Global Jihadism after the Syria War

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Abstract

The period 2012-2018 is turning out to be an important transformative period for the global Jihadi movement, most importantly because of events in Syria but also resulting from Jihadists' ability to expand and take advantage of beneficial opportunity structures in other war theatres. The article identifies the most important trends of this period for the future evolution of Jihadism, namely the ideological evolution, Jihadism as a tangible political project, internal conflict, networks and training, the coming of a new generation of ideologues and technical evolution. Similar to previous transformative periods in Afghanistan and Iraq, the argument made here is that these six trends will have a long-lasting impact on the Jihadi movement and guide the behaviour of groups and individuals for years to come.

Keywords: Jihadism, Syria, Global Jihad, Fratricide, Ideology

In 2013, Danish researcher Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen posed the question of whether Syria would become a school for terrorists.[1] Now, six years later, the answer appears to be a resounding confirmation. The war in Syria will go on record as one of those key periods that transformed the state of Jihadism, similar to previous experiences of Jihadi melting pots like Afghanistan in the 1980s-90s and Iraq in the 2000s. In 2006, Thomas Hegghammer published the article "Global Jihadism after the Iraq War" examining how the war in Iraq impacted the Jihadi movement and its engagement in other battlefields.[2] This article builds on Hegghammer's piece in that it identifies how the Syrian war—and more generally the period 2012-2018—has had an impact on developments and trends within Jihadism.

Looking at past transformative periods, like the experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, helps to understand how current events may change the future. Hence, our knowledge of how these past experiences influenced the ensuing evolution of the Jihadi movement offers further insights into how current trends affiliated with the Jihadi school of Syria will influence the future development and configuration of the Jihadi movement. The article does not only deal with the Syrian war, but more generally, its evolutions within Jihadism during the period (2012-2018) of the Syrian war as Jihadists have been active on several battlefields, but with Syria being the most dominating, not least because of the success of the Islamic State and Syria being the centre of its caliphate. Moreover, it identifies the most important trends of this period and discusses how they may influence the future. These trends are: ideological evolution, Jihadism as a tangible political project, internal conflict, networks and training, a new generation of ideologues, and technical evolution. Each of these aspects has been characteristic of the ongoing Jihad in Syria and other battlefields since 2013 and will likely have an impact on the future development of Jihadism locally, regionally, and globally.

This article is founded on several years of close observation of the Jihadi movement as part of a larger research project on the internal dynamics within Jihadism. This process has involved reading thousands of Jihadists' own written products, following their online behaviour on Twitter and later Telegram, and interviewing senior ideological figures. Based on this research, the article first describes each of six identified trends before concluding with a discussion of how these trends will have an impact on the future evolution of the Jihadi movement.

Ideological Evolution

The emergence of modern Jihadism is usually dated to 1960s Egypt although it can be traced back to the 19th century and the military struggles of Abd al-Kader and Omar Mukhtar against Western imperialism. Abu Musab al-Suri, one of the most prominent contemporary Jihadi strategists and thinkers, sets the start of the

Jihadi current to 1963.[3] Since then, Jihadi ideology has evolved considerably in terms of the definition of the main enemy, the objective, its modes of legitimation and how it related to the broader society.

Prior to the Syrian war, three distinctive currents of Jihadism can be identified: The first current emerged in the early 1960s in Egypt with Sayyid Qutb and later Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj as the intellectual and organizational pioneers. This current, which can be termed a *nationalist Jihad* with an ideological foundation in the Muslim Brotherhood, viewed local governments as illegitimate since they were not ruling according to God's law, the shariah. While they did have their disagreements, both Qutb and Faraj considered Jihad as a means to achieve a certain objective: to topple the near enemy (*al-aduw al-qarib*) through the struggle of a vanguard movement.

The second current, the *solidarity Jihad*, started in 1979 and dominated until the mid-1990s. Led by Abdallah Azzam, this current still emphasized the need for a vanguard, but it centered around the anti-Soviet struggle in Afghanistan. In that sense it was much closer to classical Jihadi doctrine, which emphasizes the fight against an occupying enemy, but its innovation was Azzam's reframing of Jihad as an individual duty (*fard al-ayn*) and that Jihad was not a matter of a certain nationality but the concern of the entire ummah. The obvious result was an internationalization of Jihad which would turn out to have a lasting impact. It was also around this time that the debate about whether to prioritize the near enemy (un-Islamic Arab governments) or the far enemy (Israel) emerged within Jihadist circles. Ayman al-Zawahiri, a senior member of Egyptian Al Jihad, wrote that the liberation of Palestine goes through Cairo,[4] but in the mid-90s, other Jihadists slowly started to doubt such an assertion.

This re-orientation towards the far enemy after the fall of the Soviets initiated the third current, the *global Jihad*, but unlike early debates, it was now the US and not Israel that was viewed as the main far enemy, the head of the snake, that had to be defeated to facilitate successful national Jihadi campaigns. There have been different accounts of whether this re-orientation was led by Bin Laden or the Egyptian contingent represented by al-Zawahiri.[5] It appears likely, however, that it came as an amalgamation of al-Zawahiri becoming disillusioned with the unsuccessful struggle against the Egyptian regime, and Bin Laden, being extremely preoccupied with the issue of Palestine, starting to see the US as the main obstacle to Palestinian liberation and as transgression against Islam with its presence in the holy land of Saudi Arabia. The rise to prominence of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi implied a return to prioritize the near enemy and, thus, does not represent a qualitative shift or evolution in the characteristic of the Jihadi current despite his strong emphasis on sectarian violence, which certainly made him stand out even in Jihadi circles. Salafi ideas were already a strong influence within al-Qaida, but they gained even more traction within al-Zarqawi's Iraqi movement, especially in terms of the impact of concepts such as *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* (loyalty and disavowal) and *takfir* (excommunication). With the US invasion of Iraq, the ideas of Bin Laden and al-Zarqawi coalesced to some degree, which eventually facilitated a union between the two in 2004 and, to Bin Laden, striking the far enemy in the Middle East region became an acceptable substitute to strike in the far enemy's own countries.

A fourth current, *hybridised Jihad*, emerged with the Islamic State in 2014 and represents one of three key ideological evolutions resulting from the Syrian war. Arguably, since al-Qaida's branching out through its affiliate-structure, Jihadi groups have been hybrids in their enemy hierarchies to some extent, but the Islamic State became the first Jihadi group that rightfully could be described as a hybrid due to its concurrent military campaigns against local and Western enemies.[6-7] Such "glocal" outlook is evident from its consistent campaign of international terrorist attacks simultaneously with its establishment of provinces around the world and military struggles against local regimes. Since May 2014, the Islamic State can be connected one way or the other to 54 terrorist attacks in the West (including Australia), while leading insurgencies against local regimes in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Libya, Nigeria, the Philippines, Afghanistan, Yemen and to a lesser extent in Somalia, Pakistan, Kashmir and Indonesia.[8]

No other Jihadi group has ever managed to run dual campaigns against both the far and the near enemy with a similar attack frequency as the Islamic State. This enabled the group to communicate with and attract a diverse

group of people with differences in ideological motivations and grievances. In his 2009 article studying the phenomenon of ideological hybridization, Hegghammer argues that the negative effects of hybridization likely surpass its positive impact. He identifies three risks for hybrids: inconsistency between discourse and action, internal ideological division, and provoking unnecessary enemies. Interestingly, the Islamic State has only suffered from one of these risks, namely the provocation of unnecessary enemies, but that did not stem directly from its campaign of international terrorist attacks, but more from its successes locally on the ground.

A simultaneous ideological evolution within Jihadism is a diversification of ideological orientation. With the emergence of groups like the Islamic State, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, Ahrar al-Sham and Jaysh al-Islam on the Syrian battlefield, Jihadism has become a much more complex ideological landscape. Previously, al-Qaida Central and its affiliates represented the mainstream, albeit an extreme, ideological position within the Jihadi movement. Other groups of a more nationalist and socio-revolutionary character existed and differed from al-Qaida in terms of objectives and their relations with states, but the emergence of new groups nonetheless represents a broadening of Jihadism as an ideological movement.

On one side of the ideological spectrum, the Islamic State emerged from the ashes of al-Qaida in Iraq, but the extremism characterizing its predecessors became even more pronounced, distinguishing it from other Jihadi groups including al-Qaida. Thus, its horrifying use of violence, exclusivist attitude to other Jihadi groups and theological rigidity made it stand out on one extreme. On the other side of the spectrum, groups like Jaysh al-Islam and especially Ahrar al-Sham represent a new and more 'moderate', or revisionist, face of Jihadism.[9] Despite an obvious Salafi influence, Ahrar al-Sham appeared as a third way between Jihadism and the broader scope of militant Islamism.[10] Compared to al-Qaida and the Islamic State, it was especially Ahrar al-Sham's willingness to cooperate with non-Jihadi and external actors, including states like Turkey, that sets it apart. More recently, tensions between al-Qaida and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham have emerged over the future of the Jihadi project. After splitting from al-Qaida and changing its name from Jabhat al-Nusra to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the group has aligned increasingly with Turkey in an attempt to navigate in an opposition environment under intense pressure from the Syrian regime assisted by external actors. The schism between Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and al-Qaida is founded in diverging opinions on how to cope with this pressure, with the former propagating the necessity of abandoning *organizations* as the foundation of the Jihadi struggle and instead support a jihad of the ummah (*jihad al-ummah*), while the latter stresses the need for Jihad of the elite (*jihad al-nukhba*) to uphold the correct Islamic creed (aqida).[11-12]

This shows how al-Qaida continues to subscribe to the idea of Jihad fought by a *vanguard* in contrast to a mass movement. This division between supporters of a popular jihad absent of organizations as the center of gravity and those in favour of a pure vanguard movement has also led to fractures in the relationship between the arguably two most influential Jihadi ideologues alive, Abu Qatada al-Filastini and Abu Muhammed al-Maqdisi.[13] The two Jordanian ideologues and personal friends have long been considered supportive of al-Qaida, but the recent schism has revealed differences in their view of *reality* (waqi') and how to deal with it. While al-Maqdisi continues to stress the necessity of a purist creed and upholding monotheism (tawhid), Abu Qatada appears willing to accept certain actions that perhaps dilute the proper creed but benefits the Jihadi project.

The ideological evolution within the Jihadi movement since 2013 has impelled the necessity to develop new analytical categories to capture the internal diversity between Jihadi groups. Previously, the dominant way of conceptualizing Jihadi groups was according to their primary enemy (far or near enemy) or their driving rationale for militant activism (classical, global or socio-revolutionary Jihadism).[14-15] Other research has distinguished between *strategists* and *doctrinarians*.[16] But these terminologies fail to capture much of the evolution explained above to a satisfying degree and are incapable of explaining the nuances and dynamics that characterize contemporary Jihadism. This prompted Stenersen to develop a new typology presented in the article "Jihadism After the 'Caliphate': Towards a New Typology," which places Jihadi groups on two scales; how they relate to society (integration vs. separation) and whom Jihadists fight for (the nation vs. the ummah).[17] This typology offers an important framework tuned to a more fine-grained analysis of the internal diversionary

issues within the movement that allows for a nuanced understanding of the internal diversity and dynamics over time. Thinking of Jihadi groups in terms of these two scales helps conceptualizing groups' primary objective and how they see not just the surrounding society but also other groups including potentially rival Jihadi groups.

Jihadism as a Tangible Political Project: The Caliphate and Strategic Experiences

The Islamic State's caliphate declaration presented a second evolution within the Jihadi movement. Existing Jihadi groups, including al-Qaida, have always been rather vague about their actual political objective besides identifying an Islamic state as the end goal. A more specific definition of how that state should be established and how it should look has been absent. Examples of the establishment of political entities do exist, however. These includes Abu Eesa al-Rifai's Jama'at al-Khilafa (aka Jama'at al-Muslimin) in Peshawar and later in London, the Islamic Emirate of Kunar founded by Jamil al-Rahman in Kunar, al-Shabab in Somalia and AQAP's emirate in Yemen in 2011-2012.[18]

In his seminal 2001 book *Knights under the Prophet's Banner,* Ayman al-Zawahiri is realistic albeit vague about Jihadists' objective. "The establishment of a Muslim state in the heart of the Islamic world is not an easy goal or an objective that is close at hand", he writes. But "If the goal of the jihad movement in the heart of the Islamic world in general and Egypt in particular is to cause change and establish an Islamic state, it must not precipitate collision or be impatient about victory. The jihad movement must patiently build its structure until it is well established. It must pool enough resources and supporters and devise enough plans to fight the battle at the time and arena that it chooses."[19] In the post-9/11 period, much of the debate has centered around the strategy of the Jihadi movement in a new security environment rather than elaboration of the configuration of the ideal political Islamic entity. This discussion has mainly taken its foundation in the writings of Abu Musab al-Suri and Abu Bakr Naji both of who authored detailed strategies of how to approach the enemy, either through campaigns of *qital al-nikaya* (fighting to hurt the enemy) or *qital al-tamkin* (fighting to consolidate control of territory).[20]

The Islamic State's decision to announce a caliphate on 29 June 2014 put immense pressure on the entire Jihadi movement and instigated a debate on the process of the establishment of a political entity, which particularly unfolded in 2015-16. As already mentioned, ideas such as controlling territory or establishing an Islamic political entity, whether it being a caliphate or an emirate, were not new, but were simply taken to new heights by the Islamic State's declaration. For the al-Qaida leadership in AfPak, this was a challenge for two reasons. First, it knew from history that some within al-Qaida were in favor of establishing a political entity of some form. Second, it quickly turned out that the caliphate declaration had a massive impact on support mobilization with the migration of foreign fighters spiking around the time of the declaration (see Figure 1, courtesy of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point). The Islamic State's state project thus put pressure on other groups to actually discuss the political project further than just 'the action of jihad', which arguably illustrated the lacking depth of a political program within Sunni Jihadism.

The main response from the al-Qaida leadership came in a publication series by al-Zawahiri titled *The Islamic Spring*, which was published from March 2015 to July 2016. In the nine episodes, al-Zawahiri rejects the legitimacy of the caliphate, criticizes its methodology while laying out the requirements for a 'legitimate' caliphate on the 'prophetic methodology' taking inspiration from the companions of the prophet, *the sahabah*. The Islamic State's caliphate, al-Zawahiri claims, caused disunity and confusion among Muslims, while the purpose of a truthful caliphate should be the exact opposite. A similar debate took place among Jihadi ideologues in Syria.[21]

Figure 1: Fighter Entries per Month
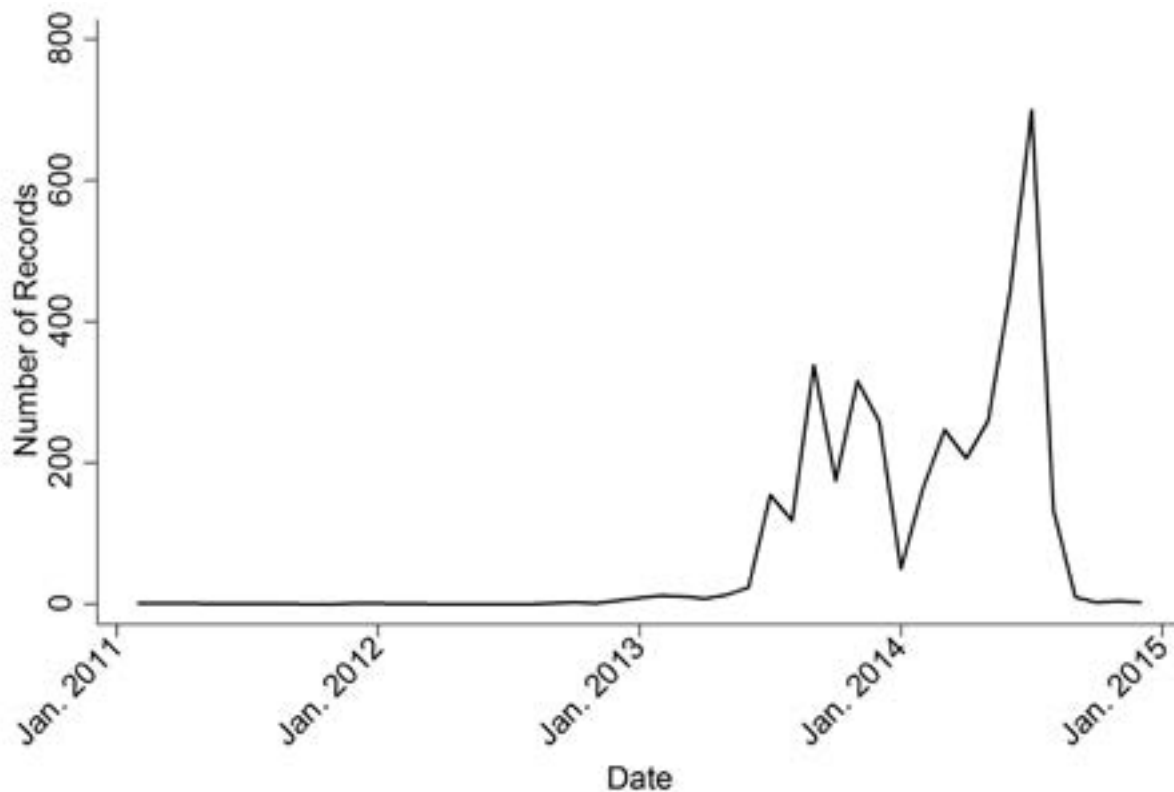
Source: Brian Dodwell, Daniel Milton & Don Rassler, 'The Caliphate's Global Workforce: An Inside Look at the Islamic State's Foreign Fighter Paper Trail', *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, April 2016, p. 7. Reprinted with permission.

Even though the territorial caliphate has been almost entirely dismantled in Syria and Iraq, the group's organizational structure contracting and arguments being made that it is now mainly a virtual caliphate, the fact that it was established and controlled large swaths of territory for several years will have a lasting impact on the Jihadi movement.[22] State creation has become a part of Jihadi consciousness and Jihadists are likely to discuss the political objective of their project in more tangible terms in the future based on the experiences from 2014-2018. Another likely result of the post- or lost-caliphate period is caliphate nostalgia as argued by Hegghammer.[23] The current generation will refer to its success in standing up to local Arab regimes and the entire West although they might disagree with its religious interpretation and violent strategy, while younger generations will idolize it as the vanguard of the Jihadi cause.

Considered its obsession with establishing an Islamic state or a caliphate, Jihadists have dedicated exceptionally little time and few words to explaining what they actually mean by the caliphate and how its establishment should be achieved. The most elaborate document prior to 2014 was likely "Informing the People about the Birth of the Islamic State of Iraq" authored by the Islamic State of Iraq's shariah official Uthman Bin Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi in 2007.[24] The Islamic State's caliphate declaration, however, has led to new discussion on the caliphate including several written pieces published either in support of the new caliphate or against it.[25] The result is that Jihadists' state project has evolved both on a theoretical and a tangible level. It is no longer the utopia it appeared prior to 2014 and, in the future, Jihadists will have a literary corpus and a concrete strategic experience to rely on. The experience of building the caliphate not only offers a lot of 'dos' but also 'don'ts' for the future.

Fragmentation, Polarization and the Normalization of Infighting

The Jihadi current has seen internal debate, contestation and occasional infighting from its inception, but the Syrian war entailed hitherto unseen levels of intra-Jihadi conflict and animosity between groups that are ideologically close (like the Islamic State and al-Qaida) and distant (like the Islamic State and Ahrar al-Sham or the Taliban) from one another. The tensions that emerged from the Islamic State of Iraq's expansion to Syria in early April 2013 led to discursive contestation with Jabhat al-Nusra and the al-Qaida leadership, which over time translated into direct military infighting between the Islamic State and a wide range of groups for the control of territory and Jihadi authority. This *Jihadi civil war* critically escalated in January 2014 and spiraled out of control in the Spring until the Islamic State declared its caliphate in June.[26]

Despite being prone to internal conflict, Jihadists have always stressed the illegitimacy of infighting as it not only threatens their political project but also because it potentially entails spilling the blood of Muslims, which is deemed impermissible.[27] Back in the days of the sahabah, a supporter of Husayn ibn Ali allegedly told a supporter of Yazid ibn Muawiya that "Until now we have been brethren with the same religion and community … if the sword is used … we will be an umma and you will be an umma".[28] In 2014, the sword was not only introduced, but became a default feature used by Jihadists against other Jihadists, cementing the failure of peaceful institutional mechanisms to settle internal conflict. Amidst the intensifying infighting, senior al-Qaida leader Abu Khalil al-Madani cautioned on 9 April 2014 his fellow Jihadists in other groups saying "We are like one body, and we are in one ship", but only three days later a senior Jabhat al-Nusra leader concluded that the "methods [of the Islamic State] clearly caused the biggest rift in the global Jihad that the ummah has ever seen since the fall of the Khilafa".[29-30] It started to appear as if Abdallah Azzam's prophecy that "Muslims cannot be defeated by others. We Muslims are not defeated by our enemies, but instead, we are defeated by our own selves" would become true.[31]

The infighting turned very al-Qaida-Islamic State centric although it involved most of Syria's Jihadi groups. The Islamic State narrative was that al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri was at fault for the conflict, famously claiming that "here we are extending our hands to you again, to be the worthy successor to the best predecessor; for the shaykh Usama bin Ladin united the Mujahidin upon one word, while you [al-Zawahiri] disunited them, split them and dispersed them in total dispersion".[32] Al-Qaida and other Jihadi groups would argue that it was due to the Islamic State's aggressiveness and exclusivist approach. While the intra-Jihadi conflict first emerged in Syria, it eventually spread to Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Libya and Egypt concurrently with the Islamic State's territorial expansion outside the Levant. Numbers are notoriously challenging to measure, but qualified estimates are that casualties from fratricidal Jihadi infighting number in the thousands in Syria and Afghanistan, in the hundreds in Yemen, Somalia, and Libya and likely even lower in Egypt.

The intra-Jihadi conflict has left the Jihadi movement more fragmented and polarized than ever before. Bakke et al. define fragmentation according to three dimensions: (1) the number of groups in the movement, (2) the degree of institutionalization across groups, and (3) the distribution of power among groups.[33] Based on this we can conclude that in the period 2013-2018, the Jihadi movement has experienced severe fragmentation resulting from and causing infighting and at the expense of movement cohesion. While competitive cooperation was still dominant among Jihadi groups opposing the Islamic State, over time it developed into a general logic of factionalism within the Jihadi movement at large.[34] From late 2013 and until October 2014, 15 calls for arbitration and reconciliation can be identified with 10 of them involving tangible initiatives to settle the conflict, but none of them succeeded in illustrating a Jihadi failure at establishing institutional setups to manage inter-groups issues. Although supra-group military alliances have been more successful, they have nonetheless been short lived and volatile.

Figure 2: When Jihadis Fight Jihadis
Six years of militant infighting between Jihadi factions, 2013-2018
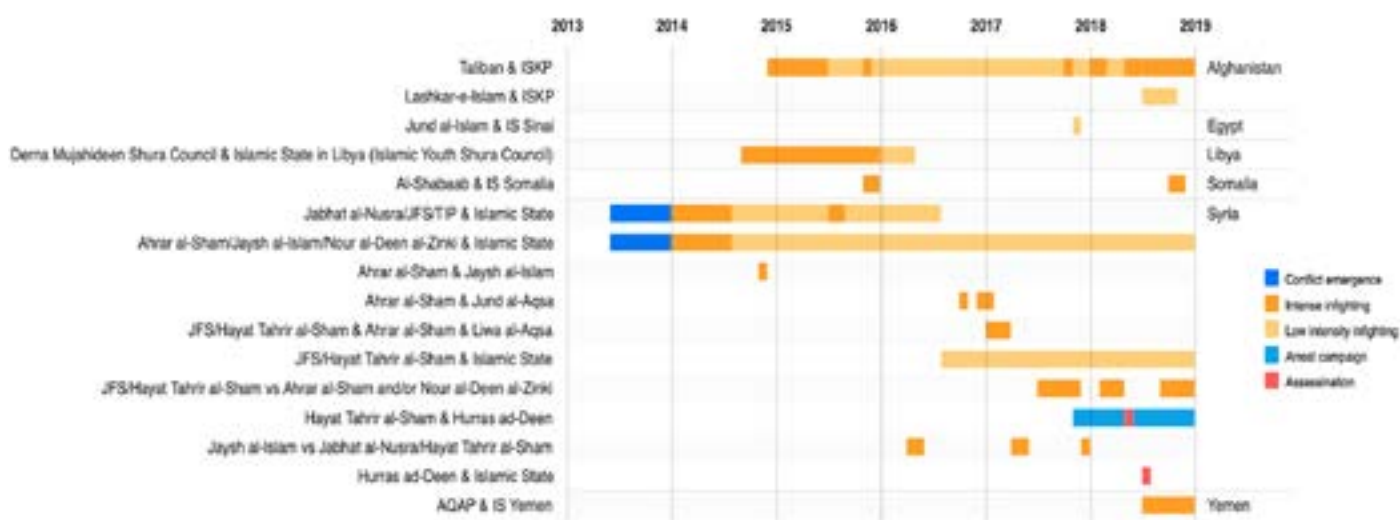
Source: Author's own data compilation

The Jihadi movement also became polarized, mainly as a result of the Islamic State's self-perception and its caliphate declaration which entailed an imperative—according to the Islamic State—to either join the caliphate or be considered an enemy. This logic was evident in two now famous texts. The first is a declaration by the late Islamic State spokesman Abu Muhammed al-Adnani from June 2014 when he declared the caliphate and announced that "As for you, O soldiers of the platoons and organizations, know that after this consolidation and the establishment of the khilafah, the legality of your groups and organizations has become invalid". Indicating that this was not only a ruling for Syria, he emphasized that "The legality of all emirates, groups, states, and organizations, becomes null by the expansion of the khilafah's authority and arrival of its troops to their areas."[35] The second is an article published in the group's English language magazine, *Dabiq*, in February 2015, titled "The Extinction of the Grey Zone," in which the author argues that neutrality is not a legitimate position.[36] The intention was to force groups and individuals to take a stance on the Islamic State, and in light of its military strength at the time it was likely the author assumed that a compelling argument like this would lead competing groups to join.

Among the opponents of the Islamic State, prominent Jihadi ideologues have partly contributed to this polarizing environment. Some ideologues, like the Egyptians Hani Sibai and Tariq Abdelhaleem and the Syrian Abu Basir al-Tartusi, were quickly out declaring the Islamic State as *khawarij*, referring to a historic extreme Islamic sect, and calling for Jihadists to fight the group.[37-39] Others, like Abu Qatada and al-Maqdisi were more hesitant to call for such attacks and initially only considered it legitimate to defend against attacks instigated by the Islamic State. In particular, al-Maqdisi tried to soften the perception of the Islamic State by arguing that "What makes them [the Islamic State] differ from the khawarij is that IS do have an ok idea and intentions, but they are simply doing things wrongly. The khawarij had bad intentions when they were killing Muslims".[40] Abu Qatada and even al-Maqdisi would eventually turn more explicitly critical of the Islamic State, thus enabling their followers to target more aggressively Islamic State fighters.

Now, after five years of directing bombs and bullets towards other Jihadists, intra-Jihadi conflict is becoming increasingly normalized within the movement. The boundaries for what it takes to attack fellow Jihadists has been lowered and a new generation of militant Islamists and sympathizers have grown up being socialized into the legitimacy of infighting. Ideological texts enabling infighting or internal criticism now exist in abundance making it easier for future generations to engage in similar fratricidal behavior.[41]

Networks and Training

Arguably the most important short-term impact of the Syrian conflict on the global Jihadi movement can be seen in the networks established and the skills gained from years on the battlefield. It is hard to overstate the importance of previous active battlefields like Afghanistan (1980s-90s) and Iraq (2000s) on the ensuing evolution and effectiveness of Jihadism around the world. Organizationally, Jihadists returned home to their respective countries and established new groups engaged in local struggles. In terms of efficiency and social networks, active battlefields have been key to educate and connect people from all over the world, who have benefitted from this know-how and social capital in the following years. Experience from previous battlefields has even become a prerequisite for future leadership positions, while the ideological and technical training at camps in battlefields have been essential for perpetrators of international terrorist attacks.[42-43]

On the importance of training camps in Afghanistan, Hegghammer wrote: "The training camps generated an ultra-masculine culture of violence which brutalized the volunteers and broke down their barriers to the use of violence. Recruits increased their paramilitary skills while the harsh camp life built strong personal relationships between them. Last but not least, they fell under the ideological influence of Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri".[44] Similar conclusions can be drawn from Aimen Dean's account of his own experiences in several training camps.[45] Just as we can talk about a Jihadi *generation* of Afghanistan and Iraq, so we can talk about the generation emanating from the Syrian Jihad. We will see new networks and groups emerge based on connections established during years of interaction in Syria. We will see future Jihadi leaders with experience from the Syrian Jihad. And we will see perpetrators of international terrorist attacks who learned their trade and prepared in Syria's training camps. In this light, battlefields are extremely effective *socialization platforms* both in terms of ideological, strategic and tactical socialization.

Table 1: Overview of Foreign Fghters (FF) Mobilized in Recent Conflicts

Location	FF mobilization period	Conflict (simplistic)	Number of FF
Afghanistan	1980-1992	Mujahideen vs. Soviet Union	5,000-20,000
Bosnia	1992-1995	Bosnians vs. Serbs/Croats	1,000-2,000
Chechnya	1995-2001	Chechens vs. Russia	200-300
Afghanistan	1996-2001	Masoud vs. Hekmatyar Taliban vs. Northern Alliance	1,000-1,500
Afghanistan	2001-2010	Taliban vs. Kabul/USA/NATO	1,000-1,500
Iraq	2003-2010	Sunnis vs. Baghdad/Coalition	4,000-5,000
Somalia	2006-2010	Al-Shabaab vs. Transitional government/Ethiopia	200-400
Syria-Iraq	2012-2017	Jihadists/Islamists/revolution- aries vs. Assad/Russia/Iran government/Baghdad/External actors	30,000-42,000

Sources: Numbers on conflicts prior to the Syrian Jihad are taking from Thomas Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad," *International Security* 35, no. 3 (2010): 61; Estimate on foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq comes from UN CTED Trends Report, "The Challenge of Returning and Relocating Foreign Terrorist Fighters: Research Perspectives," 2018.

Numbers of Jihadists are notoriously difficult to estimate because of the clandestine nature of the movement in general and should thus always be viewed critically.[46] Nonetheless, if we take a look at the number of foreign fighters joining the conflict in Syria and Iraq (Table 1), it is striking how high the number of foreigners mobilized to fight is compared to historic examples of Jihadi foreign fighters mobilization. While these numbers are not disaggregated in terms of the specific groups people fought with, we can with confidence say that the vast majority of the 30,000-42,000 people joining the conflict in Syria and Iraq between 2012-2017 fought in the ranks of the most hardcore Jihadi groups, namely the Islamic State and Jabhat al-Nusra.

In the period 2012-2018, thousands of people, locals as well as foreigners, have trained and fought in active Jihadi battlefields in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Sinai, Algeria, Somalia, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Philippines (to mention the most important). In the training camps, fighters have followed military courses and received ideological education. The military skills are further developed and refined in active battle while the fighters' ideological stance hardens. In terms of military and ideological training, a generation has thus received its bachelor, master and—for those living long enough—Ph.D. degrees on these battlefields, making them experts in what they do. While many have died, others left disillusioned and some eventually returned to live their previous life before war broke out, the sheer magnitude of the number implies that a substantial number of well-trained Jihadists will continue as believers in the Jihadi project and in search of new battlefield arenas. In such future endeavors, their militant social network is important. Being on the battlefield has turned fighters into brothers-in-arms and established a high degree of trust so essential for (clandestine) militant activity. Either people are already connected or they can easily do in the future because of their pedigree as seasoned fighters.

Strong *networks,* both in the Middle East region but also when foreign fighters returned back to the West or joined third country conflicts, were a defining feature of the post-Afghan and Iraqi wars. Experienced fighters set up their own groups, became Jihadi entrepreneurs or perpetrated terrorist attacks on their home soil. So far, the rate of Jihadists with experience as foreign fighters who later carried out terrorist attacks in the West post-2012 has been surprisingly low compared to historical estimates and the number of returnees.[47-48] This has arguably led to premature conclusions that the threat of returning foreign fighters is perhaps not as severe as initially thought.[49] But arguably the most critical blowback from foreign fighters is still awaiting.[50] Two factors may explain this: first, Jihadists are still fighting a war and for those joining the Islamic State, the objective has been to establish and later protect the caliphate. This has obviously influenced their immediate priorities in favor of ongoing conflicts. Second, it must be assumed that most of those fighters who returned early have been the least committed. Those still fighting after several enduring years on the battlefield, who have not yet succumbed to bullets or the strenuous life as a Jihadist, are likely those we should fear the most. While few will survive and states around the world have made a serious effort to ensure they will not return to their home countries, they should nonetheless be considered a greater threat than early returnees or than during the zenith of the Islamic State's military and governance project.

A New Generation of Ideologues

An often underappreciated element is the emergence of a new generation of Jihadi ideologues helped by the context of the Syrian war and the organizational platform offered by certain groups. At the outset of the Syrian war, well-established Jihadi ideologues included Anwar al-Awlaki and Ahmed Musa Jibril for non-Arabic speaking audiences, and in the Arab world famous figures like al-Maqdisi, Abu Qatada, Abu Basir al-Tartusi, Umar al-Haddouchi, Abu al-Walid al-Ansari, Abu Yahya al-Libi, Atiyyatullah al-Libi, Iyad al-Qunaybi and the Shuaybi-school of Saudi scholars like Sulayman al-Ulwan. Although these figures remained influential (both al-Libis died quickly after the outbreak of war), a new cadre of mainly young ideologues has also blossomed up.

At first, the Islamic State sought to attract, without success, the support of senior ideologues like al-Haddouchi, al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada. Out of necessity, the new state had to promote its own cadre of in-house ideologues

that were largely unknown within the Jihadi environment or at least not considered household names. When the Islamic State realized that it would not succeed in attracting any established ideologues—besides Abu al-Mundthir al-Shinqiti for a brief period—it initiated a campaign to vilify these figures by questioning their credentials and personality.[51] Simultaneously, it offered its own ideologues an organizational platform through which to publish their work, which stands in clear contrast to how other groups including al-Qaida operate. Abu Ali al-Anbari, Turki al-Binali, Abu Bakr al-Qahtani and lesser known figures like Abu Yaqub al-Maqdisi, Abu al-Mundhir al-Harbi al-Madani and Abu Zeid al-Iraqi, to mention a few, have all produced pools of written and audio material shared widely on the Internet mainly through media platforms utilized by the Islamic State. Al-Anbari (Abd al-Rahman Mustafa al-Qaduli) had been a central figure on the Iraqi Jihadi scene for more than a decade when he emerged as the most senior ideologue within the Islamic State. An emissary of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi to Khorasan and later the emir of the Mujahideen Shura Council in Iraq using the kunya *Abdullah al-Rashid al-Baghdadi*, al-Anbari was certainly not new to the world of Jihad, but he had always managed to operate under the radar. However, as a deputy to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in the Islamic State, his name and face was finally revealed. Besides his organizational role, his ideological ideas were presented in lectures and books on issues related to creed (aqida) and methodology (manhaj).

However, the Bahrani Turki al-Binali was the main ideological voice of the Islamic State, at least initially in 2013 and 2014. Al-Binali was portrayed as the *mufti* of the Islamic State and the main ideological voice of the group to bolster its claim to represent a caliphate and to counter the criticism from opposing ideologues. But this changed in mid-2014, as al-Binali's role became less public as he dedicated his time to his organizational role of heading the office of research and studies (*maktab al-buhuth wa-l-dirasat*). Generally, for the ideological figures within the Islamic State, being able to produce and disseminate material through official and semi-official Jihadi media centers was important to lend credit to their material and make it more authoritative. Although most of these ideologues have now been killed, their material is still available and will be used by Jihadi sympathisers in the future. Whether any one of them will reach the same standing of established Jihadi scholars is uncertain, but their vast production, still available and being translated into numerous languages, will be important to future generations of Jihadists. Especially al-Binali's writings on the caliphate and his critique of higher-ranking ideologues, including his previous mentor al-Maqdisi, will serve as an example, legitimizing the questioning of existing authorities.

Opposing the Islamic State, senior Jihadi ideologues unequivocally sided with al-Qaida or more moderate Jihadi factions and this decreased the pressure to promote new ideological figures. A few *new faces* supportive of al-Qaida, or later, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, did cement their names on the Jihadi scene, however. After his arrival in Syria in 2013, Abdallah al-Muhaysini, a Saudi preacher, quickly emerged as a rising ideological star of the Syrian Jihad. With a Ph.D. in Islamic jurisprudence from the Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh, al-Muhaysini is well-educated compared to many other Jihadi ideologues, but his contribution to the Syrian Jihad was not limited to a shari' role as he engaged heavily in fundraising, reconciliation efforts and mobilization.[52] His lectures and videos often show him on the battlefield preparing al-Qaida affiliated fighters before battle, talking in his characteristic high pitch voice—sometimes screaming, sometimes crying—in an extremely passionate fashion. Mainly acting independently of any group, although close to *Jabhat al-Nusra*, he was briefly a member of its later iteration *Hayat Tahrir al-Sham*. A central figure behind the military coalition *Jaysh al-Fatah*, al-Muhaysini sought to portray himself as the *Abdallah Azzam* of the Syrian Jihad, trying to cross organizational boundaries and be perceived as *the* authoritative figure of Jihadists in opposition to the Islamic State.

Compared to al-Muhaysini, the Jordanian Sami al-Uraydi built his reputation inside the group Jabhat al-Nusra as a senior shari'. Close to al-Maqdisi, al-Uraydi was always part of the theological hardliners within his group, but it was first after leaving al-Nusra in February 2017, subsequent to the group's split from al-Qaida and name change to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, that the Jordanian seriously established himself as a central figure. In 2017 and 2018, he produced several major written productions, mainly critical of his former comrades in Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and striking a similar criticism to that of al-Maqdisi emphasizing the importance of doctrinal purity and *tawhid* (monotheism).[53] In 2018, al-Uraydi was a central figure in the establishment of a new

al-Qaida affiliated group in Syria, named *Hurras al-Deen* (Guardians of Religion), claiming loyalty to Ayman al-Zawahiri and attacking Hayat Tahrir al-Sham for being *diluters* (mumayyiʿa) of religion.

A third emerging figure is Abu Mahmoud al-Filastini, a Palestinian based in London, but supportive of Jabhat al-Nusra and later Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. Abu Mahmoud was a student of Abu Qatada during his time in Britain and the two have remained ideologically close during the evolving Syrian conflict. Similarly to al-Uraydi, Abu Mahmoud really established himself in 2017 and 2018 as a strong supporter of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, regularly posting articles in defense of the group on his Telegram channel and launching a strong criticism against al-Maqdisi, al-Uraydi and their supporters. This has placed Abu Mahmoud in opposition to both the Islamic State and al-Qaida and a strong proponent of *jihad al-ummah* and the dissolution of Jihadi *groups* for the benefit of the general Jihadi *project*.[54] Other figures like Anas Hassan Khattab and Abdallah al-Shami (Abd al-Rahim Atoun) have been important ideological voices within Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and its predecessors as in-house ideologues, but their contribution is most in an organizational setting rather than as independent figures.

Technological Evolution

Arguably one of the most important features of the Jihadi current in the past five years, and key to understanding the rise of groups and individuals, is the evolution in information technology and how Jihadists have taken advantage of the opportunities offered by new IT-platforms. It is not that Jihadists are newcomers to the use of the Internet. Previously they relied on online fora to disseminate their material and communicate, but the outreach potential was rather limited. With the introduction of social media and file sharing platforms, the Jihadists now have an extremely powerful tool to reach new audiences, communicate with one another and ensure that their material is ever available.

At the outset of the Syrian conflict, Facebook was the main Jihadi alternative to their closed fora, but it was quickly replaced by Twitter and later Telegram as the media platform of choice. All these platforms have enabled Jihadists to disseminate, propagate and recruit at a hitherto unseen degree. Not only have these media platforms ensured a broader distribution of Jihadi material but also a certain consistency in availability. Although media companies have intensified their efforts at closing down Jihadi use of their platforms, they have been unable to prevent it entirely. Hence, these media platforms, in addition to file sharing platforms such as justpaste. it and archive.org, have ensured that Jihadi material is ever present. Groups like the Islamic State, al-Qaida, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and the Taliban manage accounts on online platforms themselves, but the impact is magnified even further through supporter (*munasirun* or *ansar*) networks functioning as semi-independent online *entrepreneurs*. Supporters either manage channels that specialize in specific elements or as individuals disseminating their own or official group material.

Compared to other groups, the Islamic State has been the pioneer in terms of the quality and the quantity of online dissemination. A plethora of unofficial media centers are publishing and circulating official group material, their own production facilitates discussion between sympathizers.[55] This has not only eased the pressure on official group channels to circulate material through a decentralization of responsibility, but also offered agency to a broad group of actors and helped ensure a constant online presence. This responsibility is being acknowledged by the Islamic State, but it is a relationship the group is carefully managing. The group considers its online presence as equally important to its battlefield operations, which was illustrated by its booklet published in 2015 titled *Media Operative, You Are a Mujahid, Too* and which explains the role of the *media mujahid* in the group's *information jihad*.[56] In October 2018, the Islamic State published a video in its *Inside the Caliphate* series focusing on the role of its munasirun and illustrating its advanced IT-infrastructure connecting the group with these unofficial channels.[57] But as the Islamic State has experienced, such decentralization of its information jihad comes with the risk of misinformation. Hence, on several occasions the group has issues directives to its munasirun to only publicize information coming from its official media establishment.[58]

Ascribing the media an important role is not an innovation by the Islamic State. Ayman al-Zawahiri once

wrote Abu Musab al-Zarqawi that "we are in a battle, and that more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media" and more recently Abu Qatada al-Filastini similarly underlined the impact of media. [59-60] Al-Qaida's online presence, however, is more centralized compared to the Islamic State and relies on accounts run by official media centers like al-Sahab (al-Qaida Central), al-Malahim (AQAP) or Shahada Agency (Al-Shabaab).[61] Instead, the group gets its online support from channels ran by sympathetic ideologues like Abu Qatada, al-Maqdisi, Hani Sibai and lesser known figures like Adnan Hadid.

Disregarding the degree of centralization in their use of media, IT-platforms have revolutionized Jihadists' online behavior and perpetuated the existence of its digital material for the benefit of future generations of Jihadists who can easily access material once published. This implies easier access for future generations and enables them to tap into existing Jihadi narratives and legal judgements in an unprecedented way.

The Future of Global Jihadism

Where does the Jihadi movement stand after seven years of intensive fighting in Syria, Iraq and other battlefields? The period 2012-2018 saw the establishment of a caliphate, the geographical expansion of Jihadi military campaigns, unprecedented numbers of terrorist attacks in the West and foreign fighter mobilization. [62] It involved a broad international coalition against Jihadi groups, organizational fragmentation and ensuing infighting and the dissolution of the caliphate in all but its name. But has the period 2012-2018 been a success or a failure for the Jihadi movement and how will the six identified trends impact the future of the movement?

Since its emergence in the early 1960s, the Jihadi movement has experienced its ups and downs. The general assessment of the Jihadi movement by outsiders, however, has tended to be rather negative and the success of Jihadists (and terrorists in general) appear to be judged much more critically than other actors.[63] This is evident in Abrahms' conclusion that terrorism does not work because, he argues, terrorists rarely reach their ultimate goals.[64] But as Richard English rightly points out, we make a mistake if we keep labelling Jihadists as failures unless they reach these ultimate objectives.[65] Based on the identified trends in this article, the period 2012-2018 should generally be considered a highly successful transformative period in the history of the modern Jihadi movement for the simple reason that the positive experiences and developments outweigh the negatives.

Jihadists have managed to take their political project further than ever before with the establishment of a tangible political entity in the form of the Islamic State's caliphate. While the group's governmental epicenter was the Levant, it has also controlled territory in Yemen, Libya and to some extent Nigeria and the Philippines. Despite the dismantling of the physical caliphate, the narrative still exists and so does the strategic experience that the state project entailed. Jihadists showed that they are capable of mobilizing supporters in unprecedented numbers and those of their followers who did not die have now gained invaluable battlefield experience, established social bonds locally, regionally and globally and learned important strategic lessons. A new generation of Jihadi ideologues is coming forward and a massive pool of writing material and audio-visuals of both an ideological, strategic and tactical character has been produced. Online communication and file sharing platforms are now available in abundance, and Jihadists have shown that they know how to make savvy use of these platforms to communicate with each other and reach new audiences, not least the media. None of these positives will simply go away but will likely benefit the future Jihadi movement one way or the other.

And yet, the last seven years have not been exclusively positive for the Jihadi movement. While discursive contestation has always occurred between Jihadists, recent years have witnessed a catastrophic escalation in military infighting between Jihadists, many of whom used to be fighting in the same group. Discursive vilification of opposing figures has similarly escalated and helped break down existing authority structures within the movement. This will have a lasting effect in that it has significantly lowered the threshold for engaging in infighting through normalization and socialization processes. For new generations of Jihadists, fighting other Jihadists is simply another enemy to crush on the way to the caliphate. Despite Jihadi groups' recent successes of mobilization, the number of potential Jihadi sympathizers is still relatively low in absolute numbers. Hence,

Jihadists would do better allying rather than fracturing since internal conflict has a demobilizing impact.[66] The indiscriminate and limitless violence employed by the Islamic State is another detrimental experience for the Jihadi movement more generally. While the group may have succeeded in attracting vast numbers of youth who were fascinated with the brutality, it likely will not appeal to all future generations.[67] Other Jihadi groups have made an effort to distinguish themselves from the Islamic State's brutality but beheadings, burnings, massacres and indiscriminate terror attacks have nonetheless tainted the broader Jihadi movement.

That said, despite appearing more fragmented than ever, the experiences gained during the 2012-2018 period have generally made the Jihadi movement more dangerous, popular and arguably more mainstream. Jihadism is no longer the utopia supported by the few and promoted by men hidden in Afghanistan's caves. At least for a period, it emerged as a popular movement attracting and educating thousands of locals and foreigners. While the previous decade involved both positive and negative experiences for the movement, the objective going forward is to learn from its mistakes in its attempts to establish new religio-political entities. The diversification of group ideology and methodology is particularly noteworthy. Groups now appeal to a broader range of people and have shown themselves capable of adopting increasingly pragmatic attitudes to state authorities. Groups like al-Qaida and the Islamic State representing more hardline ideologies will continue to oppose any reaching out to the states they are fighting. But, as we have witnessed with Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and the Taliban, serious engagement with the enemy is no longer inconceivable. This leaves us with a Jihadi movement more fragmented, more networked, more mature and politically sophisticated and more diversified than ever before.

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Notes

[1] Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen, "Bliver Syrien En Skole for Terrorister?," in *Mellemøstens Nye Verden*, ed. Clement Behrendt Kjærsgaard and Lars Erslev Andersen (København: Ræson Medier, 2013), 28–42.

[2] Thomas Hegghammer, "Global Jihadism after the Iraq War," *The Middle East Journal* 60, no. 1 (2006): 11–32.

[3] Abu Musab Al-Suri, *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*, 2004.

[4] Ayman al-Zawahiri, "The road to Jerusalem passes through Cairo" (Al-Mujahidun, April 1995)

[5] In general, there seems confusion about the authoritative relationship between Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri with some arguing that the latter was in fact the real thinker of al-Qaida while Bin Laden was its poster boy. E.g. Gilles Kepel calls al-Zawahiri for Bin Laden's *mentor*, see Gilles Kepel, *Fitna: Guerre Au Cœur de l'islam* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 13.

[6] Barak Mendelsohn, *The Al-Qaeda Franchise : The Expansion of Al-Qaeda and Its Consequences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[7] Thomas Hegghammer, "The Hybridization of Jihadi Groups," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 9 (2009): 26–45.

[8] Author's own database over international attacks committed by al-Qaida and the Islamic State since 2010.

[9] Sam Heller, "Ahrar Al-Sham's Revisionist Jihadism," *War on the Rocks*, September 30, 2015: http://warontherocks.com/2015/09/ahrar-al-shams-revisionist-jihadism/

[10] Aron Lund, "Syria's Salafi Insurgents: The Rise of the Syrian Islamic Front," *UI Occasional Papers*, 2013: https://www.ui.se/globalassets/ui.se-eng/publications/ui-publications/syrias-salafi-insurgents-the-rise-of-the-syrian-islamic-front-min.pdf

[11] See especially Abu Mahmoud Al-Filastini, "An Indispensable Though Imperfect Unity," *Telegram Channel*, April 2017. All references to articles on Telegram have been stored by the author.

[12] Abu Muhammed al-Maqdisi and Sami bin Mahmoud al-Uraydi, "Jihad al-ummah wa jama'at al-ummah" [jihad of the ummah and groups of the ummah], July 2017. Maqdisi and Uraydi say that one cannot disagree with the concept of *jihad al-ummah* but the difference lies in how to interpret it. They believe that jihad is obligatory, even more important than obligations like fasting, but the

Jihad (of the ummah) must be led by knowledgeable figures (al-nukhba) to ensure it follows the correct creed and methodology.

[13] Cole Bunzel, "Abu Qatada Al-Filastini: 'I Am Not a Jihadi, or a Salafi,'" *Jihadica*, October 26, 2018: http://www.jihadica.com/abu-qatada-al-filastini-i-am-not-a-jihadi-or-a-salafi/

[14] Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[15] Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[16] Nelly Lahoud, *The Jihadis' Path to Self-Destruction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

[17] Anne Stenersen, "Jihadism after the ' Caliphate ': Towards a New Typology," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2018, 1–20, doi:10.1080/13530194.2018.1552118.

[18] Kévin Jackson, "The Forgotten Caliphate," *Jihadica*, December 31, 2014: http://www.jihadica.com/the-forgotten-caliphate/; Kevin Bell, "The First Islamic State: A Look Back at the Islamic Emirate of Kunar," *CTC Sentinel* 9, no. 2 (2016); Harun Maruf and Dan Joseph, *Inside al-Shabaab: The Secret History of Al-Qaeda's Most Powerful Ally* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018); Christopher Anzalone, "Black Banners in Somalia: The State of al-Shabaab's Territorial Insurgency and the Specter of the Islamic State," *CTC Sentinel* 11, no. 3 (2018); Michael Horton, "Fighting the Long War: The Evolution of Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula," *CTC Sentinel* 10, no. 1 (2017).

[19] Ayman Al-Zawahiri, *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner* (Translation by Laura Mansfield, 2006), 215–16.

[20] See Joas Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 84 for discussion of these notions.

[21] Joas Wagemakers, "What Should an Islamic State Look Like? Jihadi-Salafi Debates on the War in Syria," *The Muslim World* 106, no. July (2016): 501–22.

[22] Charlie Winter and Jade Parker, "Virtual Caliphate Rebooted: The Islamic State's Evolving Online Strategy," *Lawfare*, January 2018.

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[24] Uthman ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi, "I'lam Al-Anam Bi-Milad Dawlat Al-Islam [Informing the People of the Birth of the Islamic State]," *Al Furqan Media Foundation*, 2007. See also Nibras Kazimi, "The Caliphate Attempted: Zarqawi's Ideological Heirs, Their Choice for a Caliph, and the Collapse of Their Self-Styled Islamic State of Iraq," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, July 2008.

[25] Wagemakers, "What Should an Islamic State Look Like? Jihadi-Salafi Debates on the War in Syria."

[26] See Daniel L. Byman and Jennifer R. Williams, "ISIS vs. Al Qaeda: Jihadism's global civil war," *Brookings*, 24 February 2015.

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[28] Patricia Crone, *God's Rule: Government and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 24.

[29] Abu Khalil Al-Madani, "Advice to All the Fighting Groups in the Cause of Allah," *As-Sahab Media Productions*, April 2014.

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[31] Jed Lea-Henry, 'The Life and Death of Abdullah Azzam', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XXV, No. 1, Spring 2018.

[32] Abu Muhammed Al-Adnani, "Apologies, Amir of Al-Qaida," *Al-Furqan Media Foundation*, May 11, 2014, https://pietervanostaeyen.wordpress.com/2014/05/12/new-audio-message-by-isis-shaykh-abu-muhammad-al-adnani-as-shami-apologies-amir-al-qaida/.

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[35] Abu Muhammed Al-'Adnani, "This Is the Promise of Allah," *The Islamic State, Al-'Itisam Media*, June 29, 2014, https://pietervanostaeyen.wordpress.com/2014/06/29/the-islamic-state-restores-the-caliphate/.

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[38] See Abu Basir al-Tartusi, "A Declaration Regarding the Fighting Between the ISIS and the Mujahedeen of Al-Sham," 15 January 2014 (accessed here: https://justpaste.it/bas2) and Abu Basir al-Tartusi, "The Validity of the Victorious Emirate," 15 March 2014 (accessed here: https://justpaste.it/i8eg).

[39] Crone, *God's Rule: Government and Islam*; Lahoud, *The Jihadis' Path to Self-Destruction*.

[40] Abu Muhammed al-Maqdisi, "Awradaha sa'ad wa sa'ad mushtamil. Ma makadha ya sa'ad turid al-ibal [This is not how cattle is taken to the water spring, Saad]," September 2014.

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[55] A few examples of such unofficial media foundations include al-Ghuraba (an archive of al-Ghuraba material can be accessed here: http://web.archive.org/web/20160307213149/http://justpaste.it:80/archivealghuraba), al-Battar (Al-Batter used the twitter handle https://twitter.com/me_bttar), al-Baqiya and al-Wafa' (Al-Wafa used the twitter handle https://twitter.com/alwaf_aa) on Twitter and the websites of Ansar al-Khilafa (the website is now defunct but used to be on https://ansarukhilafah.wordpress.com) and Ahl ul-Tawhid (the website is now defunct but used to be on https://ahlutawheed.wordpress.com).

[56] Charlie Winter, "Media Jihad: The Islamic State's Doctrine for Information Warfare," *ICSR*, 2017; The Islamic State's video titled "Media Man, You Are a Mujāhid Too" published by its wilayat Salahuddeen in May 2015 can be accessed here: https://jihadology.net/2015/05/27/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-media-man-you-are-a-mujahid-too-wilayat-ṣalaḥ-al-din; Charlie Winter, "What I Learned from Reading the Islamic State's Propaganda Instruction Manual," *Lawfare*, April 2017.

[57] The Islamic State, "Inside the Caliphate 8," Video published 30 October 2018.

[58] See for instance Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, "Give Glad Tidings to the Patient,", *Al Hayat*, 22 August 2018.

[59] Ayman al-Zawahiri's letter to Abu Musab all-Zarqawi dating 9 July 2005 can be accessed here: https://fas.org/irp/news/2005/10/letter_in_english.pdf

[60] Abu Qatada al-Filastini's article "The Importance of Jihadi Media" can be accessed here: https://www.lawfareblog.com/article-shaykh-abu-qatadah-al-filistini-importance-jihadi-media

[61] This is not to say that al-Qaida does not have munasirun channels. Examples of such include the *Global Islamic Media Front* (GIMF) and *Al Hijrah*.

[62] Petter Nesser, "Military Interventions, Jihadi Networks, and Terrorist Entrepreneurs: How the Islamic State Terror Wave Rose So High in Europe," *CTC Sentinel* 12, no. 3 (2019).

[63] Fawaz A. Gerges, *Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[64] For example Max Abrahms concludes terrorism *does not work* simply because terrorists, including Jihadi groups, have failed to reach their ultimate objectives. See Max Abrahms, "Why Terrorism Does Not Work," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (2006): 42–78. In contrast, other authors claim that terrorism is a useful strategy to reach one's objectives, see Bruce Hoffman, "Terrorism in History," *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, 2007, 8–28; Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (2006): 49–80.

[65] English, Richard. *Does Terrorism Work?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

[66] Assaf Moghadam, *Nexus of Global Jihad: Understanding Cooperation among Terrorist Actors* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017); Tricia Bacon, "Alliance Hubs: Focal Points in the International Terrorist Landscape," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 8, no. 4 (2014): 4–26.

[67] Olivier Roy, *Jihad and Death: The Global Appeal of Islamic State* (London: Hurst & Company, 2017).