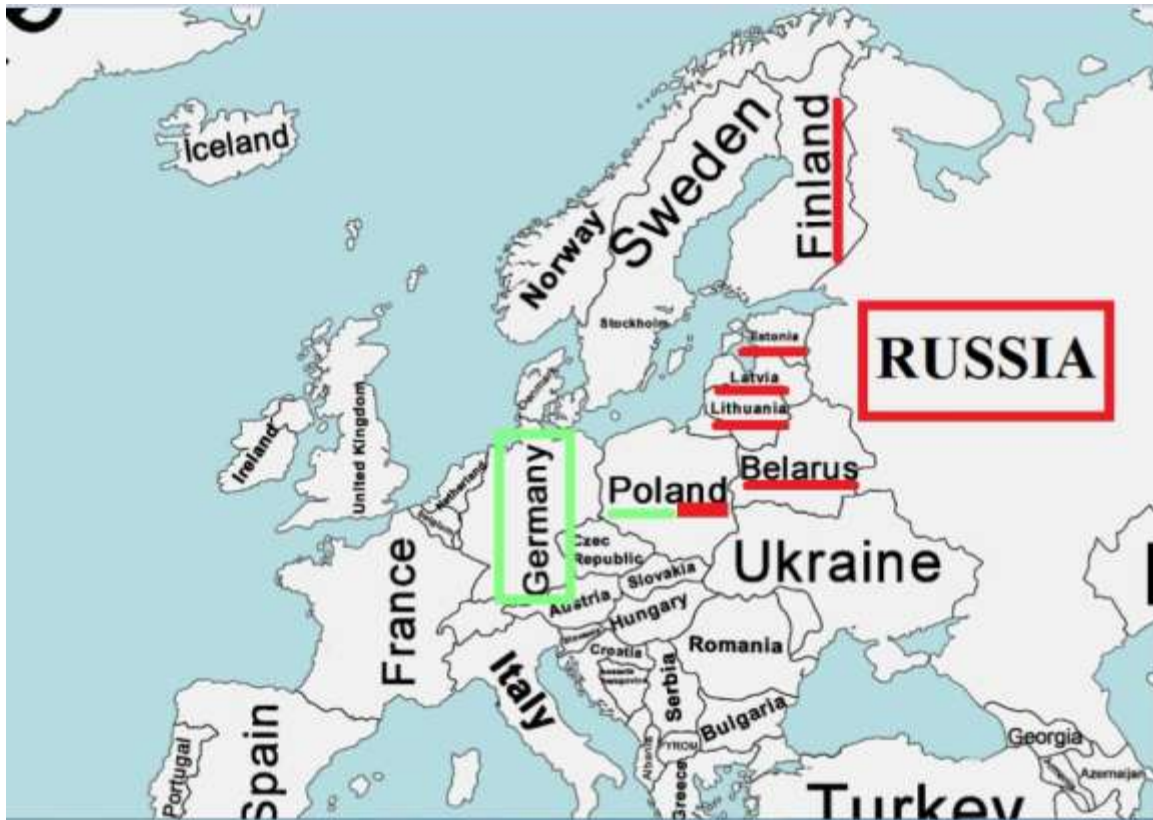
Putin is trying to reestablish the Soviet Union and that really scares the Europeans. But no matter how much Putin scares the Europeans, he looks really sweet when compared to a rising Islamic State. If there is an Islamic State Europe will start begging Russia for her protection.

That's why both Putin and Erdogan see with in a very positive way the idea of the Caliphate. The Russians also think that due to their nuclear weapons they will be able to beat the Ottomans if they have to fight them in the future.

The deal between Putin and Erdogan, which gave Putin Europe and Erdogan the Middle East, is the Molotov-Riebertrop Pact of the 21st Century. Under the original Molotov-Riebertrop Pact the Communists (Russians) and the Nazis (Germans) forged an alliance against the West, and they split Eastern Europe in zones of influences i.e. the Nazis (Germans) took half Poland, the Communists (Russians) took the other half of Poland, plus the Baltic States

and Finland. Moreover the Communists agreed to supply the Nazis with oil, iron, wheat and other raw materials, and the Nazis agreed to supply the Communists with manufactured German goods.

Map The Molotov Riebertrop Pact



The agreement between Putin and Erdogan is that Erdogan will leave Europe to Russia, and Russia will leave the Middle East to Turkey, plus that Russia will supply Turkey with cheap natural gas.

Map The New Molotov Riebertrop



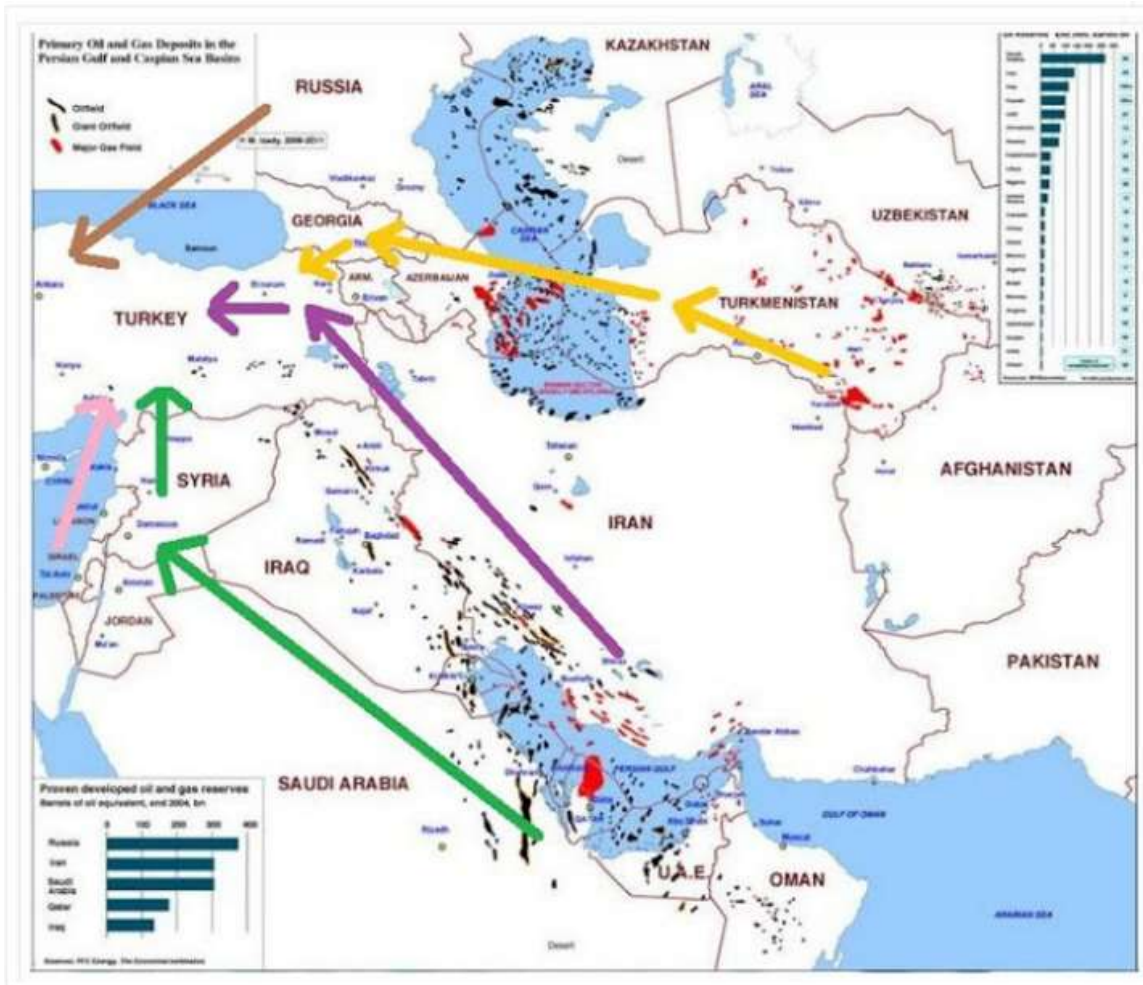
Obviously Putin and Erdogan will have to reach an agreement for North Africa too. The obvious intersection of interests is to fight the Trans-Saharan pipeline i.e. Nigeria-Niger-Algeria, and to jointly fight the French, the Spanish, the Italians and the Algerians if they dare to go ahead with the project.

If Erdogan was the Sultan of North Africa he would have a motive to promote the Trans-Saharan pipeline, but obviously the Islamic State as it is described by the Islamic propaganda lies more to the fantasy than the real world. At least that's how things are for now. Because the Muslims are very strong in United States too, and they have almost taken France, since 10% of the population in France are Muslims.

If the Putin-Erdogan propaganda is appealing to the stupid European and Americans studentss, imagine how appealing they it is to the poor Muslims,

who are a lot more stupid than the stupid young people you find in Americans and European universities. Besides the American and European universities receive generous funding from the Muslim world, and that's why most academics in Europe and the United States talk like they are the most fanatic Islamists.

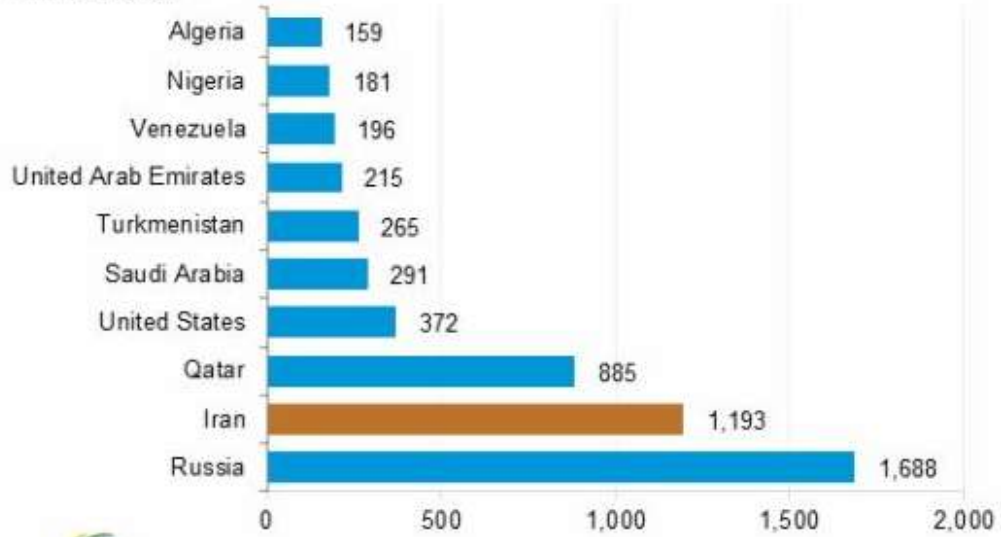
Map Natural Gas (red) and Oil (black) of the Middle East



Richest Countries in Natural Gas

Largest proved reserve holders of natural gas, January 2014

trillion cubic feet



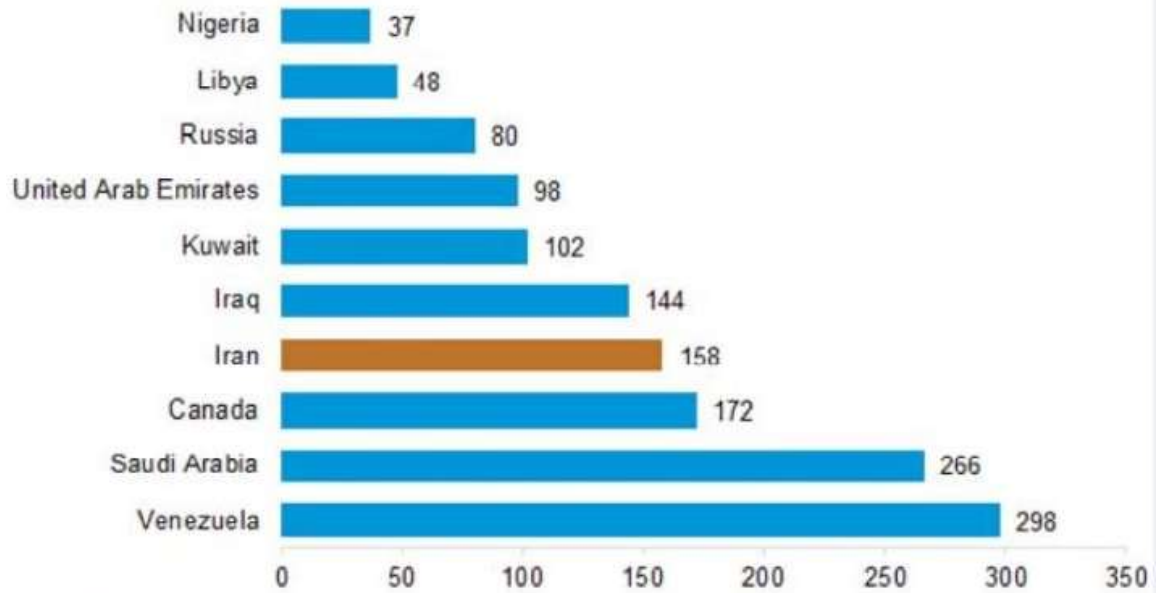
Source: *Oil & Gas Journal*

Iran's natural gas infrastructure

Richest Countries in Oil

Largest proved reserve holders of crude oil

billion barrels



Source: *Oil & Gas Journal*, January 2015.

Articles

“The Shifting Definition of ISIS' Caliphate”, August 2016

Even as ISIS forces are pushed further back behind their lines of greatest extent, a number of groups from around the world are eager to throw their loyalty behind the faltering so-called Islamic State. Groups like Boko Haram in Nigeria, al-Shabab in Somalia, and Islamic State in Libya have declared not only their support but their allegiance to the group. Central to these statements of allegiance is the use of the word “caliphate,” which is met in much of the West with as much derision as is the word “shariah.” For some observers, it makes no sense—why would groups from around the world be so willing to cash their stock in ISIS when it is clear that the group is faltering and its experiment of a “caliphate” collapsing? The truth of the matter is that while ISIS’ control of parts of Syria and Iraq may wane by the day, the caliphate that it has claimed to establish is only growing stronger. In many ways, ISIS is transforming into something altogether different, and the definition of caliphate is at the center of this metamorphosis. There is a tendency in the West to equate the idea of a caliphate with the necessity of pan-Islamic worldly power. This is understandable—the original Rashidun caliphate established following the death of Muhammad, in which the powers of government and religion were heavily intertwined, is often seen as a model. Additionally, in many sources that refer to the Golden Age of Islam, the ruler of Islam is addressed as “Caliph,” so it only follows that, for many, caliph and Islam are analogous to Caesar and ancient Rome. In reality, the correlation between the title of caliph and political power has been a much rarer occurrence outside of the earliest decades of Islamic history. In fact, the title was usually much more about maintaining legitimacy rather than demonstrating power.

During the Middle Ages, a number of caliphs ruled from seats in Cordoba, Cairo, and, most famously, Baghdad. That said, these titles were, in the case of the Umayyads in Cordoba and the Fatimids in Cairo, propagated by the same men who had political power. The reason for this is apparent upon further examination. The caliphs were those

who needed the constant reinforcement of religion to assert their legitimacy in the eyes of both their subjects and neighboring groups. Muslim Spain was in close proximity to Christendom, while Fatimid Egypt was a Shi'ite state that stood defiant of its Sunni neighbors. For example, Abd ar-Rahman of Cordoba originally held the secular title of Emir, but took on the title of caliph so that he could be mentioned as such in the Fridaykhutba. In Abbasid Baghdad, the longest-lasting of the caliphates, the title grew less and less important as local rulers, such as the famous Saladin of Crusader fame, increasingly only paid lip service to the wishes of the Abbasid caliph.

In fact, the Ottomans only revived the title as a way to build an early Sunni nationalism. After all, one still addressed the ruler of the Ottoman Empire as "Sultan," not "Caliph." During the colonial era, caliphates were established in Nigeria, Sudan, and elsewhere as a way of rallying locals against European rule. In these instances, the title's use appealed to the idea that Islam was under attack. It had little to do with political connotations, but instead framed a conflict between Islam and the other. Put into the language of Islamic governance, it underlined the distinctions between dar al-Islam, the realm of Islam, and dar al-Harb, the realm of war—the non-Islamic other. Note that such a worldview leaves little room for those in the other subdivisions developed by Islamic scholars, such as dar al-Sulh, an area where non-Muslims signed peace treaties with Muslim states.

Therefore, historically speaking, the precise definition of caliphate has changed over time, and within the considerable grey area that makes up that definition, ISIS has found the ability to maintain the idea that it is a caliphate even as its state structure changes. Just like the Rashidun and Umayyad caliphates, the first months of ISIS demonstrated a caliphate as a state. However, as ISIS faced more defeats on the battleground, it could no longer effectively define its caliphate in that paradigm. Instead, the caliphate that ISIS claims to lead now is much more like those that built a dichotomy between Islam and the other, with ISIS as the epitome of true Islam and a spiritual leader. After all, ISIS is not sending administrators to the regions that proclaim their allegiance to the group, like a traditional state might. Instead, it is pushing the idea of ISIS being the legitimate moral leader of the Islamic world.

ISIS is therefore left with two possible conclusions of the term in its own mindset. The first of these is the most obvious—ISIS uses the term as a way to attract support and further paint various conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims using the brush of dar al-Harb. In this respect, ISIS' efforts are no different than attempts by the Ottoman Empire to portray itself as a defender of Sunni nationalism. Remember that ISIS itself formed, in part, to further perceived Sunni Arab interests against a Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad and a Ba'athist regime in Damascus.

Secondly, ISIS can accept the fact that many of its adherents may not live under its direct political control. That is not of great importance. Indeed, the ability to claim responsibility for attacks that it only inspires is a major advantage for ISIS. In fact, it is the ability to appear to have some hand in coordination of the actions that will continue to give ISIS the aura that it requires to continue to expand its influence. All the while, such an expansion not only keeps local and Western targets on alert, but also furthers the mythology of ISIS as a pan-Sunni movement that can unite Sunnis from northern Nigeria, Somalia, and countless other hotspots in the Islamic world.

<http://www.mei.edu/content/article/shifting-definition-isis-caliphate>

“French strike hits IS oil facility in Syria”, November 9th 2015

The French army on Sunday bombed an oil supply centre held by the Islamic State group in eastern Syria, Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian announced Monday.

"We intervened in Syria... yesterday evening with a strike on an oil supply centre near Deir Ezzor on the border between Iraq and Syria," Le Drian told journalists on the sidelines of a forum on African peace and security in Dakar, Senegal.

It was France's third wave of strikes in Syria since President Francois Hollande decided in September to join the campaign there against IS.

The two previous waves targeted training camps for foreign jihadists who were suspected of preparing attacks in France.

Hollande on Thursday said operations would be expanded to include "all those sites from which terrorists could threaten our territory".

The president also said France would deploy its nuclear-powered aircraft carrier -- the flagship of the French navy -- to boost operations against IS in Syria and Iraq.

<http://news.yahoo.com/french-strike-hits-oil-facility-syria-143954467.html>

“November 2015 Paris Attacks”

1^η Παράγραφος

On the evening of Friday 13 November 2015, a series of coordinated terrorist attacks occurred in Paris, France and the city's northern suburb, Saint-Denis.^[9] Beginning at 21:20 CET, three suicide bombers struck outside the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, during a football match. This was followed by several mass shootings, and a suicide bombing, at cafés and restaurants. Gunmen carried out another mass shooting and took hostages at a concert in the Bataclan theatre, leading to a stand-off with police. The attackers were shot or blew themselves up when police raided the theatre.^[10]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/November_2015_Paris_attacks

“Pipelines in the Sand”, Μάιος 2016

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2016-05-17/pipelines-sand?ftcamp=crm/email//nbe/energysource/product>