

Senior Capstone Research for the Department of International Studies and  
Economics

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**Which Group has a More Sustainable Model of Terrorism, Al Qaeda or ISIS?**

Abstract: The thesis compares Al Qaeda and ISIS models of terrorism, and demonstrates that despite similar ideological beliefs the two groups markedly differ in terms of their objectives, modes of operation, recruitment and radicalization strategies, hierarchies, communication methods, and financing means. The thesis also includes an overview of the use of economics in the understanding of terrorism and counterterrorism strategies. It also uses economic theories to evaluate different counterterrorism policies in history, and whether or not they can be applied to fighting AQ and ISIS. Finally, given the information provided, the thesis compares both terrorist groups' threats and offers a specific counterterrorism strategy for each of them.

Keywords: Terrorism, Counterterrorism, Strategy, Radicalization, Recruitment

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

AQ and ISIS are two of the world's most notorious and deadliest terrorist groups with global presence and outreach. The two terror groups have garnered international attention and backlash with their grand scale operations, as with AQ 9/11 attacks, and ISIS' cross country caliphate in Iraq and Syria.

ISIS initially began as an offshoot of Al Qaeda in Iraq called AQI, and AQI separated from AQ due to their difference in ideologies, ambitions, and the execution of their agendas. Their divergences continued to grow as AQI which later became ISIS also differentiated itself from its root through its recruitment and radicalization strategies.

To answer the question about which terror group has a more sustainable model of terrorism, this thesis must address several points before arriving at that answer. The thesis initially aims to discuss the historical and political backgrounds that brought about the creation of these groups and discuss their ideological differences that caused AQI under Zarqawi to break away and rebrand itself IS. Examining their history will also look at how their different ideologies generate different targets and the legitimacy to attack them, and how that plays into their ambitions and global agenda. It will also include how their agendas influence the way they receive finances. Then it will discuss operation methods, which consist of the groups' recruitment techniques and radicalization strategies, including their cyber presence, political, historical, religious, social, and financial appeals to recruits.

Furthermore, the thesis will discuss counterterrorism policies that aim to increase the costs and opportunity costs of terrorism and reducing the benefits. Those policies are divided into defensive policies that incur substitution effects for terrorists, and proactive policies that tackle the root causes of terrorism. Moreover, it will examine historical cases to see how different

counterterrorism strategies worked against different terrorist groups, and if the model can be followed with AQ and ISIS to enhance current counterterrorism strategies. It will then offer to compare the threat of AQ and ISIS and formulate specific counterterrorism strategies for each.

## **1. Importance of Research**

Maintaining global security is an important issue and terrorism is one of the biggest threats to it. Understanding the difference between terrorist groups is essential in developing the strategies to defeat them. Most of the efforts in combating these two groups have been through military means. The world must address the root causes of terrorism including the grievances and circumstances that prompt the rise of such groups to prevent their resurgence. With the fall of ISIS, there is not yet a viable plan to solve the Syrian Civil War or to address the Sunni disenfranchisement in politics in Syria and Iraq. The world is too focused on the military approach and not a lot of attention is given to a multifaceted method that properly addresses the reasons for the rise of such groups.

This contribution seeks to directly compare both groups with regards to all possible aspects that a terrorist group can be studied through. This research will show how despite similar ideological bases and using terror to coerce change, these two terrorist groups are hardly alike. Often, high-level officials, in one case president Obama, mistake ISIS for a terrorist group like AQ, insinuating that perhaps following a similar counterterrorist blueprint would render ISIS defeated. However, as Obama later realized, ISIS is a state that raises taxes and polices its territory, hardly anything like the covert and low profile AQ. This study seeks to emphasize that even though ISIS is grander in the execution of its agendas, AQ is still more dangerous because it has outlived its offshoot and has a more solid ideological basis. I would argue that ideas are more potent because they outlive the temporary appeal of benefits and services that ISIS' provided for its recruits, as

they are more likely to get disillusioned. Ideologues, however, are harder to dissuade and are more committed to the cause

## **2. Hypothesis**

Despite ISIS' unmatched territorial conquests and financial gain by any other terrorist group, AQ remains more dangerous. I would argue that AQ's ideological foundation is stronger because it is less radical in comparison to ISIS and doesn't target Muslims as regularly as ISIS does, and hardly targets Shias, making it more appealing. While one can point out to ISIS' massive recruitment numbers as a sign that it was more successful, I would argue that was caused by ISIS' cyber shrewdness and attractive style in its propaganda material, not due to its ideological appeal. It could also be argued that a lot of those that joined ISIS were mercenaries or people who were attracted to ISIS' services. In contrast, AQ's ideas remain more potent, and it mostly attracts ideologues who truly believe in its message. AQ is also more dangerous because its means of operation are more sustainable and have enabled it to survive the U.S occupation in Afghanistan and attacks on its affiliates elsewhere in the world. In contrast, ISIS' state building has attracted huge international attention that eventually culminated in the destruction of its state in Iraq and Syria. Finally, the counterinsurgency blueprints to fight insurgencies and conventional armies have been tested and proven to work most of the times. Those blueprints have militarily defeated ISIS' predecessor AQI and ISIS' current version in Iraq and Syria. In contrast, the counterterrorism blueprint devised for AQ has not succeeded in defeating it militarily but has dealt it severe blows at times.

### **3. Methodology**

This thesis examines scholarly literature, government documents, policymakers', think tanks' and private researchers' studies, polling researches, as well as media sources to compare the historical, political, societal, hierarchical, ideological and recruitment and radicalization strategies used by AQ and ISIS. Additionally, for the counterterrorism policies section of my thesis, it will be using studies conducted by economists who explain how economics could be used in counterterrorism and the understanding of terrorist motives. Those studies also show how different counterterrorism policies lead to changing terrorist behavior based on their terrorism calculus.

### **4. Results in Brief**

ISIS' is the most successful terrorist group to date because of its unprecedented territorial accomplishments and the revenue it generated at its peaks which are huge compared to AQ's small resources pool. However, while I concede that their points are factually true, AQ's model of terrorism is more sustainable because it is less ideologically radical. AQ also has a more sustainable financial model, and has a stronger international presence compared to ISIS. Furthermore, ISIS' model also generates more international backlash than it can withstand. Through its grand agenda of state building, ISIS bites more than it can chew by fighting too many sides simultaneously to establish its caliphate. There is a reason why AQ has outlived any of the terrorist groups that came after it; its shrewd strategy of operating covertly and patiently waiting to achieve its goals is arguably a more sustainable model than ISIS' more hasty strategy.

## **Chapter 2 – History of AQ and ISIS**

This section will be divided into three parts: how both groups historically originated and the political climate around the time of their creation, their ideologies, and their agenda goals and objectives.

### **1. Historical Background**

#### **AQ's History**

AQ's origins started with the failing monarchical regime of Mohammad Zahir Shah that was ended by Prime Minister Daoud Khan by a non-violent coup in 1973 in Afghanistan. While Khan initially had the support of Communists, he took a series of steps that aggravated his relationship with them. Khan began shifting to the political right in 1977 and was also searching for means for higher external revenue and a decrease in Afghanistan's dependence on the Soviets. Khan's financial goals prompted his government to open conversations with Iran, which resulted in \$2 billion being directed to Afghanistan over 10 years. Khan further alienated the Communists by attempting to remove them from the army. Russia, fearing for its position in Afghanistan, consolidated the Communist factions in Afghanistan. Khan was assassinated in the Saur Revolution by the communists who established the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in 1978. In an effort to modernize the country, the new government launched new laws that mimicked the Soviet model, and although the public opposed them their protests were met with a government crackdown.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Aureo de Toledo Gomes and Michelle Mitri Mikhael. "Terror or Terrorism? Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Comparative Perspective." *Brazilian Political Science Review (BPSR)*. March 06, 2018. Accessed October 18, 2018. <https://brazilianpoliticalsciencereview.org/article/terror-or-terrorism-al-qaeda-and-the-islamic-state-in-comparative-perspective/>.

The USSR tightened its control even further over Afghanistan through a military invasion in light of the political climate in the Middle East in 1979. The Iranian Revolution occurred that year and established a Shiite theocracy in the country. Given the Shiites attempt to seize the Great Mosque of Mecca from the Sunni Al Saud monarchy, the USSR feared that Afghanistan could be next in the expansion of the Shiite revolution. The USSR's invasion of Afghanistan was met with the creation of a resistance, which was founded to fight off the Communist occupier of their Muslim country. Therefore, AQ was founded in 1988 by bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abdullah Azzam, and they wanted to facilitate the movement of fighters and resources to the Afghan resistance. However, after the withdrawal of the Soviets, AQ shifted its attention from Afghanistan to conflicts involving Muslims around the globe, which include supporting revolutions against apostate regimes and their Western backers.<sup>2</sup>

Bin Laden went back to Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal and discovered the presence of American soldiers in Saudi Arabia who had been stationed there since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Bin Laden viewed this presence as a desecration of foreigners or infidels in the most sacred and religious Muslim lands, and his animosity to the US was amplified, given that his perception of the US as a backer of apostate and corrupt regimes was reinforced. Furthermore, his hostility towards the Al Saud monarchy increased as he supported opposition groups in Saudi Arabia. Bin Laden was exiled in 1991 to Sudan given his actions, and he utilized the circumstances in Sudan to enhance AQ's abilities by negotiating a deal with the Sudanese government. Bin Laden was required to build infrastructure projects in Sudan using his personal money, and in return, the Sudanese government provided his group with training camps and other requirements for their operations. However, this relationship ended given increasing

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



pressure from Gulf countries on Sudan due to their fear of AQ, and consequently imposed international sanctions in 1996. The Sudanese government decided to exile bin Laden and his fighters where they chose to return to Afghanistan yet again.<sup>3</sup>

In Afghanistan, AQ cooperated with the Taliban regime and their leader Mullah Omar and the Taliban authorized the opening of training camps in Afghanistan for al-Qaeda's use in 1997. It is estimated that between 10,000 and 20,000 volunteers went through these training camps in exchange for a yearly contribution of \$20-30 million from AQ to the Taliban. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, there was mounting international pressure on the Taliban to turn over bin Laden, but the Taliban regime declined. In response Operation Enduring Freedom was launched on October in 2001 against AQ and its allies the Taliban, but groups' main leaders including bin Laden were not found. Operation enduring freedom destroyed 80% of AQ's operational and training capabilities, but although its ability was significantly diminished, AQ was still involved in other major terrorist attacks, including one in Tunisia and Bali in 2002, the Madrid train station bombings 2004, and the London metro stations bombings in 2005. In 2011, bin Laden was assassinated by American troops in Abbottabad, Pakistan, which rendered al-Zawahiri the commander of AQ.<sup>4</sup>

### ISIS' History

ISIS was founded in response to the U.S. military occupation of Iraq in 2003. Abu Musab Al Zarqawi, the group's founder fought in Afghanistan against the Soviets, but came back to Jordan after the war and was part of government opposition groups. He was arrested in 1992 after local enforcement found explosives with him that he intended to use on a military target. In prison, he met Abu Muhammad Al Maqdisi, who was a renowned jihadist preacher and became Zarqawi's

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

mentor during his time at the prison. Zarqawi was released from prison in a general amnesty in 1999 that was granted by the king of Jordan.<sup>5</sup>

In an effort to build his organization, Zarqawi pursued the support of bin Laden upon his return to Afghanistan. Zarqawi asked for financial aid from leaders of AQ, to start his activities despite refusing to swear loyalty to them. Moreover, bin Laden and Zawahiri contested Zarqawi's extremist mindset, particularly disagreeing with attacking Shiites whom Zarqawi viewed as the primary enemy of Sunnis and accused of treason. Despite their disagreements, they worked together in the Levant region, where Zarqawi was active and where AQ was weak and fragmented. The American military intervention in Iraq in 2003 was a key turning point in this narrative. The then Bush administration selected Paul Bremer to manage the provisional authority of Iraq. Bremer made two decisions which led to further instability in the country. By dissolving the Iraqi army, he rendered all members of the Baath party unemployed and left more than 100,000 skilled unemployed Baathists, who were later used by AQ for the insurgency against the American forces.

Seizing this situation, in 2004 Zarqawi pledged his loyalty to bin Laden, resulting in the creation of AQ in Iraq. This linkage brought advantages to both groups. The concept and name of AQ started to gain momentum across the region, and Zarqawi garnered backing and notoriety among Iraqi jihadists. Despite these gains, there were still strong differences in the relationship between bin Laden and Zawahiri. They disagreed on terrorist attacks aimed at US targets instead of on Shiites and Sunnis who were viewed as dissenters by Zarqawi. The group was almost obliterated following Zarqawi's death in June 2006 and the sequence of attacks on AQ in Iraq when Sunni tribes cooperated US forces. Bin Laden and Zawahiri recommended that the remnants

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<sup>5</sup> Joby Warrick. *Black Flags, The Rise of ISIS*. London: Transworld Publishers, 2016.

abandon the objectives and strategies modeled by Zarqawi, and instead look for support from the local community. However, the decision made was the opposite of this recommendation.<sup>6</sup>

Prior to his death, Zarqawi formed a council comprised of several jihadist groups operating in Iraq as he realized it was illogical for AQ in Iraq to challenge the rival jihadist groups. The creation of ISIS was then declared by this council, with Abu Hamza Al Muhajir succeeding Zarqawi, and promising allegiance to this new organization, which was led by Abu Omar Al Baghdadi. The strategy of attacking noncombatants continued to be used, with an average of 53 people killed every 24 hours by ISIS in 2006. However, the future of ISIS seemed uncertain in 2010. Abu Omar Al Baghdadi and other members had been abolished by the US which debilitated the group despite Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi's proclamation as the new leader. There were two incidences, however, which resulted in helping revive ISIS. First, following the departure of US troops from Iraq in 2011, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki started persecuting Sunnis in the country; the incarceration of Vice President Tariq Hashimi due to terrorist allegations is the main example of this. In addition, during the parliamentary elections of 2014, Maliki's electoral agenda showcased him as an able candidate in defending Shiites from a Sunni counter-revolution. Sunni resistance was impelled because of this stance, leading it directly into the arms of extremist movements in the country, particularly ISIS. The second event was the development of the Syrian civil war in 2011.<sup>7</sup>

Just as the sectarianism between Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq was a defining factor in the reunification of ISIS, the Syrian context permitted Al Baghdadi to extend the span of his operations. The Syrian-Iraqi border had always been penetrable, enabling jihadists to infiltrate Iraqi territory. Upon these jihadist groups' return to Syrian territory, they further destabilized the

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<sup>6</sup> Gomes and Mikhael. "Terror or Terrorism? Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Comparative Perspective."

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

country. ISIS exploited these circumstances and intervened in the conflict, particularly through the Jabhat Al Nusra organization which emerged in January 2012. Nevertheless, Jabhat Al Nusra chose to adopt guidelines from central AQ to gain the support of the local community, coordinating with other groups and avoiding the use of barbarity. Hence, this resulted in the strife between AQ and ISIS. On April 9th, 2013, Al Baghdadi declared the merger of Jabhat Al Nusra with his group, forming ISIS and the Levant and granting himself the status of leader of both organizations. The leaders of Jabhat Al Nusra pleaded Zawahiri to intervene and on February 02, 2014, AQ disavowed this union, refuting any connection to ISIS and exonerating itself from accountability for any of its actions. Hereafter, on July 4th, 2014, after claiming large sections of Syrian and Iraqi lands, Baghdadi announced the creation of a new caliphate and appointing himself as caliph.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Ideology

Terrorist groups have purposefully misinterpreted jihad as a ‘holy war’ for their own political purposes and agendas. However, jihad is used to describe three different types of endeavors: an internal spiritual struggle against sin and evil and to implement the Muslim faith as best as possible, a struggle to build a great and pious Muslim society, and lastly the struggle to defend Islam from aggressors through holy war if it is required.<sup>9</sup> Thus, jihad can be divided into internal and external jihad. The internal jihad is defined as the Muslim’s efforts to maintain their faith as best as possible as well as adhering to the religion’s strict guidelines.<sup>10</sup> It is also known as the greater jihad because it is considered to be the core idea of jihad, and implementing it is considered more difficult to do for a Muslim. Upon returning from one of the battles, the prophet said to his followers: “We are

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> "Religions - Islam: Jihad," BBC, August 03, 2009, accessed February 13, 2019, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/beliefs/jihad\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/beliefs/jihad_1.shtml).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

finished with the lesser jihad; now we are starting the greater jihad.”<sup>11</sup> This shows the emphasis that the religion puts on the greater internal jihad over the external holy war.

The second part of jihad is the external holy war or the lesser jihad, which is also divided into two sections, offensive jihad, and defensive jihad. Offensive jihad can be fought by a Muslim state headed by the authority of a caliph or imam against a non-Muslim enemy state — if it poses it an existential threat or is hostile, prevents the propagation of Islam — but is not legitimate if it is for the conversion of non-Muslims.<sup>12</sup> The Quran (2:256) says that “There is no compulsion in religion”, which demonstrates that coercion in conversion is unacceptable in Islam. On the other hand, defensive jihad seeks to maintain the safety of the state by defending the land from threats, and it is required by every Muslim regardless if a caliph exists or not.<sup>13</sup>

As such, jihad for the sake of conquest, pillaging, or glory is not justified, and it is only legitimate if it follows the above-mentioned rules and brings the perpetrator closer to God and religion. As a last resort, if the hostile non-Muslim nation cannot be dealt with, jihad may be used only if the belligerent state has been presented with the triple alternative and rejected the first two options. The alternatives are to accept Islam, pay the jizyah (a tax imposed on non-Muslim for being under Muslim control and safety), or fight.<sup>14</sup> There are numerous guidelines in place to regulate jihad when it is initiated. Jihadists are required to differentiate enemy combatants from noncombatants, and no harm should be done to civilians, be it women, children, or monks (unless

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Tony Coady and Michael O'Keefe, *Terrorism and Justice Moral Argument in a Threatened World* (Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Michael G. Knapp. “The Concept and Practice of Jihad in Islam.” *Parameters: U.S. Army War College* 33 (1): 82. 2003.

they are fighting as well), in addition to those granted immunity. Jihad also requires the response of force that is proportional to that of the enemy's use of force.<sup>15</sup>

The definition of jihad thus makes terrorism, which is the deliberate targeting killing of civilians, forbidden in Islam, and it says so in the Quran (2:190) "And fight, in the path of Allah, those who fight you, and do not transgress limits." Ibn Taymiyyah, one of the renowned Islamic scholars, reemphasizes this point by stating: "As for those who cannot offer resistance or cannot fight, such as women, children, monks, old people, the blind, handicapped and their like, they shall not be killed, unless they actually fight with words and acts."<sup>16</sup> We can, therefore, see that the use of jihad and religion by terrorist groups is misconstrued purposefully by these groups to serve their terrorist agenda, and is used thoroughly in their ideologies. This makes challenging their rhetoric by appealing to the Muslim world with the moderate version of Islam of utmost importance to hinder radicalization and recruitment.

### AQ's Ideology

To discuss AQ's ideology we must also mention the thinkers that influenced its philosophy. Abdullah Yusuf Azzam was one of the main Islamic scholars of his time; he influenced Osama bin Laden's thinking and shaped the jihad principles that enabled that captured that hearts and minds of Afghan and Arab men and mobilized them to repel the Soviets in Afghanistan. He was one of the founding members alongside Osama of the Afghan Service Bureau (MAK) which was a key element in recruiting, indoctrinating and training thousands of youth.<sup>17</sup> Azzam visualized AQ to be a global organization that would mobilize its soldiers to fight on behalf of oppressed Muslims all around the globe, a reaction force that is ready to defend Muslims wherever they exist

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 85.

<sup>17</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 18-19.

in a short notice.<sup>18</sup> This idea also appealed to Osama who wished to unite the Islamic world into a single unitary state and remove secular rulers from power, with Egypt being a prime target for them.<sup>19</sup>

Despite agreeing on assisting Muslims who were oppressed around the world, specifically those engaged in ethnic or national struggles like Chechnya and Kashmir, Osama and Azzam quarreled regarding their vision for AQ. Their power struggle started after they disagreed on AQ's tactics when Egyptian fighters within MAK proposed to train MAK fighters in terrorist methods.<sup>20</sup> Azzam refused and issued a religious fatwa (a ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a recognized authority) on killing civilians. Azzam said: "Muslims do not have to stop an attack mushrikeen [polytheists], if non-fighting women and children are present. But Muslims should avoid the killing of children and non-fighting women and should not aim at them."<sup>21</sup> However, Osama disagreed and endorsed the Egyptian faction's shift toward terrorism. In order to transform AQ's in his own vision, Osama authorized the assassination of Azzam to the Egyptian faction using a remote-controlled bomb.<sup>22</sup>

Al Zawahiri filled Azzam's ideological vacuum after the latter's death and transformed Osama and AQ from a guerilla group to a terrorist group. Al Zawahiri was the head of the religious committee of AQ and issued *fatwas*, and was the head of the consultative council, or the *Shura Majlis*.<sup>23</sup> Both Osama and Al Zawahiri are followers of Salafi Islam which is associated with Wahhabism. Salafism seeks to bring back Muslims to the Quran and the Prophet's authentic Sunnah (the way of life prescribed as normative for Muslims on the basis of the teachings and

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<sup>18</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 21-22.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 23.

<sup>23</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 26.

practices of Muhammad and interpretations of the Koran). It also seeks to address modern problems with Islamic solutions and build an Islamic society that is based on laws that free from any additions, deletions, or alterations.<sup>24</sup> Salafism also speaks all people with no discrimination to culture, race, or color, and this why Osama and AQ's message has reached far beyond Sunnis. This trait allowed AQ to build ties with Shias and construct strategic bonds with Shia groups like Hezbollah,<sup>25</sup> and this far-reaching message was one of the main reasons why AQ and ISIS to split up.

### ISIS' Ideology

Despite ISIS lacking theoretical or scholarly criteria, it has extracted from Salafi jihadists' scope of ideas and accordingly selected whatever suits its unique framework of the world. Occasionally, the organization has even been held accountable for misappropriating the studies of radical Salafi theorists, one example being the distinguished Salafi – jihadist scholar Abu Mohammed Al Maqdisi, who berated Baghdadi's cohorts for stealing his works and declaring them as their own. Nevertheless, Maqdisi is not a prime source of inspiration for ISIS, as the organization bases itself on much more brutal and deadlier principles. Baghdadi and his inner circle specifically look towards three Salafi – jihadist manifestos to reason and justify what they do. The most notable of the three is *The Management of Savagery*. This proclamation was distributed in PDF format under the pseudonym Abu Bakr Al Muhajjer in the early 2000s, offering a calculated blueprint on how to create an Islamic caliphate that differentiates immensely from comparable efforts by Salafi – jihadists in the decades prior. *Introduction to the Jurisprudence of Jihad* by Abu Abdullah Al Muhajjer, the second text, commands Salafi – jihadists to do everything required in order to form a purely unified Islamic state. The last book is *The Essentials of Making Ready*

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<sup>24</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 27.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



*[for Jihad]* by Sayyid Imam Al Sharif, aka Abdel-Qader Ibn Abdel- Aziz or Dr. Fadl. This extensive study centers on the theological and practical definitions of jihad in Islam and has become a key text in jihadi training. Dr. Fadl confessed that he wrote the book in 1987-1988 for it to be a reference book for training camps of what eventually became AQ.<sup>26</sup>

While Najji's identity remains ambiguous, both Muhajjer and Dr. Fadl had close relations with Zawahiri. Muhajjer is an Egyptian national who fought in Afghanistan alongside Osama bin Laden and Zawahiri. The three manifestos embody the most radical beliefs within the movement and the deterioration of the Salafi – jihadist ideology into *Fiqh Al Damaa* (the jurisprudence of blood). Despite most analysts focusing primarily on *The Management of Savagery*, the other two texts are equally significant in offering intellectual and ideological motivation and inspiration for Baghdadi and his ideologues.<sup>27</sup>

Despite their contrasts, there are conceptual correlations amongst the three manifestos that provide theoretical advice for ISIS's operations. First, the three texts ask for complete war and promote offensive jihad in contrast to defensive jihad in order to eliminate the *kuffar* (infidels) or the enemies of Islam, hence spreading turmoil and fear. At the core of this justification is the doctrine that Salafi – jihadists must eliminate the idea that the formation of an Islamic state is possible through a continuous electoral or political process. The authors mock those Islamists who propose a reformist approach, asserting that it is impossible to construct the institutions of an Islamic state under a system of apostasy. Second, despite a total war commonly targeting the near enemy and the far enemy, they focus combatting authoritarian Muslim rulers who do not implement *shariah* (Quranic law). Finally, the three manifestos persuade the movement's organizers and lieutenants to execute with freedom, to inspect no limits and follow in the footsteps

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<sup>26</sup> Fawaz A. Gerjes, *ISIS: A History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017, 34.

<sup>27</sup> Gerjes, *ISIS: A History*, 35.

of the Prophet's companions, who, in their view, viciously punished dissenters and adversaries. They cite detailed examples of early Islamic history to strengthen their argument that exorbitant violence establishes their desired submissive environment. In alignment with their rationale, brutality is the key to prosperity and triumph, while leniency is a recipe for failure and loss. The texts also contend that the long-term objective of restoring Islam's golden age and consolidating the Islamic state legitimizes the means like ruthlessness and barbarism.<sup>28</sup>

Although all three Salafi jihadist theorists call for offensive jihad rather than defensive jihad, Najji offers an in-depth explanation for total war. Najji states that previous Salafi – jihadists lacked a tactical road map and executed isolated violent attacks with no thorough “military strategy” or detailed scheme. He strongly reprimands fellow Islamists for misusing their time and efforts on prophesizing jihad rather than engaging in jihad. Rather, Najji provides a broad plan divided into three phases in which violence would be increased qualitatively and strategically instead of in an impromptu and spontaneous way. The first phase, *al- Nikaya wal- Tamkeen* (vexation and recognition), the enemy's resolve must be fragmented by exercising attacks against fundamental economic and strategic targets such as oil facilities and tourism infrastructure. On behalf of security forces' efforts to immediately mobilize resources to protect these unstable targets, the state and its powers would lose credibility, paving the way for “savagery and chaos”. Najji then goes on to claim that this security vacuum would allow for Salafi – jihadists to enter by commencing an all-out battle on the watered-down security forces. Once the leaders are removed from power, a second phase would begin, *Idrarat al-Tawhush* (the organization and running of savagery), and the third and final phase, *Shawkat al-Tamkeen* (empowerment), would see the

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<sup>28</sup> Geroges, *ISIS: A History*, 36.

formation of the Islamic state. Najji clarifies that this Islamic state should be governed by a single ruler who would then unite dispersed groups and domains of “savagery” in a caliphate.<sup>29</sup>

### **3. Terrorist Tactics and Objectives**

AQ and ISIS also contrast in terms of their main enemies, strategies, tactics, and other essential issues. Therefore, the threat they pose to global security is different than one another.

#### *AQ's Tactics and Objectives*

AQ relies on the “far enemy” strategy, with its primary enemy being the US, because it views the US as the root problem in the Middle East. AQ despises the US for its support to corrupt, repressive, apostate regimes in The Middle East, and it believes that by targeting the US it will coerce it to end its support to those regimes and withdraw from the region. This would leave those regimes weak enough to be attacked from within and toppled. While AQ perceives Shias to be apostates, unlike ISIS it does not see their killing justified and finds that to be a waste of resources, and harmful to its image among Muslims and its overall agenda. Despite the fact that AQ does not engage in sectarian attacks, its current leader Zawahiri cannot publicly denounce sectarianism because it is really popular among many radical Muslims and is used extensively in the Syrian civil war.<sup>30</sup>

AQ uses several strategies to achieve its main objectives. AQ has always gone for eye-catching terrorist attacks in its fight against the US to grab the attention of the Muslim world and radicalize potential recruits to boost its recruitment. It has launched large-scale attacks against US strategic or symbolic targets, with the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 9/11 being the most notable. Other notable attacks include the 1998 bombings of the US embassies in

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<sup>29</sup> Gerges, *ISIS: A History*, 37.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel L. Byman, "Comparing Al Qaeda and ISIS: Different Goals, Different Targets," Brookings, July 28, 2016, accessed April 02, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/comparing-al-qaeda-and-isis-different-goals-different-targets/>.

Kenya and Tanzania, the naval attack on USS *Cole* in the port of Aden in 2000, and several foiled plots in 2005 that targeted 10 transatlantic flights.<sup>31</sup>

AQ is also convinced that this strategy will force the US into withdrawing from the Middle East due to previous incidents in which terrorism coerced the US into withdrawing from certain areas it was engaged in militarily. The US retreated from Lebanon after Hezbollah targeted the US Marine barracks and embassy with bombs in Lebanon. The US also retreated from Somalia in the aftermath of the “Blackhawk Down” incident. In addition to conducting dramatic terrorist attacks, AQ supports insurgents in the Muslim world in their fight against US-sponsored regimes, like the Afghani government that is supported by the US. By targeting the backed Afghani government, AQ aims to repeat its Soviet experience with America.<sup>32</sup>

AQ has also supported smaller-scale terrorist attacks on Western targets and has trained insurgents and helped establish guerilla militias. Moreover, it utilizes overwhelming amounts of propaganda to radicalize Muslims and persuade them that jihad is their duty, and to encourage terrorists to implement AQ’s goals over their own domestic goals.<sup>33</sup>

### ISIS’ Tactics and Objectives

ISIS does not follow AQ’s “far enemy” strategy, rather it focuses on “near enemy” strategy. ISIS’ main enemies are apostate regimes in the Arab world, and two that it has constantly fought against are the Assad regime in Syria and the Abadi regime in Iraq. ISIS and its leader Baghdadi continued the strategy of AQI and their leader Zarqawi by targeting Shia Muslims in Syria and Iraq, and by targeting other religious minorities like Yazidis and Christians. ISIS engages in such

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

attacks to purify the Muslim world from minorities like Shias, which ISIS views as innovators and infidels who alter and change the religion.<sup>34</sup>

In Syria, ISIS was in war with all other groups participating in the Syrian Civil War. It targeted other jihadist networks, like Al Nusra Front which is an AQ affiliate.<sup>35</sup> It fought the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish-Arab alliance that also included Turkmen and Armenian fighters. The SDF was primarily led by People's Protection Units (YPG) which is a Kurdish Militia.<sup>36</sup> ISIS also fought the Free Syrian Army (FSA) an umbrella group that comprises of defected members of the Syrian Army, civilian fighters, and Islamist militias.<sup>37</sup> It also fought against Shia militias like Hezbollah which support the Assad regime.<sup>38</sup> Although the US leads an international coalition against ISIS and backs some ground actors like the SDF against ISIS, ISIS does not target the United States because it is not within its range.<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, the US remains an enemy for ISIS, which has been targeted through lone wolf attacks.

ISIS' strategy is to gain authority of territory and constantly expand its control. ISIS' strategy is motivated by its ideology because ISIS seeks to establish an Islamic state or caliphate, with ISIS' radical perception of Islamic governance and laws. ISIS' strategy is also inspired by its plans to increase recruitment through captivating Muslims with its caliphate, and by gaining control of territory which enables it to build an army, which would then it would use to conquer more territory.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Farah Najar, "What Is the Future of the Syrian Democratic Forces?" Al Jazeera, November 25, 2017, accessed April 02, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/11/future-syrian-democratic-forces-171124110417741.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Massimiliano Pillon, "The Syrian Conflict. Conflict Analysis of a Multi-Layered Civil War." Academia.edu - Share Research. 2014, 23. [http://www.academia.edu/11304521/The\\_Syrian\\_Conflict.\\_Conflict\\_Analysis\\_of\\_a\\_Multi-Layered\\_Civil\\_War](http://www.academia.edu/11304521/The_Syrian_Conflict._Conflict_Analysis_of_a_Multi-Layered_Civil_War).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Byman, "Comparing Al Qaeda and ISIS: Different Goals, Different Targets".

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

ISIS' tactics developed through its involvement in the civil wars in Iraq and Syria. ISIS seeks to occupy territory, and therefore it utilizes artillery, massed forces, and heavy armory like tanks and Man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS) in expanding territory or defending it from attacks. ISIS also uses terrorism as a tactic because it weakens enemy morale and fighting mentality, it causes a sectarian response to its attacks, or to help its conquest operations on the ground. ISIS also terrorizes its own citizens through mass executions, public beheadings, rape, and crucifixions to force its population into compliance and purify the population of any infidels. Nevertheless, ISIS does provide basic services to its community which does get them some support and respect, and through this combination of fear and respect, ISIS controls its population.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter 3 – Operation of Groups**

This section will be divided into four sections, recruitment techniques, radicalization strategies, the composition of both terrorist groups, and their communication strategies.

### **1. Recruitment**

Terrorist groups like ISIS and AQ use several recruitment techniques. There are four approaches that these groups primarily rely on, which are called the Net, the Funnel, the Infection, and the Seed Crystal approaches.

#### **The Net Approach**

Recruiters using the Net approach would view everyone as a potential target, as the entire population is perceived to be similar and receptive to their propaganda. One of the ways they approach their audience is through sending out videos. Those who are accepting of their propaganda would consume their message and join the ranks of the group.<sup>42</sup> In one of its videos, ISIS utilized this approach in their film that featured the captured Jordanian pilot Moath al-Kasasbeh.<sup>43</sup> The pilot denounced the Jordanian monarchy and the coalition's actions in Syria and Iraq, and then urged citizens to join ISIS in a propaganda ploy set up by ISIS to attract recruits. He was burned in a cage by the end of the video that featured many cinematic effects.<sup>44</sup> Terrorist groups also use this approach through sermons given at mosques that are led by radical imams. People attending that sermon and exposed to its message could easily be radicalized.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Scott Gerwehr and Sara Daly, "Al-Qaida: Terrorist Selection and Recruitment," Rand, accessed April 11, 2018, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reprints/2006/RAND\\_RP1214.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reprints/2006/RAND_RP1214.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> Mohammed Abu Dalhoum, "Youth Deradicalization. Strengthening the Bonds between Jordanian Youth," GRIN, 2016, accessed April 11, 2018, <https://www.grin.com/document/346854>.

<sup>44</sup> Laura Smith-Spark and Michael Martinez, "Who Was Jordanian Pilot Moath Al-Kasasbeh?" CNN, February 04, 2015, accessed April 11, 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/29/middleeast/who-is-jordan-pilot-isis-hostage/index.html>.

<sup>45</sup> Gerwehr and Daly, "Al-Qaida: Terrorist Selection and Recruitment".

While this approach could attract a lot of recruits, terrorist groups use it carefully because it has two main disadvantages. One of its disadvantages is that it is the least secretive of the approaches, and its publicity could expose those attempting to recruit.<sup>46</sup> It can also easily backfire as with the ISIS' propaganda video with al-Kasasbeh. ISIS lost a large chunk of their sympathizers in Jordan, one of its three main sources of recruits, due to the barbarity of the death of the pilot.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, employing the Net approach in mosques is troublesome because sermons can easily be monitored and controlled by governments and intelligence agencies, rendering it possible for those counterterrorism agencies to apprehend the recruiters.<sup>48</sup>

### *The Funnel Approach*

The Funnel approach like the Net targets those who are prone to recruitment but does not view the entire population as homogenous and receptive as the Net approach would. Potential recruits would start at the wide end of the funnel, and through the process of transformation in identity and motivation would become radicalized at the other end of the funnel.<sup>49</sup> Through the transformation recruits must prove their worth and loyalty by their detailed knowledge of radical Islam and committing violent acts. While recruits might opt out of the program, they can be influenced by the process of radicalization and act as future recruiters or mediators between recruiters and potential targets.<sup>50</sup>

### *The Infection Approach*

Terrorist organizations would utilize this approach when the audience or society they are attempting to recruit from is resilient to its propaganda. The best option then with audiences like

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<sup>46</sup> Abu Dalhoum, "Youth Deradicalization. Strengthening the Bonds between Jordanian Youth".

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Gerwehr and Daly, "Al-Qaida: Terrorist Selection and Recruitment".

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.



these is to try to recruit from within the society by sending a reliable recruiter. The recruiter would then attempt to directly approach potential candidates and achieve recruitment through persuasion. The recruiter must be careful with their targets, but also transform those targets into recruiters themselves whereby they can also continue to spread the propaganda and add further recruits. This approach has a high success ratio with targets who are not radical in their beliefs but are highly disappointed in their lives or hold some sort of grievance.<sup>51</sup>

### *The Seed Crystal Approach*

Terrorist organizations would utilize the Seed Crystal approach when the population or audience they are targeting is even more impenetrable to their messages than that of the infection approach. In this unusual case, recruiters would not be able to recruit from within by sending in a trusted agent. As an alternative, recruiters would arrange the potential context for those in the society they are targeting to seek out self-recruitment.<sup>52</sup> When a potential recruit opts in for the process and chooses to recruit themselves on their own, they transform themselves into the trusted agent that terrorist organizations use in the Infection approach. The next step then would be for others to continue to echo the propaganda to other people.<sup>53</sup>

## **2. Radicalization**

Terrorist groups like AQ and ISIS use 4 elements to radicalize individuals, it includes: radicalizing social groups, desire for change, desire to respond to grievances, and perceived awards. Each of these elements is further categorized, and the details are explained below.

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<sup>51</sup> Abu Dalhoum, "Youth Deradicalization. Strengthening the Bonds between Jordanian Youth".

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

### Radicalizing Social Groups

#### A. Social-Psychological Processes

Social groups are a major part of the radicalization process of individuals, and it influences their behavior, beliefs, and their dedication to action. There are several social-psychological processes that radicalize individuals, those include: in-group/out-group, conformity, compliance, groupthink, group polarization, and diffusion of responsibility.<sup>54</sup>

The in-group/out-group is a process in which terrorist groups perceive themselves positively and outsiders negatively by demonizing those outsiders, which makes terrorist groups more likely to launch attacks against those who are foreign to their group. Conformity is a process in which terrorist groups outline their expectations for what individuals' beliefs and attitude should be, which results in a change in individual conduct to conform to the group ideas. Compliance is one in which terrorist groups promote increased obedience of their orders to individuals. Compliance increases if terrorist groups are highly cohesive, isolated from competitive groups, there is a high cost if an individual does not follow orders, and the terrorist group's attention and satisfaction of its members' needs. Groupthink is a one in which radicalization increases due to pressure to reach an agreement or an identical solution/perspective to a certain topic which causes biased judgment on the part of individuals. Group polarization is one in which group interactions within a radical/terrorist group highly polarizes individuals' conducts. Finally, diffusion of responsibility increases the radicalization of individuals by restricting individual responsibility for violence and sharing it among the entire group, decreasing individual accountability.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Paul K. Davis and Kim Cragin, eds., "Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the Pieces Together," Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009, 74.

<sup>55</sup> Davis and Cragin, "Social Science for Counterterrorism", 75.

## B. Terrorism Recruitment

Radicalization can occur through a top-down process through a terrorist group's cell in which they approach individuals for recruitment. Recruitment can be done through informal group or individual gatherings in homes, camps, or mosques, like AQ recruiters in Saudi Arabia who conducted meetings in private homes. In such gatherings, potential recruits are evaluated for their reasons to join the terrorist group and the qualifications and skill set that they could bring to the group. Terrorist groups send recruiters to seek out potential candidates in universities, social clubs, schools, and mosques, and those recruiters would promote the group's ideology. The recruiters would also use social-psychological processes like conformity, in-group, and groupthink to interact with candidates. Recruiters could also seek to recruit their own friends and family rather than seek out strangers to join the terrorist group.<sup>56</sup>

## C. Bottom-Up Peer Groups (Religious Settings, Family, Prisons, Internet)

Radicalization can also occur through a bottom-up process in which individuals are responsible for radicalizing themselves through their interactions with family, friends or peers. This new trend in terrorism has been demonstrated in an analysis of 242 European terrorists who got radicalized through their inner circle and had no ties to terrorist networks. However, this process increases an individual's chance to be approached by a recruiter by making their interest more visible for recruiters. It can occur through 4 social venues: religious settings, family, prisons, and the internet.

In religious settings that promote violence, imams and spiritual leaders use their religious legitimacy and power to radicalize individuals that they are meeting, whether it is in private settings or mosques. They lecture these individuals in religious sermons and indoctrinate them with their hateful ideology. This has been the case with the AQ cell that was responsible for the

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<sup>56</sup> Davis and Cragin, "Social Science for Counterterrorism", 76.

Madrid bombings in 2004 as they all attended Madrid's M30 mosque and a Saudi recruit who joined AQ in Iraq to fight against the American occupation. Family can also be a source of bottom-up radicalization through continuous contact with parents, siblings, tribes, or clans.<sup>57</sup>

Radicalization can also occur in prisons, and they are considered to be one of the growing breeding grounds for indoctrination as inmates radicalize one another.<sup>58</sup> During the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Bush administration disbanded the Iraqi military overnight, which rendered around 300,000<sup>59</sup> to 500,000<sup>60</sup> armed Iraqi men unemployed and angry at the decision. Many of these men were detained at Camp Bucca, a U.S detention facility in southern Iraq. The facility housed 24,000 men, and an estimated 100,000 men passed through between 2003 and 2009. Jihadists were able to network with the former soldiers and Ba'athists who became major targets for recruitment.

The detention structure of Camp Bucca allowed radicals to easily connect, indoctrinate, plan, and organize with others who were less radical or moderate, as the compound was divided into compounds of 1,000 inmates.<sup>61</sup> Due to the chaos of the war, Americans imprisoned and grouped together radicals with innocent individuals they collected during house raids, and ex-soldiers, since the Americans were unable to distinguish between prisoners. As the US was pushing for an exit in 2009, many prisoners at Bucca were released, and others were handed to Iraqi authorities who

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<sup>57</sup> Davis and Cragin, "Social Science for Counterterrorism", 78.

<sup>58</sup> Davis and Cragin, "Social Science for Counterterrorism", 79.

<sup>59</sup> Dexter Filkins, "Did George W. Bush Create ISIS?" *The New Yorker*, May 15, 2015, accessed March 24, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/did-george-w-bush-create-isis>.

<sup>60</sup> Mehdi Hasan, "Blowback: How ISIS Was Created by the U.S. Invasion of Iraq," *The Intercept*, January 29, 2018, accessed March 24, 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2018/01/29/isis-iraq-war-islamic-state-blowback/>.

<sup>61</sup> Alexandra Klausner, "US Prison Camp in Iraq Accidentally Formed ISIS by Housing the Most Radical Jihadists Together and Allowing Them to Organize Terror Group," *Daily Mail Online*, June 01, 2015, accessed March 24, 2019.

proved incompetent in keeping them locked up.<sup>62</sup> It was later found out that nine members of the Islamic State's top command did time at Bucca,<sup>63</sup> including Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi, the group's current leader, and Haji Bakir, a former colonel in Saddam's regime. Haji Bakir was the architect of ISIS' organizational structure and devised the strategies that yielded ISIS' military achievements.<sup>64</sup>

Radicalization can also occur on the internet, as it helps terrorists convene on virtual platforms and makes it easier for them to indoctrinate others with their ideology and exchange experience and ideas. The World Wide Web offers an online venue for terrorists and their supporters to post and share training material, ideologies outlined through manifestos, electronic magazines, and videos of terrorists in action. Applications on the internet like blogs, chat-platforms like WhatsApp, social networking apps like Facebook and Instagram, and video sharing sites like YouTube enable like-minded individuals to meet and share their ideas. Like any other setting, group social-psychological processes occur on the internet, and radicalization is easier because it does not require the physical presence of its participants.<sup>65</sup>

The internet also enables terrorist groups to recount injustices and attacks that occurred against Muslims around the globe to cause anger among its potential recruits and provoke them to react by joining their terrorist groups. It also allows recruiters to connect with potential candidates as they monitor those apps for willing and qualified supporters and contact them for recruitment. In

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<sup>62</sup> Brad Parks, "How a US Prison Camp Helped Create ISIS," New York Post, May 30, 2015, accessed March 24, 2019, <https://nypost.com/2015/05/30/how-the-us-created-the-camp-where-isis-was-born/>.

<sup>63</sup> Terrence McCoy, "Camp Bucca: The US Prison That Became the Birthplace of Isis," The Independent, November 04, 2014, accessed March 24, 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/camp-bucca-the-us-prison-that-became-the-birthplace-of-isis-9838905.html>.

<sup>64</sup> Parks, "How a US Prison Camp Helped Create ISIS."

<sup>65</sup> Davis and Cragin, "Social Science for Counterterrorism", 79.

the case of AQ recruiters, they monitored internet sites in the search for potential candidates to join the Iraqi insurgency against the American occupation.<sup>66</sup>

ISIS, on the other hand, is known for producing Hollywood-esque “action-adventure movies” designed to attract followers through its cinematic nature.<sup>67</sup> ISIS also creates chants intended to boost the morale of fighters on the battlefield, boast about its achievements and victories, set the boundaries of its territory, and mock its opponents in war.<sup>68</sup> As its accounts, pages, and videos on these sites were continuously taken down, ISIS found an ideal replacement in Telegram.<sup>69</sup> Telegram’s administrators are not as strict as other platforms as they do not regularly take down posts and shut down the accounts posting them. Therefore, ISIS uses Telegram to post videos, journals, memes, and pictures. Furthermore, Telegram’s secure algorithm in one-on-one communications allows ISIS’ hierarchy to communicate effortlessly with its fighters with no risk of intelligence agencies eavesdropping on the conversation.<sup>70</sup> The ISIS sympathizer who carried out the attack on a nightclub in Istanbul communicated with his Emir from Raqqa before and after the operation. The Paris attackers also used encrypted apps like WhatsApp and Telegram to communicate<sup>71</sup>. ISIS uses 21 languages in its social media platforms and has thus far been able to attract 30,000 fighters from 100 countries<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup> Davis and Cragin, “Social Science for Counterterrorism”, 80.

<sup>67</sup> Ed Payne, “ISIS Video Is Counterpoint to Obama Speech,” CNN, September 18, 2014, accessed March 24, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/17/world/meast/isis-threat/>.

<sup>68</sup> Alex Marshall, “How Isis Got Its Anthem,” The Guardian, November 09, 2014, accessed March 24, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/nov/09/nasheed-how-isis-got-its-anthem>.

<sup>69</sup> Ahmet S. Yayla and Anne Speckhard, “Telegram: the Mighty Application that ISIS Loves,” ICSVE, May 09, 2017, accessed March 24, 2018, <http://www.icsve.org/brief-reports/telegram-the-mighty-application-that-isis-loves/>.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Evan Perez and Shimon Prokuecz, “Paris Attackers Likely Used Encrypted Apps, Officials Say - CNNPolitics,” CNN, December 17, 2015, accessed March 24, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/17/politics/paris-attacks-terrorists-encryption/index.html>.

<sup>72</sup> Allison McDowell-Smith, Anne Speckhard, and Ahmet S. Yayla, “Beating ISIS in the Digital Space: Focus Testing ISIS Defector Counter-Narrative Videos with American College Students,” ICSVE, March 31, 2017, accessed March

#### D. Alienation

Radicalization can also be caused by Muslim individuals that feel a lack of belonging and social alienation in their communities. This exclusion drives them to look for some company which they ultimately find among radical Muslims. However, an individual has to be open to radicalism, and through companionship with other radicals their own radicalization progresses. Another method that creates a cognitive opening for radicalization among individuals is if they experience an identity crisis that shakes their beliefs and makes those individuals susceptible to radical ideas. Social alienation, political repression, and personal crises like the death of a family member can all be opportunities for a cognitive opening that leads to radicalization. The 2006 London terrorist attacks were caused by Afghan veterans who returned to Saudi Arabia and joined AQ's cell in Saudi Arabia.<sup>73</sup>

#### *Desire for Change*

Potential terrorist recruits can also be radicalized through incentivization to change the societies they live in, and often they join terrorist groups because they find these changes in the terrorist group's objectives.

#### A. Political Change: Desire for an Independent State and to Sow

Terrorist groups can radicalize individuals through their objective to institute political changes in the areas they operate in. They could be motivated by a desire to establish an independent state or to defeat an occupying force. Terrorism methods like suicide terrorism are supposed to force governments into surrendering territories.<sup>74</sup> In the case of ISIS, it has viewed the Sykes-Picot agreement as obsolete, meaning that it does not recognize the borders and the nations established

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24, 2019, <http://www.icsve.org/research-reports/beating-isis-in-the-digital-space-focus-testing-isis-defector-counter-narrative-videos-with-american-college-students/>.

<sup>73</sup> Davis and Cragin, "Social Science for Counterterrorism", 81.

<sup>74</sup> Davis and Cragin, "Social Science for Counterterrorism", 83.

in the Middle East. After capturing large swaths of territory in 2014 in both Iraq and Syria, ISIS declared that it is changing its name from “The Islamic State of Iraq and Al Sham (the Levant)” to the “Islamic State”.<sup>75</sup> The name change symbolized the transformation of an ISIS operating in two separate countries to a caliphate operating in a single entity. By obliterating the border between both countries ISIS became a cross-border caliphate that it aspired to be, eradicating part of the legacy of western imperialism in The Middle East.

To radicalize individuals ISIS' English language propaganda outlet, the Al-Hayat Media Center, released a video called The End of Sykes-Picot. During the video an ISIS fighter claimed that there are no borders, that the world belongs to God and that both territories are a single country. He also nicknamed Abu Bakr el Baghdadi “the breaker of all barriers”.<sup>76</sup> In this video, ISIS was appealing to potential recruits through several means. ISIS undermined western intervention and highlighted the complicity of Arab leaders in maintaining this map, and thus by destroying these borders it gave itself the legitimacy it took away from other Arab nations. ISIS’ motive was to inspire and encourage others to erase borders and unify under a single Islamic caliphate.

## B. Religious Changes: Caliphate and Millennialism

Terrorist groups can also radicalize individuals through their objectives to institute religious changes. Groups like AQ and ISIS appeal to individuals by claiming that they seek to create a united Muslim community that implements ‘Islamic’ law.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> James Miller, "Why Islamic State Militants Care So Much About Sykes-Picot," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, May 16, 2016, accessed March 24, 2019, <https://www.rferl.org/a/why-islamic-state-cares-so-much-about-sykes-picot/27738467.html>.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Davis and Cragin, “Social Science for Counterterrorism”, 85.



### C. Discrimination

Radicalization can also occur among individuals who believe they are the targets of social, economic and political discrimination. Discrimination can then lead to alienation, making individuals susceptible to radical ideas. Discrimination can be also be initiated by government officials by uttering Islamophobic remarks for example, which could reinforce a sense among radical individuals that the government in question should be fought or removed.

AQ and ISIS use Islamophobic reactions to by government officials, political pundits, and some media outlets following acts of terrorism abroad to appeal to potential recruits.<sup>78</sup> Those reactions continually erase the individuality of Muslims living in the West and lump the radical attackers with the general Muslim community. This plays directly into the Clash of Civilizations narrative that AQ and ISIS pursue that pits all Muslims against the West. In the aftermath of the Orlando shooting in the United States, Trump tweeted that he had been correct on radical Islamic terrorism,<sup>79</sup> and the attack reinforced his calls for a ban on Muslims entering the United States, which he implemented as President. The executive order was used in ISIS propaganda to portray the ban as a war on all Muslims. Ironically, some ISIS social media accounts praised Trump as "the best caller to Islam" for attracting new recruits.<sup>80</sup> Clint Watts, a former FBI counterterrorism special agent, said that the United States is directly increasing recruitment and making it harder for itself and its allies to fight ISIS by alienating Muslim partners because of Trump's rhetoric.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Muhammad Mansour, "Islamophobia: What the Islamic State Really Wants," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, July 29, 2016, accessed April 19, 2018, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/islamophobia-what-isis-really-wants>.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Eliza Mackintosh, "Trump Ban Is Boon for ISIS Recruitment, Experts Say," CNN, January 31, 2017, accessed March 25, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/30/politics/trump-ban-boosts-isis-recruitment/index.html>.

<sup>81</sup> Tiffany Ap, "Terror Recruitment Video Has Trump Excerpt," CNN, January 03, 2016, accessed March 25, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/01/02/middleeast/al-shabaab-video-trump/>.

The Obama administration was more politically correct than Trump in that it was precise in specifying that their war was on terror and not with Islam. However, the Trump administration is playing into terrorists' propaganda tools through several controversial policies. The Trump administration intentionally avoids political correctness by calling it radical Islamic terrorism rather than terrorism, Trump's call for surveillance of mosques, establishing a database or registry for all Muslims in the US, bringing back torture for detainees, the decision to move the United States embassy to Jerusalem as recognition of Israel, and mainly his ban on immigrants from seven majority-Muslim countries.<sup>82</sup> AQ and ISIS continue to exploit policies and reactions like these that alienate the Muslim community and targets individuals prone to radicalization and pushes them over the edge.

### *Desire to Respond to Grievances*

Individuals' desire to react to perceived grievances can be a source for their radicalization. This desire can be caused by a personal or collective grievance, or for the maintenance of their identity.

#### A. Personal Grievance: Revenge

Individuals' personal desire to avenge the injustice and abuse that they have experienced can make them susceptible to radicalization. Their motivation to exact revenge can also be motivated by attacks on their family, friends, and loved ones. It could be caused by government abuse or occupying forces, which could include means like torture or murder of individuals.<sup>83</sup> This desire could also be caused by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Survivors of PTSD have a higher propensity to become radicalized, and their desire to avenge themselves or others increases and

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<sup>82</sup> Mackintosh, "Trump Ban Is Boon for ISIS Recruitment, Experts Say".

<sup>83</sup> Davis and Cragin, "Social Science for Counterterrorism", 87.

becomes driven by survivor guilt. They feel a responsibility for revenge because they feel like they did not deserve to survive.<sup>84</sup>

## B. Collective Grievance: Duty to Defend

Another source of radicalization is the desire of individuals to respond to collective grievances and their responsibility to defend the group they identify with. Terrorist groups exploit atrocities committed against Muslims in conflicts in Kashmir, Bosnia, Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan to radicalize individuals. There has been a motivational pattern among terrorist attacks in Europe that is caused by foreign military occupations like Russia of Chechnya, US of Iraq, Israel of Palestine, and French support for the repressive Algerian regime. Individuals then feel inclined to respond through global defensive jihad to protect Muslims from the attacks of foreigners.<sup>85</sup>

AQ and ISIS distribute videos of anti-Muslim violence on the internet, and through DVDs and cassette videos. Research shows that viewing death-related videos and content can increase support for martyrdom and suicide operations. It also leads to a surge in pride for radical individuals in their country, ethnicity, religion, and race.<sup>86</sup>

AQ relies primarily on anti-American sentiments as a way to radicalize individuals. In 1996, Osama bin Laden wrote a 30-page fatwa called “Declaration of War Against the American Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places”. In this document, he praised attacks against US forces in Lebanon and Somalia. He also talked about how the Islamic world had suffered from attacks and injustices by the hands of US and Israeli forces, as well as their other Western allies. He emphasized the American presence in Saudi Arabia and how it desecrated the “land of the two

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<sup>84</sup> Davis and Cragin, “Social Science for Counterterrorism”, 88.

<sup>85</sup> Davis and Cragin, “Social Science for Counterterrorism”, 89.

<sup>86</sup> Davis and Cragin, “Social Science for Counterterrorism”, 90.

holiest sites”, which had been present since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.<sup>87</sup> In the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, bin Laden had presented his services to protect Saudi Arabia with hardened fighters from Afghanistan. However, the Saudis opted for the US military for the next six years American soldiers were present in Saudi Arabia to contain Saddam Hussein advances. This event prompted bin Laden to believe that the US must be fought first in his “far enemy” strategy because it will continue to support apostate regimes that persecute Muslims. Therefore, Muslims should join AQ and drive out American forces from Saudi Arabia. Bin Laden and AQ continuously referenced American interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan to mobilize Muslims into joining AQ and fighting American forces.<sup>88</sup>

ISIS, on the other hand, relies primarily on exploiting divisions between Sunnis and Shia. Back in 2006, ISIS predecessor AQI was responsible for the renewed schism due to the bombing of the Shia Al Askari mosque in Samarra, and the targeting of Shiites in general. Zarqawi, AQI’s leader, wanted to embroil US forces in a sectarian war to force their withdrawal from Iraq. Years after AQI’s defeat, ISIS capitalized on AQI’s legacy of the Sunni-Shia schism and wanted to further sectarianize the conflict.<sup>89</sup> In 2011, Syria’s governmental forces cracked down on peaceful protests demanding change and reform. ISIS exploited the Sunni disenfranchisement in the Syrian government and military and the domination of the Shia Alawites to attract Sunni militants around the region by viewing the conflict as sectarian.<sup>90</sup> Coupled with the later involvement of Iran,

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<sup>87</sup> Dominic Tierney, "Al-Qaeda Has Been at War with the United States for 20 Years," *The Atlantic*, August 23, 2016, accessed April 05, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/08/twenty-years-war/496736/>.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Zachary Laub, "The Islamic State," Council on Foreign Relations, August 10, 2016, accessed July 13, 2017, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/islamic-state>.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

Hezbollah, and Shia militias in the conflict<sup>91</sup> to assist a losing Assad for strategic purposes, ISIS' perspective gained legitimacy and the conflict was effectively sectarianized.

ISIS also exploited Sunni disenfranchisement in Iraq, as Sunnis were deprived of taking part in governance in 2003 during the US-led occupation leadership, and then by politicians from Iraq's Shia majority. Previous Prime Minister Anwar Al Maliki entrenched his power by eliminating Sunni political rivals while favoring and rewarding Shias with benefits. He also neglected to assimilate the Sunni Awakening councils and their militias into the security forces and went as far as detaining some of their leaders. That left many of the Sunni militias with the choice of being unemployed or joining the lucrative offers of ISIS. Furthermore, the Iraqi government deepened sectarianism in 2013, when Sunni protests for the marginalization of their sect and corruption in governance were met with extreme violence from governmental forces.<sup>92</sup>

In 2015, ISIS sectarian activities took place in other countries, as ISIS was responsible for the bombing of Shiite mosques in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen, the beheading Egyptian and Ethiopian Christians in Libya, and the attacks on security forces in those countries. They aimed to set a cycle of revenge attacks against Sunnis to legitimize their argument as being a defender of Sunnis.<sup>93</sup>

### C. Identity

Identification with the broader Muslims community could be exploited by terrorist groups to advance their collective grievance argument. Terrorist recruits join terrorist groups due to this strong connection with the global Muslim community, and this reinforces their sense of

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<sup>91</sup> "The Sunni-Shia Divide," Council on Foreign Relations, February 2016, accessed July 13, 2017, <https://www.cfr.org/peace-conflict-and-human-rights/sunni-shia-divide/p33176#!/>.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Daniel Byman, "ISIS Goes Global," Foreign Affairs, March/April 2016, accessed April 05, 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/isis-goes-global>.

responsibility to defend Muslims that they have never met. Their identification with their religion tops their identity hierarchy, and it surpasses their ethnic and national identity. This is what drives them to fight for and on behalf of Muslims that they have never met due to their bond with them in the global Islamic community, rather than a shared nationality or ethnicity. Research shown has that identification with the Muslim identity positively correlated with the perceived importance of Jihad and martyrdom.<sup>94</sup>

### *Perceived Awards*

Behaviorism (a branch of psychology) argues that the consequences of actions influence an individual's behavior. Options that increase the possibility of a behavior which are known as rewards, and options that decrease the possibility of a behavior are known as punishments. Rational choice asserts that rational actors will choose an option that maximizes their utility. The combination of both these theories suggests that radical individuals will respond to real and expected incentives of terrorism and will choose to participate in it given the consequences of their actions.<sup>95</sup>

#### A. Religious Rewards

Martyrdom is considered a religious award for participating in Jihad and dying in the name of Islam. Islam teaches that those who participate in Jihad and are killed are martyrs, which grants them an afterlife in heaven, forgiveness of all their sins, the ability to guarantee paradise for 70 family members and friends, and the enjoyment of sexual pleasures with 72 virgins.<sup>96</sup> Terrorist groups exploit this teaching in Islam to radicalize individuals and convince them of dying for their agendas, especially through suicide terrorism.

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Davis and Cragin, "Social Science for Counterterrorism", 91.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

## B. Social Status

Elevated social popularity and status could be a source of motivation for a recruit to join a terrorist group. Participants in terrorism are viewed heroically by supporters of terrorism due to the importance of jihad in Islam. Terrorist groups like AQ and ISIS and their supporters would pay their respect to fallen terrorists on social media and public exhibitions. However, sometimes familial or popular support might not be as pronounced due to the secrecy of operations.

## C. Financial Rewards

Another source of radicalization for potential recruits is financial rewards. AQ operatives received regular salaries for their participation in terrorist activities. Their counterparts the Abu Sayyaf Group operatives under ISIS command in the Philippines was able to increase recruitment due to growing funds from kidnappings, which increased financial rewards for its operatives.<sup>97</sup> ISIS caliphate in Iraq and Syria attracted unemployed individuals through the large salaries it provides for its operatives. Their soldiers earn between \$400 and \$1,200 a month, plus a \$50 stipend for their wives and \$25 for each child. Highly skilled engineers and technicians can earn up to \$1,500 a month.<sup>98</sup> Families of terrorists killed on the battlefield could also be entitled to receive funds from the terrorist group their sibling joined.<sup>99</sup>

## D. Friendship

Friendship and community ties are often established among members in operational cells within a terrorist group. These bonds increase radicalization among members, as terrorist

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<sup>97</sup> Davis and Cragin, "Social Science for Counterterrorism", 93.

<sup>98</sup> Pagliery, Jose. "ISIS Cuts Its Fighters' Salaries by 50%." CNNMoney. January 19, 2016. Accessed March 26, 2019. <http://money.cnn.com/2016/01/19/news/world/isis-salary-cuts/index.html>.

<sup>99</sup> Davis and Cragin, "Social Science for Counterterrorism", 93.

operatives become increasingly detached from their community and more connected to and reliant on members of their terrorist cell.<sup>100</sup>

#### E. Excitement

Terrorist groups promise a great deal of excitement and action for their potential recruits, which drives their radicalization and motivation to join their groups. Recruitment videos distributed on the internet and social media depict various aspects of terrorism and real operations were undertaken against enemies. Terrorist groups also advertise the weapons in their arsenals, and in the case of ISIS tech-savvy videos its military convoys parading through cities. Psychological research with non-terrorist research subjects demonstrates that exciting and action related activities are perceived as rewarding activities for individuals.<sup>101</sup>

### 3. Hierarchy

#### *Al Qaeda*

AQ functions as a loose coalition, with each organization within the coalition having its own command, control and communication structures. The compartmentalized structure gives AQ its resilience for attacks and it also gives it adaptability. Groups within the coalition can merge, interact, or separate given the surrounding circumstances or AQ's needs. AQ is composed of 4 elements: a pyramidal structure to enable strategic and tactical guidance, a global terrorist network, a guerrilla organization operating in Afghanistan, and a loose alliance of transnational terrorist groups and affiliates.<sup>102</sup>

AQ's hierarchy is headed by an Emir-General, which initially was Osama bin Laden. However, Zawahiri succeeded bin Laden after his death by American special forces. Below the

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Davis and Cragin, "Social Science for Counterterrorism", 94.

<sup>102</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 57.



Emir-General is the *shura majlis* or consultative council, which was composed of elite members like Zawahiri when bin Laden was in charge, and Abu Ayoub Al Iraqi. The consultative council is active in tactical and political decision making but is also an interpretive religious council. Below the consultative council and reporting to it are four operational committees: military, finance and business, *fatwa* and Islamic study, media and publicity, with each being headed by an Emir. Some committee commanders serve multiple times and rotate positions with each other.<sup>103</sup>

AQ relies mainly on its military committee and finance committees. The military committee is responsible for recruiting, training, procuring, transporting and conducting military operations, enhancing tactics, and creating special weapons. The training camps set up by the military committee provide the recruits with the training and weaponry needed.<sup>104</sup> The finance and business committee oversee AQ's financial resources and infiltrates societies to raise and channel funds to AQ.<sup>105</sup> The other committees' responsibilities are displayed in Figure 1 below.

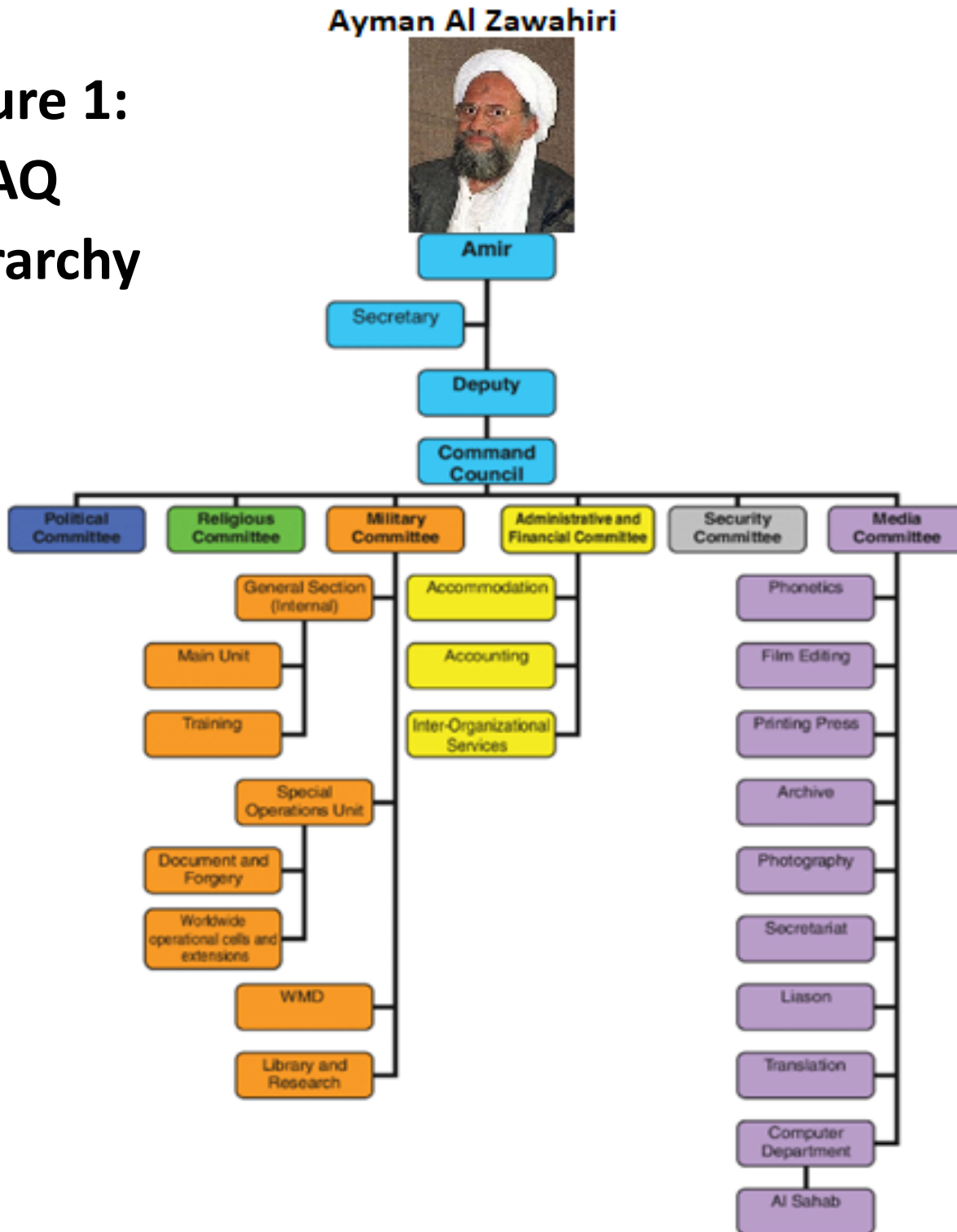
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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 60.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 1:**  
**AQ**  
**Hierarchy**



Gunaratna, Rohan, and Aviv Oreg. 2010. "Al Qaeda's Organizational Structure and Its Evolution." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33 (12): 1043–78.  
doi:10.1080/1057610X.2010.523860.

## ISIS

ISIS operates like a bureaucratic or military hierarchy and is headed by *Al Imara*, or executive branch, with Baghdadi at the helm, and below him his Cabinet advisors and his two main deputies. His two deputies are Abu Ali Al Anbari and Abu Muslim Al Turkmani. Both of them are experienced Iraqi military veterans who served in the Saddam, and they are responsible for managing Syria and Iraq, respectively. The split of overseeing Syria and Iraqi is purely for administrative purposes, as it makes it easier for both territories to be governed. The two deputies give orders to the governors beneath them who are in charge of controlling several sub-states in Syria and Iraq. Those governors pass orders to local councils about implementing the executive branch's commands which could vary from political and financial subjects to media matters.<sup>106</sup>

The Shura council reports directly to the executive branch, and it serves as a religious guidance committee which is responsible for ensuring that all local councils and governors are implementing ISIS' Islamic law. The Security and Intelligence Councils, though separate, have similar responsibilities. They operate like ISIS' intelligence system which is supposed to kill rivals and dissenters and foiling any plots against the leadership. They are also responsible for preserving physical security.<sup>107</sup>

The Military Council is responsible for devising and conducting the military campaigns to maintain and expand territory The Finance Council is responsible for overseeing ISIS' sources of

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<sup>106</sup> Nick Thompson and Atika Shubert, "The Anatomy of ISIS: How the 'Islamic State' Is Run," CNN, January 14, 2015, accessed April 20, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2014/09/18/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq-hierarchy/index.html>.

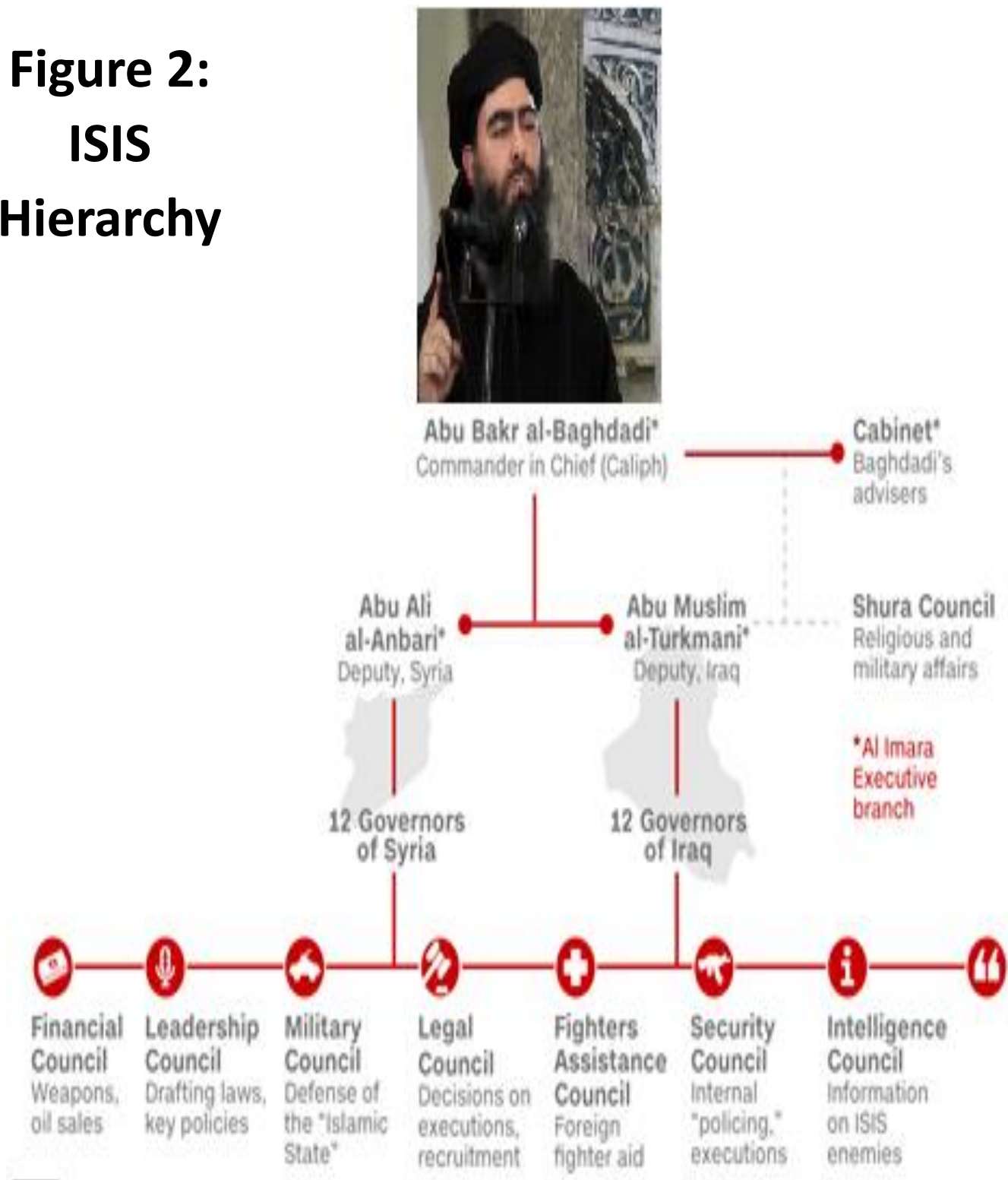
<sup>107</sup> Richard Barrett. *The Islamic State*. The Soufan Group. October 28, 2014. Accessed April 19, 2019. <http://www.soufangroup.com/the-islamic-state/>

revenue like oil sales and taxation.<sup>108</sup> Other councils' responsibilities are explained below in Figure 2.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

## Figure 2: ISIS Hierarchy



Thompson, Nick, and Atika Shubert. "The Anatomy of ISIS: How the 'Islamic State' Is Run." CNN. January 14, 2015. Accessed April 09, 2019.

<https://www.cnn.com/2014/09/18/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq-hierarchy/index.html>.

#### 4. Communication

##### Al Qaeda

AQ's terrorist network follows the cellular or cluster model, in which the network is made of several cells, and within those cells, the members do not know each other. This ensures that if a cell member is compromised the other members and other cells will continue to work naturally without disruption. Cell members also never meet together in a single location, and they are unfamiliar with the communication measures that cell leaders use with other cell members. While Western intelligence agencies utilize technical methods of intelligence gathering, AQ relies on untraceable methods of communication, using mainly human couriers. Nonetheless, AQ also relies on an email communication encrypted software called "Pretty Good Privacy" which the UK's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) and the US' National Security Agency (NSA) failed to decrypt.<sup>109</sup>

To maintain its operational efficiency and secrecy, AQ relies primarily on compartmentalization of its components; its support capacity (propaganda, financing, procurement, training) operate semi-independently of its operational capacity (surveillance/intelligence gathering, prosecution of attacks).<sup>110</sup>

To plan an attack, AQ used to get its strategical and tactical direction from Bin Laden and now gets its commands from Al Zawahiri. Bin Laden developed the plans for 9/11 attacks, and the USS Cole attacks, reviewing and optimizing each stage of the attack. AQ establishes sleeper cells around the globe, including Europe and North America, and those cells wait for commands and activation from the core. To establish such cells, it involves 3 phases. First of all, an AQ intelligence team conducts an inspection operation near the target intended to be attacked. Then,

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<sup>109</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 76.

<sup>110</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 79.

an attack team moves in and trains for the planned operation. Later, a support team moves in and purchases safe houses and vehicles, also transporting with them necessary weapons and explosives used for the operation. Finally, a strike team arrives and enacts the planned attack.

Furthermore, AQ relies on other measures to maintain its operational effectiveness and secrecy. It divides its operatives into cells to overt and covert operatives, with both sections of operatives functioning under a single leader. Overt members should not be curious about cases or matters that do not concern their work, and he should not hold information with him regarding other group members or addresses. Covert members should not purchase or rent properties and avoid going to Islamic sites or wear Islamic clothing.<sup>111</sup> AQ emphasizes that its operatives have a perfect cover and background story with the necessary documents to support such a persona. It asks them to blend in and adapt to in the environment that they live in.<sup>112</sup> Should two operatives need to meet, AQ leaders will pre-assign the location and duration of the meeting.<sup>113</sup>

AQ has taken several steps to reduce the detection of its communication when Osama bin Laden's satellite phone was compromised by Indian intelligence. AQ limited duration of speaking to less than 5 minutes, positioned the phone call next to a high-frequency source like tv stations. It also disguised the voices of those speaking and the times, locations, and frequency of calls is constantly altered to avoid creating a pattern. It also asked its operatives to use public phone booths should they need to call rather than using cellphones that can be tapped.<sup>114</sup>

Finally, AQ trains its cell members to be independent of the core command by giving them the necessary knowledge and tools for self-sufficiency, which includes making explosives and

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<sup>111</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 80.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 81.

<sup>114</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 80.

acquiring weapons.<sup>115</sup> It also trained them to set up training camps with multiple escape routes and taught them not to reveal their identity to trainees and recruits.<sup>116</sup>

### ISIS Communication

ISIS utilizes telegram to communicate with its fighters because of how easy it is to use. Telegram only requires people who download the application to sign up, insert their cell phone number, and verify that number after registration. Users could even circumvent having an actual phone number by acquiring a proxy internet number. Users are also not required to maintain their phone numbers after registration, so telegram accounts are hard to trace back to their users because phone numbers could be changed, and they could also use fake proxy internet numbers. This allows terrorist operatives to conceal their identities and communicate freely without fear of being identified.<sup>117</sup>

ISIS uses telegram to disseminate propaganda through its channels, and its channels do not need verification from a user to join, a user can simply join by locating the channel on telegram. ISIS does not require verification from users joining because they want as many people to be exposed to their propaganda. However, with peer-to-peer communication, ISIS requires that the users must know each other's registered phone numbers or user names. In order for a user to connect with another user, they must have the other user's phone number or name. This process is beneficial for operatives working abroad who need to switch phone numbers and reconnect with their leaders or middlemen again. ISIS operatives could also download these accounts and set them

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<sup>115</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 82.

<sup>116</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 83.

<sup>117</sup> Ahmet S. Yayla and Anne Speckhard, "Telegram: the Mighty Application that ISIS Loves," ICSVE, May 09, 2017, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://www.icsve.org/brief-reports/telegram-the-mighty-application-that-isis-loves/>.



up in their original country or area before moving to another place and logging back into the same account, which also helps them conceal their identities.<sup>118</sup>

The nature of the Telegram application with a secure algorithm providing protection from the outside world and making it almost impossible, or very difficult, for law enforcement to trace back to the original users, also has become a magnificent advantage for the terrorist organization in terms of the anonymity of its users and for carrying out terrorist operations via secure communications. These two qualities are the most valuable qualifications for a terrorist organization like ISIS. Thanks to Telegram, ISIS has now been using their application very heavily almost without any interruptions with great success when compared to other social media applications.<sup>119</sup>

Telegram has become the choice of the ISIS due to its specifications of providing secure encrypted communications and allowing users to share large files and act with their accounts operating with impunity. While Telegram administrators claim, they favor speech free of interference; it is time for the owners of Telegram to thoroughly consider the existence of ISIS presence and activities on their digital platform. the stand of the Telegram application when it comes to allowing ISIS to use its platform without interference is quite different and difficult to understand. Recently, Rob Wainwright, the director of Europol, European Union's policing body, condemned Telegram owners for failing to join the fight against terrorism.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

## 5. Financing

### *Al Qaeda Financing*

As demonstrated before in the hierarchy section, the Finance and Business Committee handles the financial resources and aspects for Al Qaeda. AQ places a financial and a technical-logistical support system that is in place long before it becomes active in a certain location. In the Middle East and especially in the Gulf, AQ receives aid from masked public support systems that are sponsored by Islamic philanthropists and foundations. AQ's financial network is resilient due to its compartmentalized nature.<sup>121</sup> AQ emphasizes financial training, management, and sustained generation and investment of funds. AQ's financial committee encompasses professional bankers, accountants, and financiers. This committee is responsible for overseeing and administering the movement of funds across Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America. To be able to move funds from the source of origin to the intended recipient, the identities of both groups have to be concealed. Therefore, AQ has founded multiple legitimate fronts and private organizations and institutions like charities, companies, and banks which disguises its illegal transactions.<sup>122</sup>

AQ's sources of funding are varied but are mostly coming from external sources. AQ relies mainly on wealthy Arab patrons from the UAE, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. These money transfers occur through banks and business that AQ uses as 'legitimate' fronts. In one instance, the National Commercial Bank (NCB) of Saudi Arabia was used as a front to transfer millions of dollars to AQ accounts in New York and London. Their chairman Khaled Bin Mahfouz was apprehended, and the bank was reformed.<sup>123</sup> AQ also receives funds from Islamic charities, which by 1990 the CIA estimated to be 50 charities as sponsors.<sup>124</sup> AQ also has a diversified web of investments and

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<sup>121</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 61.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 62.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

businesses. For example, it owned a fishing business in Mombasa, a hospital equipment company in Sweden, a dairy product business in Denmark, and a paper mill firm in Norway.<sup>125</sup> AQ also relies on credit card counterfeiting which generates around \$1 million a month as it trains its members in forgery, and it owns credit card printing machines.<sup>126</sup>

AQ's banking network comprises of the feeder and operational accounts, in which money is transferred from feeder accounts to operational ones through several bank accounts to create a long money trail and disguise the purpose of the transfer. The feeder accounts are held by AQ controlled charities and the operational accounts are controlled by AQ members whose identities are not known or held by AQ sympathizers.<sup>127</sup> AQ places a huge emphasis on the hawala informal banking system, where money transfers are not monitored by the government. In Pakistan, the hawala system composes \$2.5-\$3 billion going into the country's financial network compared to the \$1 billion entering officially through the formal banking system.<sup>128</sup>

Al Qaeda spends a minimum of \$36 million and a maximum of \$50 million a year to sustain its core strength comprising of 3000 fighters in Afghanistan, in addition to its covert agents abroad. Its budget also involves spending money on weapons, technology, infrastructure, camps, offices, houses, vehicles. To ensure loyalty from other Islamist groups, one of which is the Taliban, AQ funds individuals in those organizations and used up to \$100 million by 2002 according to US intelligence estimates. Such investments with the Taliban bought them influence over political, religious and military figures in the group, which in return gave them operational freedom and movement of items and people. AQ, therefore, has set a precedent by becoming the first terrorist group to control a state by controlling Afghanistan, rather than the conventional state sponsoring

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<sup>125</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 68.

<sup>126</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 65.

<sup>127</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 63.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

of terrorism that other terrorist groups operated under.<sup>129</sup> AQ favors collecting financial resources through legitimate firms to maintain their clandestine operations. Therefore, despite its close ties with the Taliban, there is no concrete evidence to indicate that AQ benefits from the sale of narcotics that the Taliban conducts in Afghanistan to generate revenue.<sup>130</sup>

AQ follows five rules for financial security: funds are to be divided between invested funds for financial gain, and funds invested for financing operations, few AQ members should know the location of funds to ensure that funds are safe in case of a member's capture, funds dedicated to operations are not be placed in the same place, transporting and carrying funds should be done with extreme caution, money should be left with non-members and spent only when needed.<sup>131</sup>

### ISIS Financing

ISIS' revenue sources are internal and can be divided into 3 categories: the sale of illegal oil, donations from major donors abroad, and a diverse set of criminal enterprises.

With regards to oil, ISIS's daily income at its peak was around \$3 million, which gave it a total value of assets between \$1.3-\$2 billion.<sup>132</sup> Oil sales were essential for sustaining ISIS' existence because it provided salaries for fighters, maintained civilian infrastructure and administration, extended its propaganda campaign and influence, and continued bribes to tribal leaders. Before the global coalition against ISIS launched operation Tidal Wave II, ISIS controlled approximately 350 oil wells in Iraq and around 60% of Syria's oil fields.<sup>133</sup> ISIS produced 30,000 barrels in Iraq and 50,000 barrels in Syria, resulting in 80,000 barrels produced per day that are sold for \$40 per barrel

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<sup>129</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 61.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 63.

<sup>132</sup> Matthew Levitt, "Terrorist Financing and the Islamic State," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, November 13, 2014, accessed March 06, 2019, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/terrorist-financing-and-the-islamic-state>.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

on the black market.<sup>134</sup> ISIS has utilized black market routes and smuggling networks that were already in place in the 1990s during the Saddam-era oil-for-food program to sell illicit crude oil to smugglers. The smugglers would then transport the oil outside of conflict zones using multiple transport methods including tanker trucks, vans, jerry cans carried by mules, makeshift pipes, and rafts when crossing rivers. The smuggled oil would be then sold to foreign consumers in Turkey, Kurdistan, and Jordan.<sup>135</sup> However, ISIS shifted its focus over time to satisfying domestic demand because it has a competitive advantage by offering the barrel at half its free market price, and due to high exporting costs. ISIS would transport crude oil into neighboring countries, refine it into low-quality gasoline at improvised refineries, and bring it back to cities and urban centers for resale. In the case of domestic demand in Mosul, ISIS refined crude oil in the Qayara refinery and then transported back to Mosul to sell for the 2 million residents in Mosul.<sup>136</sup>

With regards to donations, ISIS has been benefiting from longstanding donors for a decade even before its current format when it was known as AQI. While ISIS used to rely on charitable donations for a large part of its revenue, it gradually shifted its focus to self-sufficiency and relied less on external donations. Despite the transition, ISIS has still amassed nearly \$40 million or more over the last two years from generous supporters from Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait.<sup>137</sup> However, while countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have developed better anti-terror financing laws, Qatar and Kuwait still have loose laws. The crackdown on terrorist financing has been weak in those countries because of major gaps in anti-money laundering and counter-terror finance (AML/CFT) laws. For example, charities in Qatar which operated under Qatar Financial Center (QFC) were exempt from government registration or

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

supervision. In Kuwait, the government cannot properly crackdown on aid is given to jihadist and rebel groups that have links to ISIS that are fighting against Assad, despite those groups having links to ISIS because it angers Salafist clerics and part of its public.<sup>138</sup>

As for its criminal enterprises, ISIS was able to utilize such activities to create its self-sufficiency, and the model has been passed down by its previous format AQI. Between 2005 and 2010, AQI generated \$70-\$200 million that was able to sustain their insurgency against the occupying American forces, and outside donations only constituted a small 5% of their budget.<sup>139</sup> ISIS' current model relies on several criminal enterprises to fund itself. One of the main sources of income within ISIS' criminal enterprises is levying taxes on the population it controls. It imposed taxes on individuals, companies, businesses, and shop owners with some unreasonable sums at times, and executed those who did not deliver or were late to for payments. In one example, ISIS required pharmacists, to pay around \$100-\$200 a month, but then were later pay as much as \$20,000 per month.

Moreover, ISIS taxes Christians and other non-Muslims through the *jizya* tax, which is a head tax of \$720 per adult male. ISIS also imposes taxes on all goods entering its territories and on the transportation methods used to bring those goods, including oil transports. Large sized trucks are required to pay \$400, whereas \$100 is imposed on small trucks, and \$50 are levied on cars or pickup trucks if they are also transporting goods. ISIS also sought to maximize civilian dependence on itself, so it seized up to 40% of Iraqi's wheat production. It also required farmers to pay a tax through cash or wheat, which is much higher than what they sell their product for. For example, farmers used to sell a kilo of wheat for 10,000-11,000 dinars, but now it is available in black markets for 4,000-5,000 dinars.

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

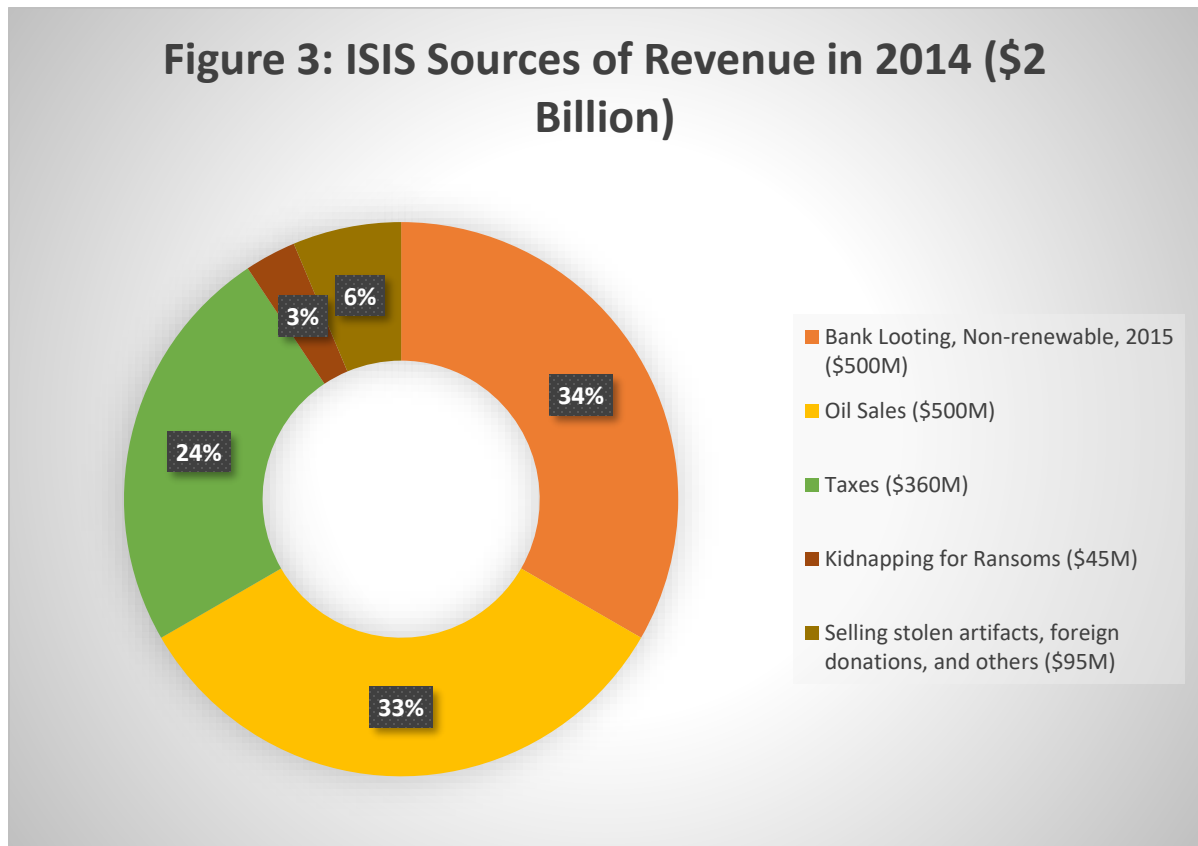
<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

ISIS has also accumulated money through robbing banks, mainly the central bank in Mosul. It also assumed control of financial accounts. ISIS only allowed customers to withdraw money from their accounts if they submitted a statement to a three-person committee constituting of ISIS members. The committee then checks for links between account holders and government institutions, Christians, Yazidis, or Shiites. If approved, the account holder is only allowed to withdraw a small 10% of the balance and the withdrawal itself is taxed 10%. Christian, Yazidis and Shiites, and former government officials accounts are seized in full and their members are not allowed to withdraw any money. Furthermore, their assets and properties are also seized by the ISIS treasury system called "Bayt al-Mal" and are sold in auctions.

Moreover, ISIS also took control of more than a third of Iraq's 12,000 archaeological sites and sold those historical artifacts that date back to 9,000 BCE by smuggling them to Europe through Turkey, Iran, and Syria. These illegal sales have given ISIS its second-biggest revenue source after illegal oil sales. There are not rough estimates for total profits ISIS has made from selling these relics, but one lion sculpture that was illegally smuggled was sold for \$50 million, so it is logical to assume that other artifacts could be worth in the same region. Also, ISIS has acquired money through ransom payments from kidnappings which comprise around 20% of ISIS's revenue, taking in almost \$10 million per month. Finally, ISIS also conducts a sex-trafficking industry in which they kidnapped around 2500-4000 Yazidi women and girls and put them into marriage or sex slavery. While these women were sold for cheap prices, their main use is not for accumulating money, but rather to entice potential ISIS recruits because women are sold for as low as \$10.

In 2014, ISIS made a total of 2 billion dollars. Out of those 2 billion, 500 million came from oil sales, 500 million to 1 billion from looting banks, which was only done once and is a non-

renewable source, 360 million from taxes, which rose to 800 million by some estimates in 2015,<sup>140</sup> and 20-45 million in kidnapping for ransom<sup>141</sup>, and the remaining 95 million would have come from other criminal activities like selling historical artifacts or receiving external donations.



<sup>140</sup> Jose Pagliery, "Inside the \$2 Billion ISIS War Machine," CNN Money, December 11, 2014, accessed April 08, 2019, <https://money.cnn.com/2015/12/06/news/isis-funding/index.html>.

<sup>141</sup> "Testimony of AS for Terrorist Financing Daniel L. Glaser Before The House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, and House Committee on Armed Services' Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities," U.S. Department of the Treasury, accessed April 08, 2019, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl0486.aspx>.



## **Chapter 4 – Counterterrorism and Economics**

### **1. Terrorism and Counter-terrorism Interactions**

Terrorism is defined as the deliberate use of violence and intimidation directed at a large audience in order to coerce a population or its government into surrendering for politically or ideologically driven goals.<sup>142</sup> The main short term aims of terrorism are to gain media coverage and publicity, undermine and destabilize existing governments, and to destroy national economies. In contrast, long term aims of terrorism include reorganization and redistribution of power, influence and wealth.<sup>143</sup> To achieve short term and long term aims, terrorists conduct tactical behaviors such as suicide bombings and skyjackings. Terrorists resort to violence to meet strategic and political aims that are difficult to pursue in the ordinary political process.<sup>144</sup>

When examining terrorism through an economics lens, terrorists are assumed to be rational actors who seek to maximize their utility bearing in mind the marginal benefits and costs of their actions. Like any rational actor, terrorists respond to incentives, self-interest and the rationality of their expectations, and terrorists also have a utility-maximizing level of terrorism where the marginal costs equal the marginal benefits of acts of terrorism.<sup>145</sup> For terrorists, the benefits of terrorism are reaching the short and long term strategic goals that they would have been unable to reach without resorting to violence. On the other hand, the costs of terrorism include the use of resources for attacks, and governmental or military reaction to such attacks. Those variables can increase or decrease the opportunity costs of terrorism and change the price of terrorism, hence affecting the level of terrorist activity.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Friedrich G. Schneider, Tilman Brück, and Daniel Meierrieks, "The Economics of Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism: A Survey (Part I)," SSRN Electronic Journal (2009): 14 doi:10.2139/ssrn.1679750.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Terrorism and Counterterrorism," 15.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

Since terrorist activities are dependent upon the costs, benefits and opportunity costs of terrorism, counterterrorism policies should therefore decrease terrorist activity by increasing the costs of terrorism, minimizing the benefits from terrorist actions by making terrorists' short-term and long-term goals unachievable, and by making non-violent substitutions to terrorism more appealing to terrorists.<sup>147</sup> Usually, maximizing the costs of terrorism is linked to an aggressive counterterrorism strategy that uses deterrence methods which include preemptive measures, military retaliation or punishment. However, defensive strategies can also reduce terrorist activities by decreasing the benefits of terrorism by recognizing the main goals of terrorism and addressing them (political and economic destabilization, and media attention).<sup>148</sup> Increasing the opportunity costs of terrorism involves policies which offer positive incentives for potential terrorists by mitigating conditions like poverty or government repression. Such measures make terrorism less appealing even if the absolute costs and benefits of terrorism have not been altered.<sup>149</sup>

Analyzing counterterrorism strategies should not only focus on their effects on cost-benefit and opportunity cost of terrorists, but also focus on the resulting consequences of such measures. Counterterrorism strategies often overlook the repercussions of their actions on terrorism and assume that terrorist behavior is consistent and non-adaptive to new strategies and security measures. Terrorism may even increase or become more sophisticated in the face of new security strategies by targeting new areas with lesser security and protection, shifting terrorist activities geographically, and elevate or alter terrorist tactics. The consequences of these strategies therefore increase economic costs of security.

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<sup>147</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Terrorism and Counterterrorism," 56.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

## 2. Defensive Strategies

Defensive strategies can be divided into two sections, protecting targets against attacks and mitigating impacts of terrorist attacks.

### Protecting Targets

Protecting targets strategy seeks to increase the costs of a terrorist attack by making it harder for terrorists to get to their intended target and destroy it, which would therefore increase the chance of failure. Such a strategy could entail placing and utilizing surveillance technology and hiring security personnel to protect a high-value target or that of interest to a terrorist group. An example of the usage of this strategy would be the installation of metal detectors for the first time at airports in the 1970s or the ramping up of embassies' defenses. It also includes legal measures and laws passed at national, regional or international level which leads to harsher legal action taken against terrorists. All of the strategies within protecting targets subsection seek to deter terrorists from launching attacks and possibly make substitution effects like peaceful political action more appealing.<sup>150</sup>

An analysis of such strategies demonstrates that usage of metal detectors for example, to reduce plane hijackings has been successful in decreasing the number of hijackings by 12.2 occurrences per quarter. However, the introduction of metal detectors seems to have incurred a substitution effect in terrorist behavior, as terrorists have shifted from costlier plane hijackings to cheaper means of terrorism methods such as kidnapping and hostage takings, which is shown by an increase of 3.68 incidents per quarter of the latter. Unlike metal detectors however, international conventions have had no important effect on terrorist attacks, because they have not decreased terrorists' resources or made non-terrorist options more appealing.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Terrorism and Counterterrorism," 57.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

### *Mitigating Impacts*

A complementary action to protecting targets is the mitigation of actual impacts, which in theory does not increase costs but strives to decrease the benefits derived from a terrorist attack, recommends two procedures to reduce the benefits concluding from terrorism: decentralization and changes in media reporting methods. These procedures are directly connected to the short-term goals of terrorism, primarily economic and political destabilization and media attention.<sup>152</sup>

Political decentralization (federalism or other examples of division of power) causes attacks on political objectives to appear less appealing; despite a victorious attack, the consequence on the general polity has less scope, in comparison to a similar attack in a centralized country. Terrorism advantages have comparable effects due to economic decentralization. Generally, decentralization reduces the level of immediate interdependency and hence the extent of potential damage.<sup>153</sup>

Shifts in media procedures, however, rely on the fact that media and terrorism seem to coexist. On the one hand, a terrorist act increases viewership and sales for media platforms which cover the attack. Terrorists use media as a tool to reach a wider audience which goes beyond the affected victims of an attack in order to induce fear in society. While the media continuously reports to their audience about an attack, oftentimes at the expense of other news, it plays a significant role in affecting public fear positively or negatively. One potential counterterrorism strategy could be having the government alter the information given to the media by withholding the true perpetrator of an attack, leading to free rider behavior of other competing terrorist groups which could

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<sup>152</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Terrorism and Counterterrorism," 58.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

potentially claim responsibility for an attack. This would therefore make terrorism a less attractive option to all terrorist groups.<sup>154</sup>

### 3. Proactive Strategies

Proactive strategies can be divided into two sections, targeting terrorists' infrastructure and targeting the root causes of terrorism.

#### Targeting Terrorist Infrastructure

Proactive policies are comprised of measures such as managing intelligence and surveillance technologies to expose terrorist activity and arrest perpetrators, the interference of terrorist financial flows and weapons reserves, as well as pre-emptive attacks. Beyond physical measures, they can also include the tighter legislation, restraints of citizen rights to create difficulties for terrorists to plan, distribute their information, recruit members, and so on. In summary, pre-emptive strategies aim at limiting terrorists of their (financial, human, physical, technological) resources, which would therefore disturb their actions. The literature analyzing the dynamic implications of proactive terrorist measures have given the most attention to the interception of terrorist financing. Not only is this because of the reliance of terrorist organizations on financial resources to carry out their ambitions, but also due to the prospect of identifying terrorist activity by tracking the money trail in the system.<sup>155</sup>

#### Targeting Root Causes of Terrorism

The final policy approach to be discussed centers on targeting the "root causes" of terrorism that aims to abolish the actual grievances on which terrorist activity is built. This approach undermines terrorist validity (e.g., recruitment, financing, popular support), and is connected to a rise in the opportunity costs of violence. Generally speaking, rather than increasing the costs of

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Terrorism and Counterterrorism," 60.

terrorism or decreasing its benefits, this strategy seeks to make non-violence more appealing for potential terrorists and supporters of terrorist groups. Therefore, this measure demands an identification of the “true” motives of terrorism and to shifting relevant conditions through policy actions in ways that diminish terrorist action.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. “The Economics of Terrorism and Counterterrorism,” 62.

## **Chapter 5 – Using Economics for Recommendations**

This chapter with its two sections will give recommendations towards developing a counterterrorism plan to be used to combat both groups. The first section will relate to the economics of counterterrorism and what researchers recommend should be done. The second section will relate to examining historical cases to see how different counterterrorism strategies worked against different terrorist groups, and if the model can be followed with AQ and ISIS to enhance current counterterrorism strategies.

- **Economics' Recommended Counterterrorism Strategy**

Examining counterterrorism methods through an economics lens indicates that defensive counterterrorism strategies cause substitution effects for terrorists, meaning that terrorist groups like AQ and ISIS would opt for new modes of attack, targets, and timing of attacks. In contrast, proactive methods, whether benevolent or aggressive, change the structure and organization of terrorist organizations. Research shows that terrorism is becoming progressively more extreme, terrorist organizations are relocating to areas with less security like the Middle East and Asia to operate freely without disruption and to garner more support, and terrorist groups are becoming adaptive and have altered their strategies and structures to elude proactive policies.<sup>157</sup>

To tackle the rising issue of terrorism, strategies must be devised carefully. Research indicates that the relative price of using terrorism versus not using terrorism is the primary determinant in the responsiveness of terrorists to counterterrorism policies. However, research is unsure what the cause of the reaction of terrorist groups is; whether defensive and proactive policies are the determinants for terrorist organizations' reactions to them, or whether it is the means of

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<sup>157</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Terrorism and Counterterrorism," 64.

implementation that cause the reaction.<sup>158</sup> It references the failed case of democratization efforts in Iraq after Saddam's regime as an example of poor implementation of a benevolent proactive policy which yielded negative repercussions in the country due to sectarian tensions. Nonetheless, there is widespread agreement among researchers that terrorism requires economic and political solutions, not military action, making benevolent proactive policy more successful than aggressive proactive policy (military action) and defensive policies whether deterring or benevolent (protecting targets and mitigating impacts).<sup>159</sup>

**Table 1: Classification of Different Counterterrorism Strategies**<sup>160</sup>

	<b>Defensive Policies</b>	<b>Proactive Policies</b>
<b>Aggressive/Deterrence Policies</b>  (Negative Incentives for Terrorist Activities)	Protecting Targets  (Increasing the costs of terror)	Targeting Terrorist Infrastructures  (Decreasing resource endowments of terror organizations)
<b>Benevolent Policies</b>  (Positive Incentives for Non-Terrorist Activities)	Mitigating Impacts  (Decreasing the benefits derived)	<u>Targeting Root Causes of Terrorism*</u>  (Increasing opportunity costs of Terrorism)

Research warns however that preferences and objectives of terrorist groups still play a critical role in determining their response to a counterterrorism policy. For example, it advises that counterterrorism policymakers should be aware of the degree of militancy of a terrorist group in

<sup>158</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Terrorism and Counterterrorism," 65.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Terrorism and Counterterrorism," 69.



formulating their strategy. It suggests that more militant members of a terrorist organization will be less likely dissuaded from using terrorism to achieve their objective in contrast to less militant members.<sup>161</sup>

Terrorist leaders are categorized as more militant actors, and they will continue attempting to evade security measures even if their grievances are dealt with because their elasticity to substitute terrorist activities with non-violent alternatives is small, if not zero or negative.<sup>162</sup> Terrorist recruiters are less militant than their leaders since they could be motivated by economic goals rather than political ones. Their elasticity is consequently more likely to be positive and they would be more willing to substitute terrorist action for non-violence. A distinction must be made within this group between current terrorists and potential future ones in forming a strategy for them. Specific incentives must be provided for current terrorists in order for them to abandon terrorism, but disincentives should be provided for potential future terrorists to dissuade them from joining. Terrorist support groups are actors who are not participating in preparing and executing terrorist attacks but do provide logistical support for terrorist organizations. Since they are not directly taking part in terrorist activities it can be deduced that their demand for non-terrorist action is more price elastic than the other two categories. This means that they will substitute supporting terrorism for non-violence more easily.<sup>163</sup>

Research also advises against interpreting the decrease in frequency and severity of terrorist attacks as a sign of change in terrorism. A long period of time with no terrorist attacks does not necessarily indicate that terrorist groups have abandoned terrorism, it could instead be that they are preparing meticulously for a large scale attack. Thus, policymakers must be aware of the

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Terrorism and Counterterrorism," 66.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

limitations of these indicators and not underestimate or overlook the real nature of terrorist activities.<sup>164</sup>

- **Historical Cases of the Successes and Failures of Counterterrorism Strategies**

This section will discuss counterterrorism strategies around the world to see their effect on terrorism to guide our specific counterterrorism strategy recommendation for AQ and ISIS in the following section. The strategies will be divided into defensive and proactive policies, and then further categorized to aggressive/deterrence policies and benevolent policies.

### Defensive Policies

#### A. Aggressive/Deterrent Policies

##### 1. Target Hardening and Protection

Counterterrorism could involve target hardening and protection which seeks to increase the direct cost of terrorism. Such measures could include metal detectors at airports, increasing embassies' defenses, and installing more surveillance cameras.<sup>165</sup> For example, when the United States introduced metal detectors at airports and fortified its embassies defenses, it reduced airplane hijackings and attacks on US diplomatic facilities. Similarly, the UK increased the use of surveillance cameras to monitor targets and detect terrorist activities by the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). While these protective strategies in the US and the UK did achieve their desired short term outcome of protecting high-value targets from attacks, they caused less protected targets to be more susceptible to attacks. This means that these strategies did not reduce terrorist activities but merely shifted terrorists' choices to cheaper actions. Terrorists who fought the US used more hostage takings and assassinations, while the PIRA targeted unmonitored areas

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<sup>164</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Terrorism and Counterterrorism," 67.

<sup>165</sup> Friedrich Schneider, Tilman Brück, and Daniel Meierrieks, "The Economics of Counterterrorism: A Survey," *Journal of Economic Surveys* 29, no. 1 (2014): 139, doi:10.1111/joes.12060.

in the UK.<sup>166</sup> Such strategies cause terrorists to seek alternatives and adapt their modes of attack in response to heightened protective and security measures.

**Table 2: Target Hardening and Protection Counterterrorism Policies Outcome**

Protective Measures Used	Country that Initiated the Policy	Short Term Consequences	Long Term Consequences
Installing metal detectors at airports and fortification of embassies.	United States	Reduced skyjackings and attacks on US embassies.	Caused substitution effect; more hostage takings and assassinations.
Installing surveillance cameras.	United Kingdom	Areas under surveillance were not targeted.	Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) avoided monitored areas and used larger explosives.

## B. Benevolent Policies

### 1. Politico-economic Decentralization

Decentralization decreases the benefits of terrorism that are caused by politico-economic destabilization. Political decentralization decreases the probability of a political vacuum that is a result of terrorist actions like assassinations and makes it easier for political vacancies to be refilled should they arise. Economic decentralization wants to avoid concentrating power within a

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

company or a firm under the control of a few individuals, refrain from concentrating a company into one large headquarters like the World Trade Center, or having one supply chain for a company because it makes them less attractive targets to attack. Economic decentralization seeks to minimize the impact of a terrorist attack on companies and business through power and responsibility sharing and dispersing targets.<sup>167</sup>

Studies that have examined the effect of decentralization like Brancati (2006) show that it decreases ethnic conflicts and secessionism. Other studies like Dreher and Fischer (2010, 2011) show that it might reduce the probability of terrorist attacks. They also found that economic decentralization is more successful in decreasing terrorist attacks in contrast to political decentralization.<sup>168</sup> However, decentralization in certain countries could be an ineffective and costly strategy. Fiscal decentralization could lead to high implementation and operating costs. It could also lead to inferior economic outcomes due to extreme regulation, excess market fragmentation, and lack of macroeconomic coordination.<sup>169</sup>

**Table 3: Decentralization Counterterrorism Policies Evaluation**

Decentralization Type	Short Term Consequences	Long Term Consequences
Political	Minimize impact of assassinations.	Does not have significant impact on the number of incidents.
Fiscal/Economic	Minimize impact of attacks on economic centers. Leads to less transnational and domestic terrorist attacks.	High implementation costs. Likely to result in inferior economic outcomes due to excess regulation.

<sup>167</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Counterterrorism," 140.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

## 2. Role of the Media

Media attention is an important short-run goal for terrorist organizations because they are able to advance and communicate their agenda through the media and gain public approval and legitimacy. Studies like Melnick and Eldor (2010) show that media coverage of terrorism is correlated with more economic damage. Subsequently, it makes sense to curb media coverage of a terrorist attack to prevent terrorists from getting the spotlight that they seek and making terrorism an unattractive option. However, it is difficult to implement media censorship because it violates democratic values like freedom of speech, and so it violates constitutional rights. As such, a government can ask for a self-regulating media, but due to the surge of views, sales, and ratings associated with covering a terrorist event, it is unlikely that media will self-regulate. Another alternative to censorship or a self-regulating media could be government manipulation of information on terrorist groups. A government could publicly speculate about the terrorist group responsible for the attack even though it identified the organization behind it. With this strategy, a government could induce free rider behavior of other terrorist groups to claim the attack as their own. This strategy would prevent the perpetrating terrorist organization from getting the attention it seeks, and it would make terrorism an unattractive option.<sup>170</sup>

While government strategies concerned with media such as censorship, self-regulating media, or manipulating information can curb the spotlight that terrorist groups get from attacks, it could also lead to negative long-term consequences. Firstly, such strategies could lead to more sophisticated and spectacular attacks that will ensure the publicity a terrorist organization needs even when media coverage is limited. Secondly, the Internet has provided a platform for terrorists

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

to gain popularity and attention without the use of the media. Thirdly, some terrorist organizations do not need to claim responsibility for an attack due to the low or non-insistent competition among organizations in a certain area or country, like the PIRA and the UK.<sup>171</sup>

**Table 4: Media Counterterrorism Policies Evaluation**

Media Counterterrorism Policy Type	Short Term Consequences	Long Term Consequences.
Restricting Media Coverage	Deny terrorists the media attention and publicity. Make terrorism an undesirable option.	Violation of constitutional rights in democracies (freedom of speech).  Leads to more spectacular attacks.  Use of Internet can circumvent low media coverage .
Self-Regulating Media		
Manipulation of Information by the Government	Leads to free rider effect, other terrorist organizations may claim responsibility.	Does not work in areas of low competition among terrorist groups.

### Proactive Policies

#### A. Aggressive/Deterrent Policies

##### 1. Punishment and Deterrence: The Role of the Police, Military, and Intelligence Services

<sup>171</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Counterterrorism," 141.

This strategy tends to be the one most promoted for by policymakers to combat terrorism. It involves directly using a state's policy, military, and intelligence agencies to kill and capture active terrorists and their sponsors. It deters potential recruits from joining due to fear of imprisonment and death, raising the opportunity costs of terrorism and making it an unappealing option. While this strategy has been effective with certain terrorist groups, it has failed with others.<sup>172</sup>

Some studies have found that aggressive police or military operation to be ineffective because it has its limitations, which these studies attribute to three reasons. Firstly, lack of cooperation between different security agencies could lead to poor intelligence, which exacerbates a conflict as was the case with counterterrorism abilities in the early stages of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Secondly, the organizational structure and ideology of the terrorist group affect the success of an aggressive military policy. Decapitation efforts of terrorist groups (killing of terrorist leaders) do not always yield desirable results due to the terrorist group's hierarchy. The decapitation of Sendero Luminoso by capturing their leader was a very successful policy due to the strong hierarchical structure of SL. However, the same effect has not been present when Operation Neptune was launched by the CIA and US Navy against AQ, which eliminated Osama bin Laden. The operation had no effect on AQ activity as it was still involved in Mali, Syria, and Yemen. Thirdly, harsh counterterrorism efforts and prolonged campaigns escalate conflict and increase recruitment, producing negative effects.<sup>173</sup>

Besides its limitations, aggressive police or military operation or punitive counterterrorism policy produces undesirable effects. First of all, it causes substitution effects for terrorists in which terrorists opt for actions that are less costly to them. For example, longer prison sentences for plane

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<sup>172</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Counterterrorism," 136.

<sup>173</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Counterterrorism," 138.

hijackings has made other forms of attack more favorable for terrorists like hostage-taking, which means that in the overall picture terrorist activities did not diminish.<sup>174</sup> Secondly, terrorist groups revert to loose hierarchal structures instead of rigid structures to evade detection and limit the destruction to itself which could occur through decapitation. Thirdly, it forces terrorist groups to become internationalized so they can relocate their base of operation to avoid detection and destruction. Fourthly, punitive counterterrorist policies lead to high economic costs, which are associated with costs of troop deployment and surge in policing and intelligence activities. It also leads to high political costs, because the legitimacy of aggressive counterterrorism policies which may use the invasion of privacy, violence, torture, and imprisonment, is a grey area for public perception.<sup>175</sup>

**Table 5: Security Forces and Intelligence Service Efforts and Counterterrorism Outcomes.**

Operation Name	Terrorist Organization Targeted	Security and Intelligence Used	Short Term Consequences	Long Run Consequences
Battle of Algiers <sup>176</sup> (1957)	Algeria's Front de Libération Nationale (FLN)	French Military	Defeat of the FLN Insurgency.	Political crises in France due to use of torture. International Support for FLN.
<i>Operation Flavius</i> <sup>177</sup> (1988)	Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA)	MI-5 British Special Forces (SAS)	Foiled a terrorist plot by PIRA, and killed its operatives.	PIRA retaliation, continuation of activity in Northern Ireland and abroad.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid

<sup>175</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Counterterrorism," 139.

<sup>176</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Counterterrorism," 149.

<sup>177</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Counterterrorism," 137.



<i>La Guerra Sucia</i> <sup>178</sup> (1983-1987)	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA)	Death Squad: Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación	Assassination of ETA operatives.	Death of innocent civilians. ETA retaliation. Loss of legitimacy for Spanish state.
<i>Operación Victoria</i> <sup>179</sup> (1992)	Sendero Luminoso	National Police of Peru	Capture of SL leader Abimal Guzmán.	Huge decrease in SL terrorist activities.

Looking at Table 5 above we observe that some historical cases in which police, military, and intelligence agencies were used did produce desirable short term consequences by preventing and thwarting terrorist plots and killing terrorist operatives.<sup>180</sup> However, the first-order effect of policy success of reducing terrorist activity was met with a second-order effect of policy backlash. With the exception of the Peruvian *Operación Victoria*, the 3 other military operations had resulted in cycles of violence or undesirable consequences.

## 2. Tackling Terrorism Financing

Financial resources are essential for terrorists to finance large scale attacks and sustain their prolonged campaigns against an enemy. Therefore, counterterrorism strategies should focus on preventing organizations from acquiring financial resources from state sponsors of terror, and private financiers. The former can be done through denouncing a state sponsor of terror through United Nations actions, and the latter can be done by tracing international money flows and cut

<sup>178</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Counterterrorism," 149.

<sup>179</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Counterterrorism," 137.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid

them off through anti-laundering initiatives. Nonetheless, such strategies could lead to terrorist groups evolving their financing methods to avoid detection. Secondly, some nations do not cooperate with international efforts against terrorism financing like freezing assets by providing financial safe havens to those organizations, rendering the effort unsuccessful.<sup>181</sup>

**Table 6: Anti-Terrorism Financing Policy Evaluation**

Anti-Financing Measure	Short Term Consequences	Long Term Consequences
Denouncing State Sponsors of Terror	Could halt a major source of funding for a terrorist organization.	Could cause state to provide safe financial havens for terrorists. Little financial help could also still lead to great damage by terrorists.
Anti-laundering Initiatives and Assets Freezing	Halt international money flows to terrorist organizations. Prevent terrorists from using existing financial accounts.	Evolving of terrorist financing.

### 3. Military and Economic Aid

Military Aid can be used as a counterterrorism policy when it is sent to countries combating terrorism, thereby raising the material costs of terrorism. Non-military economic aid could also be used for removing the root causes of terrorism by decreasing popular support for terrorist organizations. Such a strategy hands over the responsibility of fighting terrorism from the potential country targeted by terrorism to the country of origin of terrorism. Aid motivates countries of origin through financial incentives to fight against terrorism, and profit from paid-riding. However, there are several limitations to this strategy. Firstly, this strategy in public perception could seem

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<sup>181</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Counterterrorism," 147.

like a poor policy given that aid is being given to countries with active terrorist organizations which might get hold of those finances. Secondly, the wrong mix of military aid and active military intervention could lead to instability of the receiving country, as is the case with the United States and its aid to Pakistan and Afghanistan post-2001. Thirdly, recipient countries could always opt to fight domestic terrorism rather than negotiate with it, or it could even invent terrorism to continue to benefit from foreign aid.<sup>182</sup>

**Table 7: Military and Economic Aid Policy Evaluation**

Aid Type	Short Term Consequences	Long Term Consequences
Military Aid	Raise the cost of terrorism by supporting the militaries of countries fighting terrorism.	Could get into the hold of terrorist organizations. Could also lead to regime instability.
Economic Aid	Remove the root causes of terrorism like poverty and decrease public support for terrorism. Incentivize countries to fight against terrorist organizations.	Could lead recipient governments to always opt for war rather than negotiations.  Could also lead to false inventions of terrorism to benefit from aid.

## B. Benevolent Policies

### 1. Appeasement and Concessions

Terrorists attacks are usually motivated by political goals, such as regime change or territorial gain. Government concessions can make terrorism a less appealing option by giving in to some of the terrorists' demands. For example, the *Good Friday Agreement* led to power-sharing

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<sup>182</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Counterterrorism," 148.

between Catholics and Protestants parties in Northern Ireland, subsequently decreasing terrorist activities. However, there are several limitations to this strategy. Firstly, some terrorist groups are maximalist and will only seek total concessions or no agreement whatsoever. Secondly, some concessions may lead to more radical splinter groups within the negotiating terrorist organization. For example, the successful negotiations of the PIRA in the Northern Ireland peace process led to the establishment of a more extreme faction called the *Real IRA* which promised to continue the fight. Finally, concessions could be viewed as a victory for terrorists, and a weakness of the negotiating government.<sup>183</sup>

**Table 8: Appeasement and Concessions Counterterrorism Policy Evaluation**

Concession Example	Short Term Consequences	Long Term Consequences
<i>Good Friday Agreement</i>	Negotiated a peace treaty with the PIRA. Decrease in terrorist activities	Splintering of the PIRA, establishment of the more radical <i>Real IRA</i> which continued the fight.

## 2. Grievances and Popular Support for Terrorism

Public support for terrorism leads to the emergence and sustainability of terrorism. Therefore, counterterrorism policies need to address and mitigate certain grievances to limit public support, and thereby decrease terrorism.<sup>184</sup> Unfortunately, according to some studies such as Gassebner and Luechinger (2011) and Krieger and Meierrieks (2011), there is little consensus among researchers about specific social conditions or grievances necessary for the emergence of terrorism. Researchers are especially divided about whether terrorism emerges due to economic or

<sup>183</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Counterterrorism," 141.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid

politico-institutional underdevelopment. Similarly, empirical studies are unable to identify the ‘true’ determinants of support for terrorism. While some studies like Bueno De Mesquita (2007) argue that economic variables have little effect on support for Islamic terrorism, other studies such as Mousseau (2011) argue that urban poverty is behind it. Finally, one of the biggest limitations of identifying true grievances and addressing is that it does not always lead to the end of the violence cycle. Terrorist organizations can become more radical if moderate terrorists abandon the organization after the grievances have been dealt with.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. “The Economics of Counterterrorism,” 142.

**Table 9: Economic and Political Development and the Social Origins of Terrorism****Studies**<sup>186</sup>

Study	Scope	Terrorism Type	Findings
Krueger and Maleckova (2003)	148 countries (1997-2002)	Transnational terrorism	No effect of per capita income on terrorism. More likely in countries with political repression.
Li and Schaub (2004)	112 countries (1975-1997)	Transnational terrorism	Terrorism negatively correlated with economic development, but positively correlated with democracies.
Blomberg and Hess (2008)	179 countries (1968-2003)	Transnational terrorism	High income levels and democratic institutions make terrorism less likely to emerge in a country.
Piazza (2011)	172 countries (1970-2006)	Domestic terrorism	Terrorism more likely in countries with higher GDP and Human Development Index with income inequality.

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<sup>186</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Counterterrorism," 143.

### 3. Public Good Provision and Terrorism

Terrorist groups garner a lot of public support when they provide societal services for the territory that they control or operate in. Counterterrorism policies could thus aim to provide more superior services and goods like health and educational services to drive down public support for terrorism.<sup>187</sup> Such a strategy increases the material cost for terrorists because they would have to find a new refuge which has public support. Secondly, it makes populations more likely to share information and intelligence on terrorist organizations which enhances the government's efficiency in its pursuit of terrorists. Nevertheless, this approach is costly because it involves setting up expensive welfare systems. Secondly, it does not guarantee the eradication of terrorism, as was the case with Saudi Arabia and the AQ cell in Saudi Arabia, despite the fact that the government provides huge welfare programs. Finally, studies found mixed results regarding the services that are considered most essential to the eradication of public support for terrorism<sup>188</sup>

**Table 10: Studies for Popular Support for Islamist Terrorism**<sup>189</sup>

Study	Scope	Findings
Fair and Shepard (2006)	14 countries (2002)	Unclear influence of economic conditions on support for terrorism.
Bueno De Mesquita (2007)	13 Muslim countries (2002)	Support for terrorism not linked to education, economic situation.
Mousseau (2011)	14 Muslim countries (2002)	Support for Islamic terrorism linked with urban poverty, not with lack of education or religiosity.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Counterterrorism," 144.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter 6 – Threat Evaluation and Specific Counterterrorism Strategy**

### **Recommendations**

Examining historical cases and studies of counterterrorism policies have shown that the effectiveness of these policies in affecting the opportunity costs of terrorism is heavily reliant on the context it is used in. It also challenged the previous conclusion of the economics study of terrorism that dealing with the root causes of terrorism eliminates terror. Real life cases demonstrated that it is hard to identify the true cause of terrorism and that dealing with it does not always lead to a halt of terrorist activities. Therefore, the conclusion that this thesis aims to get at is that terrorist organizations must be assessed individually to evaluate the level of their threat and formulate an appropriate counterterrorism policy that addresses their goals, agendas, organizational structures, and ideologies.<sup>190</sup> Furthermore, combating terrorist organizations should include multiple policies that complement one another, because no policy is capable of eradicating terrorism by itself. The missing “one size fits all” strategy with terrorism makes any simple policy strategy nearly impossible.<sup>191</sup> Therefore, given the information provided on AQ and ISIS in this document, this thesis will attempt to formulate a combination of suitable counterterrorism strategy for each while assessing which group poses a bigger threat for the international community.

- **Ideological Threat and Counterterrorism Strategy Response**

ISIS’ corrosive and hateful ideology makes it less appealing than the less takfiri ideology of AQ. Whereas AQ prohibits the targeting of Muslims, ISIS actively targets Muslims, especially Shias, who ISIS considers to be infidels and innovators of Islam who alter the religion. ISIS also

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<sup>190</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. “The Economics of Counterterrorism,” 150.

<sup>191</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. “The Economics of Terrorism and Counterterrorism,” 63.



kills Sunnis who it considers are apostates for not following their 'pure' version of Islam. Therefore, Muslims view ISIS more unfavorably than they do with AQ, and this claim is supported by statistics collected by the Pew Research Center.

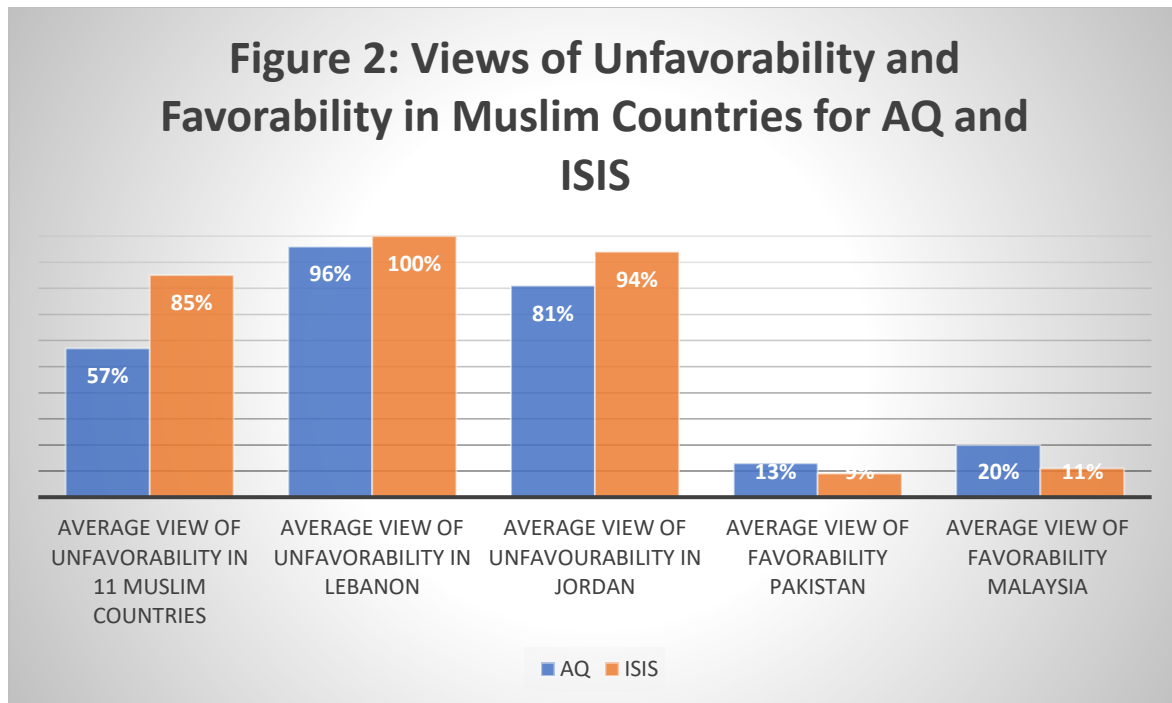
With regards to AQ ideology, a survey conducted in 2013 across 11 Muslim countries showed that a median of 57% of Muslims held an unfavorable view of the terrorist organization. This includes strong majorities of Muslims in Lebanon (96%), Jordan (81%), Turkey (73%), and Egypt (69%).<sup>192</sup> ISIS in comparison had worse approval ratings in a survey collected in 2015 across 11 Muslim countries, which showed that in no country surveyed did more than 15% of the population show favorable attitudes toward Islamic State, meaning that 85% held unfavorable views compared to AQ's 57% view of unfavourability.<sup>193</sup> In Lebanon, there was a whopping 100% view of unfavourability with 99% being extremely unfavorable, and 94% in Jordan. Even in some countries in which ISIS had a 'higher' favorability like Pakistan and Malaysia, AQ was more favorable.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> "Muslim Publics Share Concerns about Extremist Groups Much Diminished Support for Suicide Bombing," Pew Research Center, September 10, 2013, accessed April 05, 2019, <https://www.pewglobal.org/2013/09/10/muslim-publics-share-concerns-about-extremist-groups/>.

<sup>193</sup> Jacob Poushter, "Most Dislike ISIS in Muslim Countries," Pew Research Center, November 17, 2015, accessed April 05, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/17/in-nations-with-significant-muslim-populations-much-disdain-for-isis/>.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.



It is thus safe to argue that AQ poses a larger ideological threat than ISIS due to its larger appeal on Muslims. Nonetheless, regardless of the threat, both groups need to be combatted ideologically because ideology remains a major source for recruitment.

#### A. Promoting Moderate Islam

Firstly, there must be an international effort in promoting moderate Islam to counter the AQ and ISIS narratives and offer an alternative to them, and Muslim countries must be the vanguard of this ideological fight in order for the fight to gain legitimacy.

Saudi Arabia recently established a counterterrorism center in Riyadh called the King Salman Complex, which is to be used for the study of *hadith*. The center uses Islamic scholars to reauthenticate *hadith*, which are the prophet Muhammad's sayings and practices that act as a major source of guidance for Muslims' daily conduct. This reauthentication effort will seek to eliminate fake and extremist sayings that are attributed to the prophet, and any texts that contradict the

teachings of Islam and justify the committing of crimes, murders, and terrorist acts.<sup>195</sup> There should be more centers that are established across the Muslim world that replicate this counterterrorism center's efforts in order to eliminate extremist narratives and limit their influence on their intended audiences.

Moreover, those centers should also emphasize the Quranic texts and *hadith* that highlight the peaceful message of Islam, because this would challenge the superficial knowledge of Islam among active terrorist fighters and potential recruits.<sup>196</sup> In the Quran, God says that whoever kills one person is as great a sin as killing all of humanity, and whoever saves a person is equivalent of saving all of humanity (Quran 5:32). The prophet in a *hadith* (saying) said "I advise you ten things. Do not kill women or children or an aged, infirm person. Do not cut down fruit-bearing trees. Do not destroy an inhabited place. Do not slaughter sheep or camels except for food. Do not burn bees and do not scatter them. Do not steal from the booty, and do not be cowardly. And don't be spiteful or unjust."<sup>197</sup> These texts should be continuously underscored by those Islamic scholars and centers, while also showing how the peaceful message of Islam completely contrasts the barbaric radical message of AQ and ISIS.

Furthermore, those centers should utilize war ethics in Islam as a response to extremist narratives, especially to ISIS propaganda, and highlight how terrorist groups go against it. Muslims were prohibited from opening hostilities without properly declaring war against the enemy unless the adversary has already started aggression against them.<sup>198</sup> This means that Muslim soldiers were

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<sup>195</sup> Sigal Samuel, "What It Takes to Make Saudi Islam 'Moderate'," *The Atlantic*, November 17, 2017, accessed April 05, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/11/moderate-islam-saudi-arabia/546017/>.

<sup>196</sup> Jason Burke, "Rise and Fall of Isis: Its Dream of a Caliphate Is Over, so What Now?" *The Guardian*, October 21, 2017, accessed April 20, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/21/isis-caliphate-islamic-state-raqqa-iraq-islamist>.

<sup>197</sup> Abu Dalhoum, "Youth Deradicalization. Strengthening the Bonds between Jordanian Youth".

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*

expected to react to war, not initiate one, remaining on the defensive and abstaining from drawing the first blood.<sup>199</sup> This idea goes completely against the expansionist ideals of ISIS and stressing the ethics' significance in counter-extremist propaganda will delegitimize ISIS in the eyes of potential recruits and lead to decreased radicalization.

Furthermore, the media should play an important role in highlighting the efforts being put in for the moderate Islamic push. Muslim leaders like King Abdullah II of Jordan often speak of the peaceful message of Islam which goes beyond tolerance and encourages respect, solidarity, love, and coexistence with other peoples and societies. Recently in 2018, King Abdullah II was awarded the Templeton Prize for being the most active political leader who sought religious harmony within Islam and between Islam and other religions.<sup>200</sup> King Abdullah has had a history of actions which promoted the peacefulness of Islam, the highlight being the "Amman Message," which explained the main elements of Islam in 2004 in aftermath of the American invasion of Iraq and the rise of Iraqi insurgency and Islamic extremism. In 2005, 200 Islamic scholars representing all schools of jurisprudence in Islam, under his guidance, issued a declaration now known as the "Three Points of the Amman Message," which recognized the validity of all eight legal schools of Islam, forbade declarations of apostasy between Muslims, and established conditions for issuing fatwas, Islamic legal rulings.<sup>201</sup> The media then has a responsibility to propagate and echo the message of moderate Islam and the active role of Islamic countries and Muslim leaders in the fight against extremism.

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> "His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan Receives Templeton Prize." John Templeton Foundation. November 14, 2018. Accessed April 05, 2019. <https://www.templeton.org/news/his-majesty-king-abdullah-ii-of-jordan-receives-templeton-prize>.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

## B. Establishing and Funding Deradicalization Programs

Another strategy that must be used in fighting AQ's and ISIS' ideologies is establishing deradicalization and rehabilitation programs that seek to reeducate and reintegrate radicals back into their societies. Because radicalization is such a complex process these programs must therefore possess teams involving social workers, teachers, psychologists, and religious scholars. The programs should also be tailored towards addressing the grievances and causes that led to radicalization. The programs should also involve multi-agency cooperation to identify vulnerable individuals and intervene early in the radicalization process.<sup>202</sup>

These programs should also be able to identify 'instigators' from 'perpetrators. Instigators must be isolated and neutralized because their radical beliefs are deeply rooted within them, so it is extremely hard if not impossible to dissuade them from using terrorism because they will reject alternative perspectives. Instigators often have high ranking positions in terrorist organizations. Perpetrators, on the other hand, form the majority of terrorist groups and are often manipulated into joining. Some of these perpetrators join due to political marginalization and unemployment. Due to their superficial knowledge in extremism perpetrators are easier to deradicalize and reintegrate into society, and one method could be through providing them with better economic opportunities.<sup>203</sup>

## C. Revamping Educational Programs

New educational programs should be created that motivate youth to adopt an enlightened world view coexist with people different from them. It would give them a more moderate understanding of religion, culture, and identity, while also challenging radical narratives. These

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<sup>202</sup> Bendaoudi Abdelillah, "After the "almost 100 Percent" Defeat of ISIS, What about Its Ideology?" AlJazeera Centre for Studies, May 8, 2018, accessed April 05, 2019, <http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2018/05/100-percent-defeat-isis-ideology-180508042421376.html>.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

new programs should be used as a preventive defensive counterterrorism policy that immunizes the youth's minds against radicalization.<sup>204</sup>

#### D. Dealing with the Grievances

Since AQ relies primarily on the exploiting anti-American sentiments for radicalization, it would make sense to model the American counterterrorism strategy around eliminating that source of radicalization. The US is wise in negotiating with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and agreeing on core elements for a deal. The US negotiation plan struck two birds with one stone by agreeing with the Taliban that Afghanistan will no longer be used as a safe haven for AQ training camps and preparation ground for international attacks. In return, the US would withdraw militarily from Afghanistan.<sup>205</sup> By co-opting the Taliban, the plan would eliminate a fertile terror ground for AQ to utilize, while also removing a core grievance that AQ relies on, which is to fuel anti-American sentiments by referencing the American occupation of Afghanistan. Coupled with President Trump's decision to withdraw 2000 troops from Syria<sup>206</sup>, and the US withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 (only 5200 US troops remain<sup>207</sup>), the US disengagement strategy should eliminate a major source of radicalization for AQ. The lack of US military involvement in Muslim countries will make it difficult for AQ to radicalize and mobilize Muslims into fighting the United States.

ISIS however primarily relies on sectarian tensions for radicalization. A suitable counterterrorism strategy must then eliminate sectarian grievances to remove an important source

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Vanda Felbab-Brown, "The US-Taliban Negotiations Breakthrough: What It Means and What Lies Ahead," Brookings, January 29, 2019, accessed April 05, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/01/29/the-us-taliban-negotiations-breakthrough-what-it-means-and-what-lies-ahead/>.

<sup>206</sup> Julian Borger and Martin Chulov, "Trump Shocks Allies and Advisers with Plan to Pull US Troops out of Syria," The Guardian, December 19, 2018, accessed April 05, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/dec/19/us-troops-syria-withdrawal-trump>.

<sup>207</sup> Adam Taylor, "Do U.S. Troops Have a Future in Iraq?" The Washington Post, February 07, 2019, accessed April 05, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/02/07/do-us-troops-have-future-iraq/?utm\\_term=.31e5d84f9482](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/02/07/do-us-troops-have-future-iraq/?utm_term=.31e5d84f9482).

of radicalization for ISIS. In Syria, the international community must continue to put pressure on Assad to include Sunnis in politics, governance, and military, or otherwise risking that Sunni disenfranchisement in politics will further marginalize Sunnis. The international community through the UN must stress on unanimously approved United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 which demands “credible, inclusive and nonsectarian governance...free and fair elections...to the highest international standards of transparency and accountability”.<sup>208</sup> If the Assad regime does not follow through with this resolution, then the UN must resort to penalties to force Assad’s hand into making those much necessary changes. Syria also needs to be rebuilt to eliminate ISIS from utilizing unemployment as a radicalization source to draw people into the organization. Donating countries could also stipulate that they will not give funds to rebuild the country should Assad not make essential political reforms.

For Iraq, decentralization and federalism can be used as options to remedy the sectarian tensions in the country. Giving people a stake in determining the future of the country in a decentralized government may not solve Iraq’s sectarian problems, but it could foster a healthy political environment to address the power imbalance. Centralized authority in the hands of Shiite elites continue to alienate and marginalize its Sunni population, and decentralization could address that problem by giving Sunnis a say in their country’s politics.<sup>209</sup> It would also help build cooperation and trust among the different sects in Iraq. This strategy would eliminate a major source of radicalization that ISIS uses to recruit individuals.

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<sup>208</sup> Howard J. Shatz, "After Eight Bloody Years, the Syrian Civil War Is Coming to an End," *Newsweek*, April 05, 2019, accessed April 05, 2019, <https://www.newsweek.com/2019/04/12/long-road-ahead-1383671.html>.

<sup>209</sup> Ranj Alaaldin, "Sectarianism, Governance, and Iraq's Future," *Brookings*, November 26, 2018, accessed April 06, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/sectarianism-governance-and-iraqs-future/>.

- **Recruitment Threat and Counterterrorism Strategy Response**

When comparing AQ to ISIS, it is clear that ISIS' ability to recruit is exceedingly better than AQ. AQ relied significantly on religious and scholarly arguments to impress followers to join. Bin Laden and Zawahiri meticulously established an image of religious legitimacy in their propaganda videos, in which they outlined their agenda while sitting on the ground in caves and training camps. AQ's lack of action and slow videos are highly unappealing for young recruits. On the other hand, ISIS launched Hollywood-esque "action-adventure movies" of combat footage on the frontlines, which appeals to followers and young recruits through its cinematic nature. ISIS not only relied on religious arguments but also incorporated excitement and adventure in their videos. Through its barbaric videos, ISIS appealed to recruits who liked ISIS brutality.<sup>210</sup>

Moreover, ISIS' offers its fighters immediate pleasures like sexual partners for its male recruits. ISIS also offers its recruits to live instantly in an Islamic Caliphate with Sharia law compared to AQ's distant and utopian vision. Therefore, when comparing both groups, ISIS is able to draw on more recruits, especially young recruits, due to its instant gratification that it is able to provide for its recruits.<sup>211</sup>

Therefore, a suitable counterterrorism strategy to deal with both groups' recruitment must challenge their online content. ISIS' online presence especially must be dealt with due to its effective appeal on recruits. There have been calls in the past by leaders like PM Theresa May on senior executives from Google, Facebook and Microsoft to remove radical content within two hours of posting, instead of the current average of 36 hours.<sup>212</sup> Radical online content is shared

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<sup>210</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin, "ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2015, accessed April 06, 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2019-02-18/isis-not-terrorist-group>.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Heather Stewart, "May Calls on Internet Firms to Remove Extremist Content within Two Hours," *The Guardian*, September 19, 2017, accessed April 20, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/sep/19/theresa-may-will-tell-internet-firms-to-tackle-extremist-content>.



most within the first two hours known as “starburst” effect, and so decreasing the lifetime of content diminishes the number of viewers radicalized.<sup>213</sup> May and Macron are even considering stricter action to tackle online propaganda by imposing fines on social media companies that fail to remove propaganda quickly.<sup>214</sup>

- **Military Threat and Counterterrorism Strategy Response**

When comparing the number of fighters that AQ central in Afghanistan at its peak had in 2001 to the numbers of ISIS in Iraq and Syria at its peak, we observe that ISIS boasts about 6 times larger the number of fighters. ISIS has to command a large army due to its tactics of expanding and controlling territory and therefore owned at its peak in 2015 around 30,000 fighters.<sup>215</sup> In contrast, AQ does not need that many fighters, and while it trained 70,000 fighters, it only relies on selected elite group fighters and commanded at its peak in 2001 around 4,000 fighters.<sup>216</sup>

It is also worth looking at AQ’s and ISIS’ affiliates when comparing their military threat. AQ and ISIS are international terrorist groups, and as such do not only operate in their central command locations, but they are also active across the globe through their affiliates. This thesis has compiled information on a number of AQ’s and ISIS’ affiliates acquired from the United States Department of State country reports on terrorism in 2017.<sup>217</sup> The number of fighters that each affiliate has and where it operates in tables 11 and 12 below. This thesis will assume estimates in the Department of State report that refer to numbers of fighters as “low thousands” as equal to

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Cronin, "ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group".

<sup>216</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, "Al Qaeda's Ideology," Hudson Institute, May 19, 2005, accessed April 06, 2019, <https://www.hudson.org/research/9777-al-qaeda-s-ideology>.

<sup>217</sup> United States Department of State. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2017*. Washington D.C., September 2018.

2000 fighters, and “several thousand” as equal to 3000 fighters for the sake of visualizing the numbers of fighters in a graph to compare both terrorist group’s average fighter number.

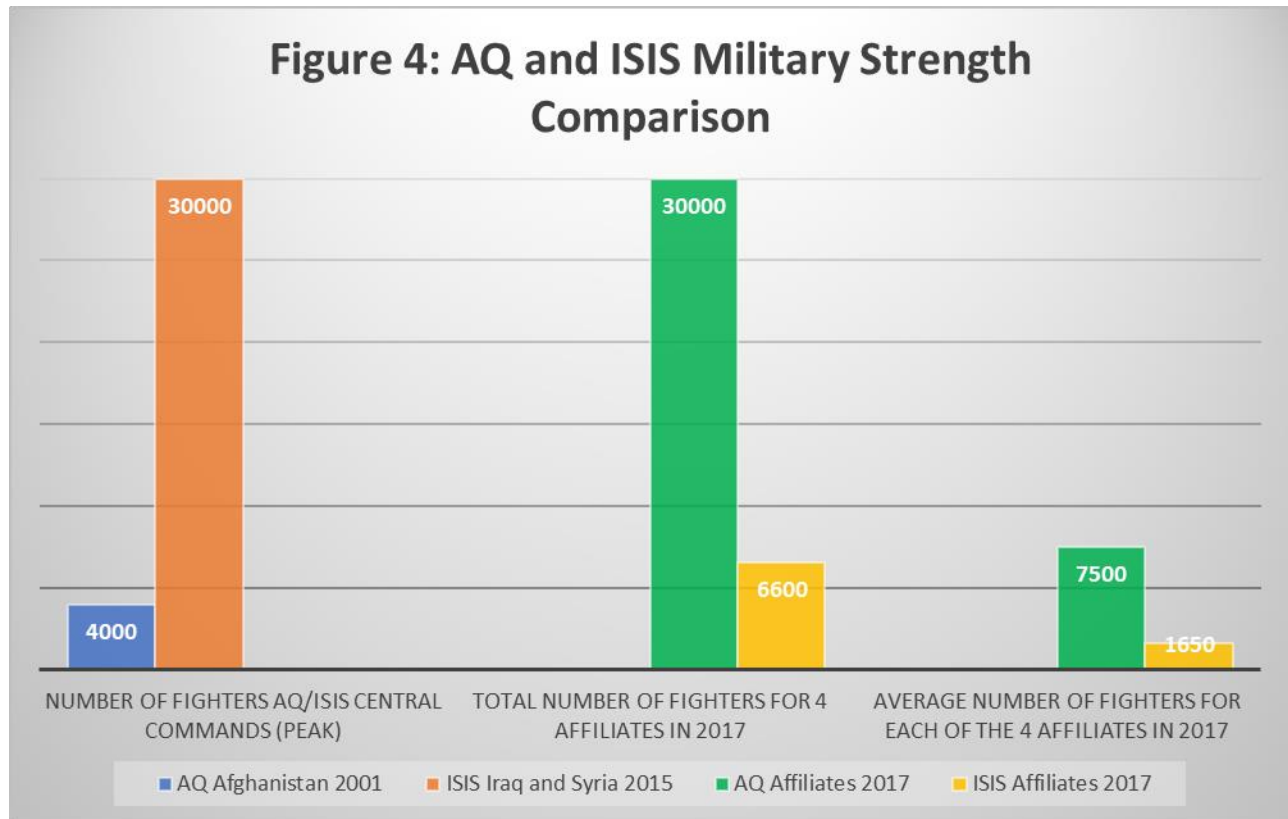
**Table 11: AQ Affiliates’ Area of Operation and Strength**

	Area of Operation	Strength
Al-Shabaab	Somalia	9,000
Al Nusra Front	Syria	18,000
AQAP	Yemen	Low thousands (2,000)
AQIM	The Maghreb and the Sahel	1,000

**Table 12: ISIS Affiliates’ Area of Operation and Strength**

	Area of Operation	Strength
Boko Haram	Nigeria	Low thousands (2,000)
Abu Sayyaf	Philippines	400
Khorasan	Afghanistan and Pakistan	3,000
ISIS Sinai	Egypt	1,200

As we can see in tables 11 and 12, AQ’s affiliates boast an average number of fighters that is 7,500 with a total of 30,000 compared to ISIS’ average of 1650 with a total of 6,600.



. Nevertheless, while it might be easy to say that ISIS is more dangerous militarily than AQ, ISIS has completely lost its physical caliphate. It was defeated recently in both Syria and Iraq due to the coalition's airstrikes, with the support of ground actors like the Iraqi Army and the Syrian Democratic Forces. Because ISIS used conventional warfare and operated like a state's military, devising a military blueprint to counter it only required replicating previous military blueprints of state versus state warfare.

In contrast, AQ required a special strategy because it operated more like a guerilla group and operated in the shadows. After 20 years of warfare, AQ central command was able to continue operating despite being dislodged from its main command location in Afghanistan. However, ISIS was removed from its physical caliphate within 4 years of the formation of its cross-state caliphate in Iraq in Syria. It can be argued that the resilience of AQ makes it a more dangerous military

threat than ISIS, even when it commands fewer troops and controls less territory. AQ is also stronger militarily than ISIS because it has a bigger international presence around the globe, as can be seen figure 4. AQ is able to strike effectively in several locations around the world due to large numbers of fighters that it possesses, in addition to the sleeper cells that it has around the globe. AQ's bigger international outreach makes it a larger threat than ISIS' smaller global presence.

As for the proposed counterterrorism strategy against AQ, the US should continue in its current military strategy against AQ because it has been able to kill prominent leaders like bin Laden and Anwar Al Awlaki, a primary AQ propagandist. Through using 291 drone strikes have the US managed to kill between 1,299 and 2,264 militants. The US has also relied on its kill/capture missions which involve the use of special operations raids.<sup>218</sup> However, it must be noted that this strategy has had its limitations. While it did eliminate key AQ figures, it has not contributed to lower terrorist activities by AQ, as the group continued to operate in countries like Syria. Furthermore, resorting to the drone program has left many civilians dead due to collateral damage, and have caused increased violence in Pakistan. The program has increased anti-American sentiments among Pakistanis and has radicalized them because local media sources perceive drone attacks as attacks on civilians.<sup>219</sup>

Moreover, AQ has proven to be resilient against decapitation operations aimed at killing its leaders, like Operation Neptune which killed bin Laden.<sup>220</sup> The US should therefore choose its targets wisely and abandon targeting mid-tier or low-tier AQ operatives should they be located near civilian centers. In doing so the US could diminish the chance of radicalization among the civilian population that would occur through indiscriminate targeting. The US should also realize

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<sup>218</sup> Jonathan Masters, "Targeted Killings," Council on Foreign Relations, May 23, 2013, , accessed April 06, 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/background/targeted-killings>.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid

<sup>220</sup> Schneider, Brück, and Meierrieks. "The Economics of Counterterrorism," 137.

that while they have been successful in killing high-level targets like bin Laden, the targeted killing program is not enough to combat AQ. It must be complemented with other strategies to reduce terrorist activities resulting from AQ.

In comparison, the Global Coalition against ISIS which involved the international cooperation of 79 partners<sup>221</sup> accomplished a complete military defeat of ISIS, and reversed all of the territorial gains that the group acquired. The combination of airstrikes and ground elements like the SDF and the Iraqi army was an extremely successful strategy in defeating ISIS. In a desperate bid to survive, ISIS is transitioning from an insurgent organization which seizes territory, operates in open areas with large amounts of military units, to a terrorist group, which launches attacks with members operating in small sleeper cells that do not hold territory. The remaining group members in Iraq and Syria will probably go underground and rely on guerilla warfare tactics like sniping, ambushes, hit and run attacks, car bombs, and assassinations.<sup>222</sup>

ISIS is reverting to AQ's mode of terrorism using guerrilla warfare and launching lone wolf attacks against the West. It would make sense that the military counterterrorism policy response should replicate AQ's blueprint despite its limitations because it is the only strategy that has succeeded in inflicting damage on AQ. This strategy should also be complemented with continuous protection of high-value targets like airports and embassies, and alertness of police and intelligence forces for terrorist plots. This will ensure that both AQ and ISIS do not get the chance to launch a spectacular attack against any country that would draw media attention and radicalize potential recruits.

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<sup>221</sup> "79 Partners United in Ensuring Daesh's Enduring Defeat." The Global Coalition Against Daesh. Accessed April 08, 2019. <https://theglobalcoalition.org/en/partners/>.

<sup>222</sup> Colin P. Clarke, "How ISIS Is Transforming," RAND Corporation, September 25, 2017, accessed April 19, 2019, <https://www.rand.org/blog/2017/09/how-isis-is-transforming.html>.

- **Financing Threat and Counterterrorism Strategy Response**

When comparing the peak annual budget of AQ to ISIS, we find that ISIS' \$2 billion budget is far larger than AQ's \$50 million budget. An observer would thus conclude that ISIS' financial might is stronger than that of AQ due to the humongous difference in financial resources. However, there are multiple reasons why AQ is more financially dangerous than ISIS. Firstly, despite 1/40 ratio of AQ's to ISIS' resources, the US spent \$134.3 billion in operation Freedom Sentinel and \$27.7 billion in operation Noble Eagle for combined \$162 billion fighting AQ compared to \$23.5 billion in operation Inherent Resolve against ISIS.<sup>223</sup> While one might point out the operations Freedom Sentinel and Noble Eagle began in 2001 and therefore must have higher costs than operation Inherent Resolve, the per year cost to defeating AQ is still larger.

Secondly, the US has been at war with AQ since 2001, and for 17 years (the Defense Department most recent report was released in 2018) the US has on average spent \$9.52 billion per year fighting AQ. In contrast, the US has only spent \$5.87 billion fighting ISIS. If were to strictly compare AQ's and ISIS' peak annual budgets to the US' average annual budget in fighting both groups, AQ was more effective in using its money. The US' budget in fighting AQ is 190.5 times larger than AQ's budget, while it is only 2.93 times larger than ISIS'.

Thirdly, it would be reasonable to think that the US would spend more money on fighting a conventional army rather than a then terrorist group, however, AQ wise use of finances has drawn the US into a costlier war. The New York Times conducted an estimate which sought to examine the costs spent by the US in fighting AQ since 2001. The estimate included the costs also borne

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<sup>223</sup> Amanda M. Macias, "The US Has Spent \$1.5 Trillion on War since Sept 11 Attacks," CNBC, September 11, 2018, accessed April 19, 2019, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/09/10/the-us-has-spent-1point5-trillion-on-war-since-september-11-attacks.html>.

by the US private sector, toll and physical damage cost, and economic impact cost. The estimate concluded that for every 1 dollar that AQ spends, the US spends \$7 million in response.<sup>224</sup> We can hence conclude that AQ's financial model is more dangerous because the costs spent by countries who fight it transcend the battlefield. By taking the fight to its enemies, AQ imposes physical costs on those countries which include economic damage, and money spent in target hardening to prevent future attacks.

For the proposed counterterrorism strategy to deal with AQ finances, the international community must continue its cooperation in freezing the financial assets of terrorist leaders, financiers, fighters, and networks. International bodies like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Financial Action Task Force must also sustain their efforts against terrorist financing. Moreover, the United Nations must always update its black list of terrorist leaders and financiers in order to constantly choke the source of funding that AQ uses.<sup>225</sup> Also, there has to be more international pressure against countries like Qatar to tighten their anti-money laundering schemes in order to prevent 'legitimate' businesses or charities from donating to AQ. By doing all of the above, the international community will choke AQ's external financial sources which it desperately relies on.

In contrast, ISIS relies primarily on internal funding, and so the proposed counterterrorism strategy to address its finances should differ. Because ISIS generated most of its funding through illegal oil sales, taxation, and criminal activities, it depends significantly on its territory. Therefore,

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<sup>224</sup> Shan Carter and Amanda Cox, "One 9/11 Tally: \$3.3 Trillion," The New York Times, September 08, 2011, accessed April 19, 2019, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/09/08/us/sept-11-reckoning/cost-graphic.html?hp>.

<sup>225</sup> Greg Bruno, "Al-Qaeda's Financial Pressures," Council on Foreign Relations, February 1, 2010, accessed April 19, 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/background/al-qaedas-financial-pressures>.

by reversing its territorial control, the international community can choke ISIS' finances.<sup>226</sup> This method was followed by the international coalition against ISIS which targeted ISIS' oil fields, and in conjunction with ground elements, reversed its territorial gain. Since ISIS' objective is to establish a physical caliphate, it will attempt in the future to control territory once more. Hence, the best counterterrorism strategy to deal with ISIS' finances must be a military strategy that will reverse its territorial gains and thereby cutting its financial supply.

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<sup>226</sup> Matthew Levitt, "Terrorist Financing and the Islamic State," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, November 13, 2014, accessed March 06, 2019, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/terrorist-financing-and-the-islamic-state>.



## **Chapter 7 – Conclusions**

Bigger is not always better, and that is exactly the case for ISIS. Any observer who examined ISIS' unprecedented wealth, territorial gain, and massive armies in Syria and Iraq back in 2015 would have thought that ISIS had it all. ISIS seemed to be in pole position to lead the radical Islamic world through its physical caliphate to heights never reached by any terrorist groups before. It has achieved what AQ dreamed of achieving in the distant future, and what AQ said was not possible in the near future. However, time proved that ISIS' terrorism model is not a sustainable model and eventually ISIS suffered its downfall and demise at the hands of those it opposed.

Despite leading in almost every category in terms of numbers compared to AQ, ISIS was simply not better. Ideologically, ISIS' extremely hateful and excluding philosophy, unreasonable stubbornness in targeting Muslims, and barbaric activities have lost its appeal among Muslims. Meanwhile, AQ more conservative ideology in comparison to ISIS' and its objectives to strictly target the US and hardly target Muslims has made it less unfavorable in the eyes of potential radical Muslims.

ISIS also accomplished military feats that AQ could have dreamed of and boasted a large army of 30,000 fighters. However, its state-building strategy that involved targeting all neighboring forces attracted significant international military attention that culminated in the destruction of its caliphate in Iraq and Syria. AQ's more patient method of operation has guaranteed its survival in the face of American military endeavors for two decades in Afghanistan. When its training camps were crushed in the months after the US invasion of Afghanistan, AQ went underground and slowly rebuilt its attacking capabilities.

Moreover, ISIS was too focused on maintaining and growing its central command in Iraq and Syria while AQ has developed ties with several transnational terrorist groups (including Shia

groups), which provided AQ a bigger international presence. AQ has also built both active and sleeper cells across the world, which gave AQ a platform to launch attacks wherever it pleases. AQ's cells operate secretly without garnering attention from domestic or international security and intelligence agencies and its loose hierarchical structure also guarantees that it is continuously able to operate even when its leaders are taken out by drone strikes or special forces raids.

AQ also chose not to focus on accumulating substantial amounts of money to increase the number of its terrorist operations or areas it functioned in. Rather, AQ focused on using its money more wisely and has drawn the US into a costlier war than what the US experiences with ISIS. Its financial sources are more covert and harder to choke, while ISIS' can be easily reversed with a military campaign.

In terms of recruitment, ISIS was able to recruit more members but that is only because it wanted a large conventional army to command and therefore required low standards and qualifications join. However, AQ trained 70,000 fighters in 2001 but only recruited 4,000 because it more focused on enlisting the elitist units who are also well versed in religion. Therefore, despite lower recruitment numbers, AQ's fighters are more drawn by its religious appeal, while ISIS recruits are tied to its territorial gain and can lose the incentive to join the group if it is not succeeding militarily.

Nonetheless, ISIS has achieved what it set out to do, it proved to its followers that an Islamic caliphate can be attained now rather than in the future as AQ's patient plan always advertised. It gave its fighters and followers instant gratification through territory, money, and sex while AQ remained static in its utopian and distant vision. However, AQ model of terrorism ensured its survival and adaptability, while ISIS' hasty model ensured its doom. Now, ISIS is mutating from an insurgent group to a terrorist organization, and by AQ's standards that should be

a victory and a sense of vindication for its beliefs in front of the Islamic community. AQ remains more dangerous overall because ideas will continue to inspire attacks, and through its covert model, it is now once again at the helm of the most successful terrorist groups in history.

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