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GLOBAL ENCOUNTER. RIVARLY BETWEEN ISLAMIC STATE AND AL-QAEDA OVER THE SUPREMACY OF TH GLOBAL JIHADIST MOVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

In 2015 the attention of the international community remains strongly directed to the events in the Middle East, especially because international terrorist groups have repeatedly demonstrated their ability to commit terrorist attacks, not only in the region but also in other parts of the world. However, since the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) announced the creation of the caliphate in Syria and Iraq, and then took over Mosul, there have been many doubts about how to describe and evaluate this group in relation to al-Qaeda, a global organisation associating jihadists, which the international community got to know on the occasion of terrorist attacks carried out in the West in the late 90s of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century.

It seems that the Islamic State combines the possibility of projection of military operations in the region with the abilities and potential of performing them far from the territory of the Middle East. Of course, al-Qaeda has also shown that it has these capabilities, however, in the case of the Islamic State it seems that they can become incomparably bigger in the future, with the formation of quasi-state structures.

Although the national and international literature describes the objectives and results of operations of al-Qaeda very broadly, as well as the expansion policy of the Islamic State, it is not focused on a comparative analysis of these two organisations. On the one hand, it may be connected with the

multidimensionality of the problems and an unusual dynamics of a series of interrelated conflicts in the Middle East. On the other hand, al-Qaeda was the source of the emergence of the Islamic State, and for this reason the separation from the structures of this organisation seems, in principle, to be often an impossible task. That is why, in the literature we do not find a holistic analysis of this issue, taking into account the comparison of these two organisations. We can encounter many more forecasts concerning the acquisition of monopoly over 'global jihad' by the Islamic State.

The aim of this publication is to show common features and differences between the Islamic State and al-Qaeda in the context of the rivalry of these two organisations. On the basis of a wide historical and ideological perspective, the article contextualises the creation of the Islamic State terrorist organisation, by means of which it seeks to understand why, in contrast to al-Qaeda, it is now able to so effectively gather and use its power and whether it will be possible in the future. In addition, for the purposes of this publication it seems necessary to show the origins of the organisation of the Islamic State, the first causes of its functioning in the structures of al-Qaeda which ultimately led to competition between the two organisations for hegemony over the global jihadist movement.

1. The evolution of the Islamic state from the structure of al-Qaeda

The history of the structures which evolved to ultimately create the current organisation of the Islamic State date back to the late 90s of the 20th century. Then Abu Musab al-Zarqawi created an organisation called Jamaat al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad (JTWJ)[1], next in 2004 it was renamed Al-Qaeda in Iraq, and Ayman al-Zawahiri became its main leader. It was he who extended the action plan of the organisation by Iraq, where a caliphate, an Islamic state based on Sharia laws, was to be established. In 2006 al-Qaeda in Iraq was joined by other groups of jihadists who declared the creation of the Islamic

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[1]   Zelin, A.Y. 2014. The war between ISIS and al-Qaeda for supremacy of the global jihadist movement. Research Notes. *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, no. 20, June 2014. Available at: http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote_20_Zelin.pdf, p. 1.

State organisation of Iraq (ISI), which was later renamed the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)[2].

The international community did not pay much attention to the activities of the Islamic State before 2013, which meant that the organisation was shrouded in mystery both in the Middle East and in the West. Also, not much attention was paid to the change of the name from al-Qaida in Iraq to the Islamic State in Iraq and the level of ambition of the members of the organisation elite, concealed under this action, remained entirely unnoticed. It is now known that the name change was a much greater event than it was perceived at that time. It signalled the beginning of an ambitious political project – the creation of a caliphate, which would be a prelude to further expansion[3].

Table 1

The evolution of the names of the Islamic State and the leaders of the organisation

Date	Name	Date	Leader
1999–2004	Jamaat al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad – JTWJ, Organisation of Monotheism and Jihad	**1999–2006**	Abu Musab az-Zarqawi
2004–2006	al-Qaeda in Iraq – AQI; al-Qaeda in the Land of Two Rivers		
2006	Majlis Shura al-Mujahedin, Mujahedeen Shura Council	**2006–2010**	Abu Ayyub al-Masri
2006–2013	Islamic State of Iraq – ISI		Abu Omar al-Qurashi Al-Baghdadi[1]
2013–	Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham – ISIS; Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant – ISIL; Islamic State – IS	**2010–**	Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi

[a] In July 2007, the United States acknowledged the need to consider whether Abu Omar al-Qurashi al-Baghdadi was a fictional person; Gordon, M.R. 2007. Leader of Al Qaeda group in Iraq was fictional, U.S. military says. *New York Times*. [Online] Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/18/world/africa/18iht-iraq.4.6718200.html?_r=0

Source: Own study on the basis of Zelin, A.Y. 2014. The war between ISIS and al-Qaeda for supremacy of the global jihadist movement. Research Notes. *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, no. 20, June 2014.

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[2] Terrill, A.W. 2014. Understanding the strengths and vulnerabilities of ISIS. *Parameters*, vol. 44, no. 3., pp. 14–15.

[3] Bunzel, C. 2015. *From paper state to caliphate: the ideology of the Islamic State*. The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, Analysis Paper, no. 19, March 2015, p. 4.

In early 2006 other jihad groups joined al-Qaeda in Iraq and together they set up the Mujahedeen Shura Council. In October 2006 the Council declared the establishment of The Islamic State of Iraq – ISI. In the period from 2006 to 2013, with the name change, the way of functioning of the organisation underwent transformation. It abstained from armed attacks, focusing on internal consolidation and the adaptation of its tactics to new realities. In 2010 Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai was appointed to lead what was then known as the Islamic State in Iraq. Now, as the leader of the Islamic State, he is known under the pseudonym Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. It should also be noted that during this period the ISI suffered a number of serious setbacks in the fight against the armies of the anti-terrorist coalition formed to fight against al-Qaeda. By the end of 2011 the group was marginalised in Iraq, but after the withdrawal of the US troops from Iraq, the ISI gradually regenerated its structures, taking advantage of the fact that the country plunged into a deep socio-economic and political crisis[4].

At the same time in which the Islamic State was building its structures focusing on recruitment activities, internal consolidation and transformation of military tactics and strategy, al-Qaeda was actually totally involved in fighting with the anti-terrorist coalition under the leadership of the United States. In addition, in May 2011, it lost its leader Osama bin Laden. Since the death of its military and spiritual leader al-Qaeda was perceived a as moribund group. Despite this, it did not want to give up the position of the leader of the jihad movement, trying to compete with ISIS. Ayman al-Zawahiri tried to counter the increase of the power of ISIS in the Middle East by announcing the creation of al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), which so far has not produced the desired effect, which was to increase the scope of the territorial impact of the group[5].

In April 2013 overt hostility between ISIS and al-Qaeda broke out, with the announcement by Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi of the extension of the Islamic State in Iraq to the territory of Syria and changing the name of the group into the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham. Also he revealed that the organisation merged with the an-Nusra Front, but the leader of the Front Abu Mohammed al-Jawal issued a statement denying such a merger. This event caused another

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4   Terrill, A.W. *op. cit.*, pp. 14–15.
5   Moore, J. Al-Qaeda losing 'deadly competition' with ISIS. *Newsweek*. [Online] Available at: http://www.newsweek.com/al-qaeda-decline-syria-affiliate-nusra-front-considers-split-311348 [Accessed: 25 April 2015]; Saltman, E.M., Winter, Ch. 2014. *Islamic State: the changing face of modern jihadism*. Quilliam, p.10.

argument between the Islamic State and al-Qaeda and led to contention for the subordination of individual jihadist cells[6].

Since the proclamation of the caliphate by the Islamic State in 2014, the organisation extremely quickly became economically self-sufficient thanks to the creation of a sophisticated financial model which, in contrast to the actions of al-Qaeda, stresses the importance of autonomy and separateness of the organisation in relation to other structures. The IS has developed a system of self-sufficiency, mainly production self-sufficiency, but also sales of crude oil resources. In addition, ISIS has got not only a well-developed economic mechanism, but also impressive operational capabilities which, when combined with propaganda, are extremely effective, by which the group represents some kind of a factor which has changed the 'global game' of terrorist organisations[7]. However, despite the fact that such a statement is obvious, because the Islamic State has undoubtedly shaken the global arena of jihad, it is not clear what this will mean for the face and actions of Islamic terrorism in the coming years, and what the consequences of this will be for the international community.

We can see numerous differences between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. The discrepancies are visible not only in the mode of action but also in the human potential of both organisations, as well as the leadership style. The main difference comes from the origin of the founders of the group. Zarqawi and other leaders of the Islamic State come from at least upper middle class, and many of them, like the leader, have higher education. Despite the fact that Bin Laden himself came from an aristocratic Saudi Arabia family[8], his closest associates came or come from poorer, less educated backgrounds. However, frictions between the leaders were not caused by the questions of the origin and education, but rather by Zarqawi's extreme views. Already during the first meeting of the leaders in Afghanistan in 1999, bin Laden was distrustful and suspicious of the younger associate. But Zarqawi settled in another part of Afghanistan, away from bin Laden and al-Qaeda program, as a result of which the concerns of the al-Qaeda leader weakened. It is believed that bin Laden from the beginning tried to fully control Zarqawi,

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6   Zelin, A.Y. The War…, p. 4; Terrill, A.W. *op. cit.*, p.15.

7   Cockburn, P. 2015. *Państwo Islamskie.* [*The jihadis return: ISIS and the new Sunni upris-ing.*] Translated from English by M. Bielik; introduction and substantial consultation D. Boćkowski, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy PWN, p. 90.

8   Villamarín Pulido, L.A. 2008. *Sieć Al-Kaida*. [*Al-Qaeda network*.] Translated by Danuta Zasada, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wołoszański, p. 107.

demanding swearing a religious oath of allegiance (*bay'ah*)[9], but the offer was repeatedly rejected. Zarqawi yielded to bin Laden only in 2004, taking an oath and changing the name of his group to al-Qaeda in the Land of Two Rivers, widely known as al-Qaeda in Iraq. At that time this fact could cement the relationship between the two organisations, but current events show that the aim of the al-Qaeda leader has not been achieved, and it was then that the Islamic State started to gain in autonomy[10].

Being a part of the network of al-Qaida in Iraq meant that the group controlled the resources and the flow of foreign fighters, which helped it win the loyalty of society. This is important because in this way AQI controlled a number of informal structures and was able to affect future generations of the jihadist movement. As a result, one of the key factors that differentiate the Islamic State from al-Qaeda now is a generational gap[11].

It should be also noted that, unlike the leaders of other cells of al-Qaeda, the current emir of ISIS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who was appointed in 2010, has never publicly sworn the oath of allegiance to Zawahiri[12]. Therefore, it can be assumed that he was set to become self-sufficient and in the long run to achieve hegemony over the jihadist movement by means of the organisation then known as the Islamic State in Iraq. It seems that it is on the right track, though the methods of the pursuit of this objective seem to be brittle. The Islamic State continuously creates its own network of interconnected, terrorist groups, modelled on the known activities of al-Qaeda. At the same time it applies proselytic actions, modern methods of recruiting fighters, improves fundraising methods, and above all tries to build effectively functioning quasi-state structures[13].

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[9] Bay'ah – an Islamic oath of allegiance, obedience sworn to a caliph, the leader of the Muslims; *Arabowie. Słownik encyklopedyczny.* [*Arabs. Encyclopedic dictionary*.] 2001. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, p. 99. Only an individual can take the oath, that is why after Zarqawi's death, bay'ah was canceled, which technically meant the lack of subordination in relation to al-Qaeda, although in practice it was subordinated to the al-Qaeda until February 2014.
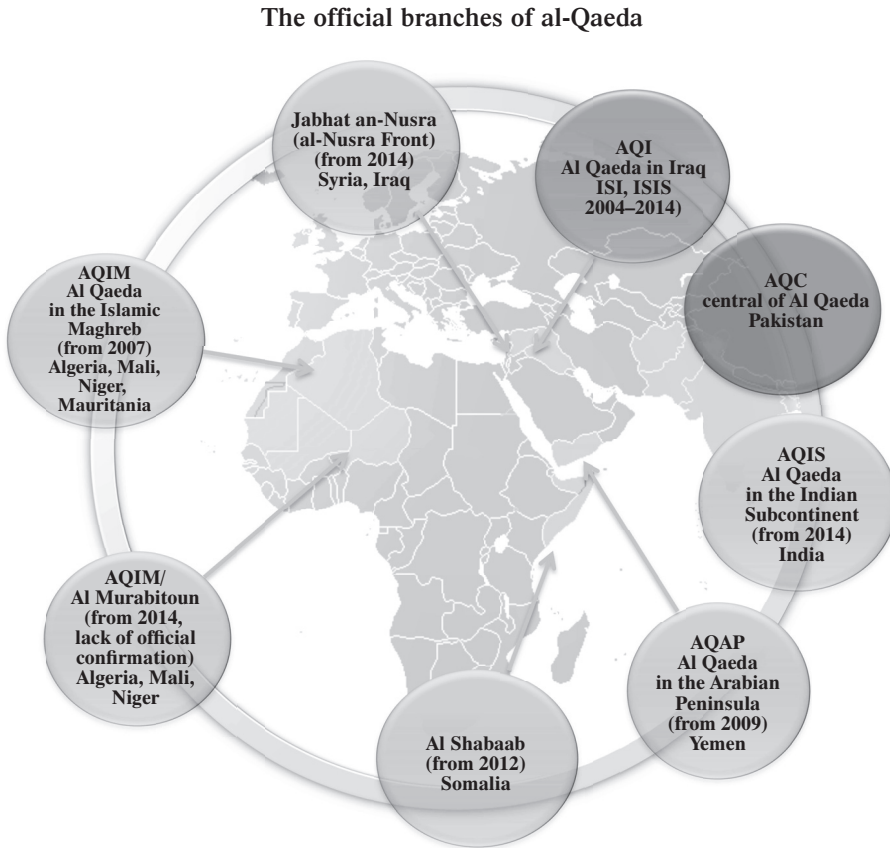
[10] Zelin, A.Y. The War…, pp. 1–2.

[11] *Ibidem*, p. 4.

[12] *Ibidem*, pp. 1–2.

[13] The IS has a number of attributes of statehood: the territory inhabited by nearly six million people, its own armed forces, police, law and judiciary, the capital, flag, leader, it intends to print its own documents and money, has its own media, press, builds a system of medical care and education. Boćkowski, D. 2015. Wstęp do polskiego wydania. Państwo Islamskie u wrót Europy. [Preface to the Polish edition. The Islamic State at the gates of Europe.] In: Cockburn, P. *Państwo Islamskie*. [*The jihadis return:*

Figure 1

The official branches of al-Qaeda

Source: own study.

2. AL-QAEDA VERSUS THE ISLAMIC STATE

In the 80s and 90s of the 20th century numerous regional groups of extremist and fundamentalist shared a very general ideological outline as well as funds and resources provided by Osama bin Laden. A clear division between Al-Qaeda and its factions, that is the split in the jihadist movement occurred only after the events of 11 September 2001. However, in the initial phase of the process, most of them, despite independence, maintained friendly relations with the network of al-Qaeda. The current situation seems

ISIS and the new Sunni uprising.] Translated from English by M. Bielik; introduction and substantial consultation D. Boćkowski, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy PWN, p. 34.

to point to the ultimate sanction of the split in the global jihadist movement which led to rivalry for hegemony between the Islamic State and al-Qaeda. The presentation of both similarities and differences in the functioning of both organisations requires first of all an analysis of ideological issues, the course of action, recruitment of new members, use of media and methods of financing.

In ideological matters the Islamic State it is very similar to other terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and the Taliban. The differences are visible only in the approach to the proper time and conditions necessary to establish the caliphate[14]. Both al-Qaeda and the Islamic State identify themselves with the movement in the Islamic political thought known as Jihad-Salafism and jihadism[15]. In fact, both groups refer to the theology of Salafism and present similar nature of jihad, but the Islamic State does it in a much stricter way. In contrast to al-Qaeda, it is absolutely uncompromising in matters of doctrine, absolutely and unquestionably referring to the idea of Salafism[16]. In addition, the *differentia specifica* of the Islamic State seems to lie in the fact that religion and ideology play a much more subjective role, which may result from the already mentioned differences in backgrounds and education of leaders of the groups.

The difference is reflected in the chosen path to the ultimate goal which is the establishment of an Islamic caliphate. The main enemy of al-Qaeda is the United States, which is seen as the cause of all conflicts in the region. The overthrow of the corrupt, apostate regimes in the Middle East and replacing them with 'real' Islamic rules becomes of secondary importance. In turn, the Islamic State does not apply a similar strategy, seeking opponents in its environment, at the regional level. The road to the main purpose of the Islamic State is not through actions directed against the United States, but against apostate regimes in the Arab world. These actions were initiated against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria and Prime Minister Haider

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[14] Friedland, E. 2015. *Special Report. The Islamic State*. Clarion Project. [Online] 10 May 2015. Available at: http://www.clarionproject.org/sites/default/files/islamic-state-isis-isil-factsheet-1.pdf, pp. 13–14.

[15] Jihadism is a neologism which was adopted by the scientific community in the late 90s of the 20th century and has permanently entered common use. Jihadism is a global social movement, in its assumptions it is utopian, anti-Western, based on the use of violence. See Khosrokhavar, F. 2009. *Inside jihadism. Understanding jihadi movements worldwide*. Boulder, London: Paradigm Publishers.

[16] Bunzel, C. 2015. *From paper state to caliphate: the ideology of the Islamic State*. The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, Analysis Paper, no. 19, March 2015, p. 7.

al-Abadi in Iraq. Thus, the Islamic State and al-Qaeda are fundamentally different in terms of the perception of their main opponents, and used strategies. Their fight tactics are also not the same. The list of enemies of the Islamic State is much longer than that of al-Qaeda, and includes Jews, Shiites, Zaidis (and other factions of Shia Islam), Yezidis, Alawites, Kurdish and terrorist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, Hezbollah[17], or some factions of al-Qaeda, for example, the Support Front for the People of Al-Sham (the al-Nusra Front). Al-Qaeda also regards Shiites as apostates, but killing them is perceived as too extreme[18], that is harmful to the broader concept of jihad which should be in the first place directed against the West[19]. A short-term aim of the Islamic State is the struggle in Syria and Iraq, a medium-term gaol consists in the consolidation and extension of control in the territory of Iraq and Syria, and taking over control of neighbouring Sunni countries. A long-term goal, and also the ultimate one, is identical with the aspirations of al-Qaeda, that is the establishment of an Islamic caliphate[20].

Thus, the differences in strategies and techniques of both organisations may result from the desire to control the territory and constantly strengthen and expand its position. By controlling a particular territory the IS can build an army, and by the army it can control more territory. For this purpose, hierarchical structure of counsellors, ministers and military commanders on the conquered areas are created[21]. The IS has already established a relatively high degree of stability of the created local organisational structures[22]. Leaving the ideological issues aside, the functioning of the IS, as a kind of a quasi-state on the occupied territory, is quite conventional insurgent behaviour, characteristic for many insurrectionary movements, including those of a fundamentalist nature. The direction in which these new structures will be developed is less obvious. On the other hand, al-Qaeda sees a long-term objective in gaining territory and the construction of the caliphate, and that is why it focuses on the dispersion and fragmentation of international

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[17] The Islamic State considers Shia Islam as perversion, like all other factions of Islam which are not compatible with the Salafist rhetoric of the organisations.

[18] Bunzel, C. *op. cit.*, p. 11.

[19] Byman, D., Williams, J. 5015. Al-Qaeda vs. ISIS: the battle for the soul of jihad. [Online] *Newsweek* 27 March 2015. Available at: http://www.newsweek.com/al-qaeda-vs-isis-battle-soul-jihad-317414 [Accessed: 13 June 2015].

[20] Friedland, E. *op. cit.*, p. 13.

[21] *Ibidem*, pp. 17–19.

[22] See Mecham, Q. 2015. How much of a state is the Islamic State? In: *Islamism in the IS age*. POMEPS Studies 12. [Online] 17 March 2015. Available at: http://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/POMEPS_Studies_12_ISAge_Web.pdf, pp. 20–24.

structures, and not on building local structures[23]. These differences in the used tactics reflect the differences in strategies. Al-Qaeda appreciates a massive scale operations, therefore makes dramatic attacks on strategic and symbolic targets, such as the World Trade Centre. In contrast, the Islamic State evolves with the conflicts in Iraq and Syria, and the tactics of the organisation adapts to the circumstances of these wars. The IS seeks to gain massive strength, and terrorism, in this context, is not a punctual action as in the case of al-Qaeda, it represents a part of the revolutionary war in which all methods of struggle are allowed[24].

The differences in the selection of techniques and perception of enemies, including mainly Shiite communities, may result from the fact that certainly the organisational structures of the Islamic State are much more heterogeneous than those of al-Qaeda. Militants from various countries and backgrounds work in the structures of the IS, and the only motive required to join the ranks of the group is a declaration of readiness to fight with the infidels and total devotion to the cause. This issue is also related to the dissimilarity of ways of recruiting fighters. The Islamic State has implemented a number of methods adapted to all environments. These are actions on local, regional, and international levels. The recruitment of fighters is not limited to the territory of the Middle East and North Africa, but it is also extended to other parts of the world, including primarily Europe. In this way, the organisation shows the world that it is exempt from punishment for breaking international law[25] and law of the widely understood West.

In addition, the IS uses a variety of techniques to recruit, ranging from proselytizing[26] taking a form of exerting pressure, the use of threats, torture, to creating an apparent concern for society: providing material and social benefits to those in need. It recruits women, and even forces them to send

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[23] See Kosmynka, S. 2012. *Od Boga do terror: rola religii w ideologii dżihadyzmu na przykładzie organizacji Al-Kaida.* [*From God to terror: the role of religion in the ideology of jihadism on the example of al-Qaeda organisation.*] Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, pp. 251–264.

[24] Byman, D., Williams, J. *op. cit.* [Accessed: 13 June 2015].

[25] See Lankosz, K., Chorośnicki, M., Czubik, P. 2005. *Walka z terroryzmem w świetle prawa międzynarodowego.* [*The fight against terrorism under international law.*] 2nd ed. Bielsko-Biała: Wyższa Szkoła Administracji.

[26] Proselytism, understood as an attempt to recruit new followers of a particular religion or idea, or as converting others to one's faith. Proselytism may take a right or wrong form, but the most dangerous of its form is exerting pressure or coercion to accept the principles of the faith.

their children to camps training new militants[27]. The organisation sees in this action a long-term investment which will be used to build loyalty and create a modern staff of fighters who will perceive violence as their way of life[28]. In addition, women play a different role in the organisation of the Islamic State. In February 2014 the IS announced the creation of the Al-Khansaa Brigade consisting solely of women whose main task is to enforce strict rules of Sharia law. However, according to the organisation, women should be primarily mothers and housewives, while men – militants. If the roles are mixed, then foundation of humanity will be affected leading to instability[29].

On the other hand, the international activities have led to the recruitment of several thousand fighters fascinated by the ideology of jihadism among Western countries. The Islamic State uses all means to attract young Europeans. A recruiting network is created by supporters from different countries and people returning from the Middle East with a mission to recruit new fighters. Network operations are facilitated by the progressive Islamisation of Western Europe[30]. Special schools are even created for newly recruited foreign jihadists[31]. This does not change the fact that the extremists associated with societies of Western Europe after arriving in a zone occupied by the Islamic State do not become a fighting 'vanguard' of the Muslim

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[27] Islamic State recruits 400 children since January: Syria monitor. *Reuters* [Online] 24 March 2015. Available at: http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/24/us-mideast-crisis-syria-children-idUSKBN0MK0U520150324 [Accessed: 7 April 2015]; Raising tomorrow's mujahideen': the horrific world of Isis's child soldiers. Extracted from: Stern, J., Berger, J.M. 2015. *ISIS: The state of terror.* HarperCollins. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/10/horror-of-isis-child-soldiers-state-of-terror [Accessed: 13 June 2015].

[28] Raising tomorrow's mujahideen': the horrific world of Isis's child soldiers. Extracted from: Stern, J., Berger, J. M. 2015. *ISIS: The state of terror.* HarperCollins. [Online] Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/10/horror-of-isis-child-soldiers-state-of-terror [Accessed: 13 June 2015].

[29] Women and jihad; Caliphate calling. *The Economist*, vol. 414, no. 8927, 28 February 2015.

[30] The population of Muslims, including immigrants and people born in Western Europe amount to approximately 20 million out of the 500 million inhabitants. Johnson, T. 2011. *Europe: Integrating Islam*. [Online] 25 July 2011. Available at: http://www.cfr.org/religion/europe-integrating-islam/p8252 [Accessed: 8 April 2015].

[31] Boćkowski, D. 2015. Wstęp do polskiego wydania. Państwo Islamskie u wrót Europy. [Preface to the Polish edition. The Islamic State at the gates of Europe.] In: Cockburn, P. *Państwo Islamskie*. [*The jihadis return: ISIS and the new Sunni uprising*.] Translated from English by M. Bielik; introduction and substantial consultation D. Boćkowski, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy PWN, p. 34.

community. Frustrated with the exclusion from the society of the West, guided by the need to return to the tradition and culture, they become the lowest level of the organisational hierarchy of the Islamic State[32].

Not only recruitment activities of the IS significantly differ from those used by al-Qaeda. It pertains also to the information transfer techniques, used both for the transfer of data on the activities and to recruit new members. The Islamic State leads a massive propaganda campaign using all modern means of communication, including Twitter[33], Facebook or YouTube, making it much more effective than the efforts of al-Qaeda in this matter [34]. The organisation also publishes an English-language magazine entitled *Dabiq*[35] and program manifestos published by the women's Al-Khansaa Brigade, while al-Qaeda mainly produces long films presenting the considerations about various aspects of jihad of main ideologists of the group, which are then transferred to the media. Certainly, the Islamic State media messages are more attractive for numerous young, frustrated fanatics of the idea of jihad. Undoubtedly the progressive process of globalisation and computerisation has enabled leaders of the group to maximise the potential of new technologies and social media. Modern technologies are also used not only to convey verbal aggression, but also to promote the contents of macabre films, such as those showing mass and individual murders, including of American journalists James Foley and Stephen Sotloff or Briton David Haines.

In addition, another factor conditioning the attractiveness of the Islamic State is also strong motivating of actions by political and social considerations, whereas in the case of al-Qaida primarily by hatred of Western civilisation. Leaders of the groups pose as defenders of the Sunni community, not only because of the religious community, but also for the sake of politico-socio-cultural actions. They try to create the educational, tax and health care system under the black flag of the Islamic Caliphate.

The methods of financing of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State are largely convergent, but each of them constitutes a different percentage of the total

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[32] Roy, O. 2007. Islamic terrorist radicalisation in Europe. In: Amghar, S., Boubekeur, A., Emerson, M. eds. *European Islam challenges for public policy and society*. Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, pp. 55–56.

[33] On the use of Twitter by the IS see Berger, J.M., Morgan, J. 2015. *The ISIS Twitter census. Defining and describing the population of ISIS supporters on Twitter*. The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, Analysis Paper, no. 20, March 2015.

[34] After the atrocities; terror and Islam. *The Economist*, vol. 414, no. 8921, 17 January 2015, p. 21.

[35] So far 9 issues of the magazine have been published.

revenues of the organisation. The IS, currently considered the richest terrorist organisation, derives its revenue primarily from smuggling crude oil (at least a million dollars a day). It is supplemented by funds from extortion, kidnapping for ransom and the tax system introduced in the occupied territories. The group is largely self-sufficient, donations constitute only a small percentage of its income. Despite the diversification of income, important differences can be indicated in obtaining financing for the activities of both organisations. The network built by al-Qaeda is more decentralised and fluid, which may be due to the long period of its operation. Moreover, in contrast to the Islamic State, donations represent a significant percentage of revenues of al-Qaeda, the CIA has calculated that it is approximately 30 million USD annually[36].

3. Will al-Qaeda lose the rivalry with the Islamic state?

The main reason for the overt hostility between al-Qaida and the organisation now known as the Islamic State may be considered Al-Baghdadi's disobedience, who decided to take control over Syria without the consent of the leader of al-Qaeda. This move surprised the headquarters of al-Qaeda, which in 2014 finally and formally distanced itself from its subsidiary in Iraq and Syria, ending years of difficult cooperation between the two organisations[37].

However, disputes between religious leaders and leaders of both organisations had lasted for a long time and had not been related only to the issue of the operation area. They had often been disputes on ideological, philosophy of life, political and social issues. Zarqawi already felt that the only way to save the *umma* – the global Islamic community – was its cleansing, while Ayman al-Zawahiri believes that not Muslims themselves are the problem, but apostate institutions which should be replaced by new ones – the true Islamic governments[38]. This fundamental divergence between the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda can be reduced to the difference between the doctrinal and more strategic perspective and differences in attitudes towards

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[36] Friedland, E. *op. cit.*, p. 20; Saltman, E.M., Winter, Ch. *op. cit.*, pp. 10–11, 47–51.

[37] Baghdadi was a leader of a section of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. For this reason, he should not lay claims to al-Sham (the Levant) which was under the control of another branch of Al-Qaeda – the al-Nusra Front.

[38] Byman, D. 2015. *Terrorism in Africa: the imminent threat to the United States*. 29 April 2015. Available at: http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/testimony/2015/04/29-terrorism-in-africa-byman/byman-aq-v-is-hsc-042315.pdf, p. 4.

building Islamic institutions and reign. Currently, the IS recognises that al-Zawahiri has deviated from the path chosen by bin Laden, which makes his leadership illegitimate. Leaders of the Islamic State consider themselves the only, true heirs of the legacy of bin Laden and al-Qaeda, which they carry out under a new name of the Islamic State caliphate[39].

Al-Qaeda has been impaired as a result of counter-terrorism actions in the region of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Former leaders of the group are dimmed by the new generation of jihadists, presenting more radical views that fit well the political climate prevailing in some Arab countries, struggling with the effects of revolts which began in 2010 and 2011. Al-Qaeda now has competition from the IS in Iraq, Syria and Libya. In addition, in Nigeria and Egypt certain factions of jihadist groups have announced an alliance with the IS.

It should be remembered that in spite of the above factors, al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan and al-Qaeda's affiliates in various regions now control more territory than at any other point in history. According to some scholars, al-Qaeda has never been on the path to defeat, and the prediction of the downfall of the organisation after bin Laden's death were premature just like the current voices about its collapse. The presence of branches of the organisation in different geographical regions (Fig. 1) can be evidence for this, as well as for the territorial proliferation of the organisation. However, on the other hand, this number may be proof of the consolidation of previously existing militant groups operating in the area, and not of the creation of new structures. Moreover, just like the Islamic State, they can detach themselves from the head office and start to compete with it. It does not change the fact that al-Qaeda is present in many different regions of the world[40].

Analyzing al-Qaeda as a network of interconnected cells, it is clear that its performance seems to remain at a good level. It is focused on profits in Syria and Yemen, as well as potentially in Libya if its unofficial branch, Ansar al-Sharia, is able to regain the strength lost after the establishment of the Islamic State. The headquarters of al-Qaeda has similar hopes connected the activities of the al-Nusra Front in Syria. In spite of this, if you look at the other branches – Al-Shabaab, AQIM, as well as AQIS – everything look less positive. However, if key data and resources of the network are successfully moved away from Pakistan, where the position of al-Qaeda has

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[39] Zelin, A.Y., *The War…*, pp. 1–5.

[40] Humud, C.E. 2014. *Al Qaeda-affiliated groups: Middle East and Africa*. Congressional Research Service Report, 10 October 2014. Available at: http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R43756.pdf, pp. 24–25.

significantly weakened, then the chances of survival and further development of the organisation will greatly improve[41].

The Islamic State takes advantage of this situation and does not conceal the competition with al-Qaeda and usurps the right to control the branches subordinate to the head office of al-Qaeda (al Qaeda Central – AQC). Such actions have already produced the effect of obtaining a group of Taliban – Al Qaeda members from Afghanistan and Pakistan, who have sworn allegiance to al-Baghdadi. Desertions of members of organisations subordinate to al-Qaeda have also happened in the case of the al-Nusra Front, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and al-Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb. Thus, the Islamic State also seems to understand the need to establish its cells in other countries, and wherever the call for jihad is or will be present, rivalry will also appear there[42].

Although al-Qaeda and the Islamic State share a common ideological program, aiming at the ultimate establishment of an Islamic caliphate, the IS is a lot younger, more radical in its actions and certainly has a faster operating structure than al-Qaeda. However, does this rapid pace of action also mean greater efficiency? An unambiguous answer to this question at the moment is a difficult task due to the multidimensional nature of this competition, connected with many conflicts in the Middle East. It seems, however, that the IS will retain the upper hand, so long as it does not suffer any significant territorial losses and can present its structures as those that build an Islamic caliphate better than al-Qaeda and its official affiliates. In addition, the Islamic State also gains the support of many important jihadist groups, for example, Nigerian Boko Haram and Egyptian Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, which have formally pledged allegiance to the IS and may be regarded as official cells of the organisation and the areas controlled by them as 'provinces' of the Islamic State caliphate. Although the media attention is focused on the Islamic State, al-Qaeda's subsidiaries have also achieved successes in recent times. This applies to the activities of AQAP in Yemen and the al-Nusra Front in Syria[43].

The rivalry of the two strongest jihadist movements, which have almost identical strategic objectives, is a fact, because first of its signs are already visible. The IS and al-Qaeda are divided mainly because of the divergence of priorities. Al-Qaeda is focused on attacking Western targets and anti-terrorist coalition forces, while the IS intends first to overthrow the systems in Middle

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[41] Zelin, A.Y. *ICSR Insight: The State of al-Qaeda*. Available at: http://icsr.info/2015/04/icsr-insight-state-al-qaeda/ [Accessed: 30 April 2015].

[42] Zelin, A.Y. *ICSR Insight…*; Byman, D. *op. cit.*, p. 6.

[43] Byman, D. *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Eastern countries by military means. However, the tactics has changed after August 2014 when the international coalition forces started conducting raids. Just like al-Qaeda, the Islamic State has begun calling for attacks on Western countries. Given the attractiveness of the IS for the community of jihadists coming from the West it is a disturbing tendency. Potentially, the group may develop the ability to attack targets located at greater distances.

It seems that al-Qaeda has already lost its monopoly of the leader of global jihadism, though in the eyes of many people it remains a symbol of terrorism[44]. Furthermore, the group which descends from this organisation is more and more often labelled with this name. However, what makes the Islamic State more attractive for Islamic militants? Certainly, one of the factors is the heterogeneity of the IS, because fighters from around the world, not only from the Middle East, operate in its structures, on the other hand, it is a group of very different origins. For this reason, leaders of al-Qaeda wonder whether they have sufficient capacity to win the ideological war with the future generation of the global jihadist movement.

On the one hand, the rivalry and mutual fight among jihadist groups can be helpful for counter terrorist activities and cause the separation of the available resources. In addition, such chaos could destroy the idea of global jihadism, thereby reducing slightly the risk for Western countries. On the other hand, excessive competition of jihadists can be a great threat to the West. If the resources of both the 'old guard' of al-Qaeda and the IS do not change, increased competition of these two jihadist networks, caused by endless conflicts, may constitute the most dangerous scenario. This rivalry may cause the increased demand for spectacular attacks against the West, which could serve as a confirmation of the dominance of one of the parties as well as a means of propaganda operations.

Summary

The face of radicalism has significantly changed since the events of 11 September 2001, after which al-Qaeda was a monopolist in the world of Islamic jihadism. Currently in the international arena there are numerous terrorist groups of different sizes, which not only cooperate, but often

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[44] See Kosmynka, S. 2012. *Od Boga do terroru: rola religii w ideologii dżihadyzmu na przykładzie organizacji al-Kaida*. [*From God to terror: the role of religion in the ideology of jihadism on the example of al-Qaeda organisation*.] Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, pp. 251–264.

compete with one another. An example of such competition is a conflict between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. These organisations are currently at open war for domination over the global Jihadist community. Undoubtedly, the IS currently has the upper hand, but the fight is not over yet. On the one hand, the organisation skilfully uses the adopted mechanisms of action, e.g. the use of cruelty, violence or proselytism and excessive enforcement of Sharia law, which currently make it attractive for a certain group of Muslims. On the other hand, in the long term, they may lead to the alienation of the organisation which, by failing to establish its cells and not undertaking cooperation with groups in other regions, would be deprived of support. In this way it will strain the long-term goals of the global 'project' of the proliferation of ideas of jihad, the ideas for which al-Qaeda, and perhaps above all al-Qaeda, has been striving for many years.

Exactly from this perspective the global clash of al-Qaeda with the Islamic State organisation could reduce the spread of the ideology of jihadism, which would contribute to the facilitation of counter terrorist activities. However, analysing the current activities of the IS, increased competition with al-Qaeda could led to the increase in demand for terrorist attacks in the West, to confirm the efficacy and the dominance of one party. Despite the fact that the prospect of a merger, or even a limited agreement between the two organisations is considered to be the most dangerous, it is possible that their rivalry constitutes a greater threat for international security. Therefore, the fear of the creation of a huge jihadist network under the leadership of al-Qaeda should be less worrisome than a scenario in which two parallel, competing structures are trying to prove their hegemony over the global jihadist movement through spectacular attacks in the West.

However, Al-Qaeda is going through a difficult period, because the IS is gaining influence both in Syria and Iraq. Taking into account the prospect of further successes, it is not currently strong enough to be able to resist this grouping. As we can see in Syria even militants of the al-Nusra Front are not able to restrain the IS. Currently, al-Qaeda and its affiliates are forced to try to regain lost territories. What is more, the caliphate created by the IS is a structure attractive for jihadists, and successes which the Islamic State has, in contrast to al-Qaeda which has not achieved major victories in the last decade, are attracting new members and the IS continues to build its prestige and legitimacy within the global Jihadist movement.

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Global encounter. Rivarly between Islamic State and al-Qaeda over the supremacy of the global jihadist movement

Summary

The aim of the article is the comparison of Islamic State and al-Qaeda, demonstrating similarities and differences between the two organisations. The main hypothesis of the research is the assumption that the Islamic State is different from al-Qaida primarily due to the fact that the main purpose of the organisation activity is to establish an Islamic state based on Sharia principles. This assumption is part of the strategy established by the deceased spiritual leader of the group – Abu Mus'ab az-Zarqawi. Despite the fact that the final strategic goal of al-Qaeda is now convergent with that of the Islamic State, al-Qaeda's methods of operation developed under the leadership of Osama bin Laden focused on the destabilisation of the West and the Muslim support of liberation movements. In turn, the Islamic State focuses on the elimination of apostate regimes in the Arab world and establishment of the Caliphate. Currently the diversity of perspectives of leaders of both terrorist organisations, despite many similarities in the ideological issues, has led to a rivalry between the two factions for hegemony over the global jihadist movement.

Globalne starcie. Rywalizacja Państwa Islamskiego z Al-Kaidą o hegemonię nad ruchem dżihadystowskim

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest porównanie Państwa Islamskiego i Al-Kaidy, wykazanie podobieństw łączących oraz różnic dzielących obie organizacje. Główną hipotezą badawczą jest założenie, że Państwo Islamskie różni się od Al-Kaidy przede wszystkim tym, że priorytetowym celem organizacji jest ustanowienie państwa islamskiego, opartego na zasadach szariatu. Założenie to jest częścią strategii ustanowionej przez zmarłego przywódcę duchowego grupy – Abu Musaba az-Zarkawiego. Pomimo, że ostateczny cel strategiczny Al-Kaidy jest obecnie zbieżny z działaniami Państwa Islamskiego, to metody działania Al-Kaidy opracowane pod przewodnictwem Osamy bin Ladena skoncentrowane są na destabilizacji Zachodu oraz wsparciu muzułmańskich ruchów

wyzwoleńczych. Z kolei Państwo Islamskie koncentruje się na likwidacji apo-statycznych reżimów w świecie arabskim oraz ustanowieniu kalifatu. Obecnie owa odmienność perspektyw przywódców obu organizacji terrorystycznych, pomimo wielu podobieństw w kwestiach ideologicznych, doprowadziła do rywalizacji obu ugrupowań o hegemonię nad globalnym ruchem dżihady-stowskim.

Глобальное столкновение. Конкуренция между Исламским государством и Аль-Каидой в вопросе о гегемонии над движением джихада

Резюме

Целью статьи является сравнение Исламского государства и Аль-Каиды, определение объединяющих сходств и разделяющих различий между этими двумя организациями. Главной исследовательской гипотезой является пред-посылка, что Исламское государство отличается от Аль-Каиды прежде всего тем, что приоритетной целью организации является создание исламского государства, основанного на принципах шариата. Данная предпосылка явля-ется частью стратегии, разработанной покойным духовным лидером группы – Абу Мусаба аз Заркави. Несмотря на то, что окончательная стратегическая цель Аль-Каиды в настоящее время совпадает с деятельностью Исламского государства, методы действий Аль-Каиды, разработанные под руководством Осамы Биль-Ладена, концентрируются на дестабилизации Запада и поддер-жке мусульманских освободительных движений. В свою очередь, Исламское государство концентрируется на ликвидации апостатичеких режимов в араб-ском мире и установлении халифата. В настоящее время это несходство перспектив лидеров обеих террористических организаций, несмотря на мно-жество сходных моментов в идеологических вопросах, привело к конкурен-ции обеих группировок в борьбе за гегемонию над глобальным движением джихада.