Articles

The Jihadi Social Movement (JSM): Between Factional Hegemonic Drive, National Realities, and Transnational Ambitions

by Jerome Drevon

Abstract

This article analyses the evolution of the jihadi social movement (JSM) in changing environmental and factional circumstances. The author argues that internationalist groups like al-Qaida and Islamic State seek to become hegemonic in the JSM vis-à-vis nationally focused jihadis. Yet hegemony is associated with changing modes of organisation that can weaken centralised organisational control and exacerbate internal divisions. Moreover, the post-2011 expansion of Islamist local governance presents new expectations that jihadi groups set up local structures of governance, which can alter their internal dynamics and cannot endure as long as their allegiance to internationalist groups remains. This analysis illustrates the prospective choices of the components of the JSM after 2017.

Keywords: jihad, social movement, strategy, al-Qaida, Islamic State, Ahrar al-Sham

Introduction

The recent territorial losses of Islamic State organisation (IS) in Iraq and Syria have resumed post-9/11 discussions on al-Qaida's (AQ) strategic future.[1] Was IS's declaration of a state and international armed campaign against Western countries ephemeral in contrast with AQ's long-term strategy? Could AQ revive its activities by filling in the vacuum left by IS, recruiting some of its former members, and consolidating the group's participation in contemporary conflicts? Is AQ's message resilient or is its long-term decline inevitable? Many analyses are conjectural guesswork and cannot simply be taken at face value.[2] With a few exceptions, analyses often assume an unrealistic degree of internal cohesion without taking into account the interplay between AQ's past organisational developments, jihadi groups' inter-factional dynamics, and environmental change.

This article conversely analyses Salafi jihadi armed groups in their broader social movement instead of focusing on a single case study. Such contextualisation is important to dissociate these groups' external and internal objectives (i.e. what they officially want to achieve vis-à-vis their stated enemies versus their objectives vis-à-vis one another) and examine the consequences of changing social movement dynamics (especially evolving patterns of interactions between Salafi jihadi groups). In contrast with other studies based on social movement theory [3], this research does not explore these groups' mobilising or framing processes but uses this theoretical framework to highlight the constraints and opportunities inherent with their modes of organisation and the consequences of factional jihadi competition. This research accordingly situates Salafi jihadi groups in a three-level framework constituted by the evolution of (1) the jihadi social movement (JSM) [4], (2) macro-level conditions, and (3) armed groups' organisational dynamics.

This article argues that internationalist groups like AQ and IS seek to change the structure of the JSM and become hegemonic to marginalise nationally focused jihadis. Their success is often contingent on their ability to position themselves favourably when macro circumstances change, especially when new fronts materialise. However, this is a costly strategy. Hegemony over the JSM is associated with changing modes of organisation that can weaken centralised organisational control and exacerbate internal divisions. International opposition to AQ and IS affiliated groups additionally illustrates a second central dilemma particularly relevant to post-2011 expansion of Islamist local governance. New expectations that jihadi groups set up local structures of governance can change their organisational making. More importantly, local governance has become antithetical to organisational affiliation with internationalist groups. Such a contextualisation illustrates the

prospective choices of the components of the JSM after 2017.

A Multi-level Understanding of the Jihadi Social Movement (JSM)

Jihadi strategic studies have successfully synthesised jihadi groups' ideological productions with their political and environmental underpinnings.[5] However, two quandaries remain. First, jihadi armed groups are constrained by their modes of organisations. Even though their long-term strategic objectives, ideological commitments, and doctrinal positions inform their actions [6], jihadi groups are not strategic black boxes following a written strategic recipe.[7] Rationalist analysis argues that, regardless of their intentions, armed groups are affected by multiple trade-offs between security, efficiency, and control.[8] How to control the actions of group members and their financial provisions when the requirements of tight organisational control is incompatible with the secrecy required by your group? What is the most appropriate organisational structure between decentralised designs, which are safer but less conducive to internal discipline, and hierarchical models?[9] Although rationalist paradigms tend to overlook armed groups' ideological frameworks, additional ideational constraints exist. Socialising armed groups' members around strong ideological tenets means that the latter cannot easily be dismissed when they become counter-productive. Armed groups' ideologically committed members are more likely to defect or switch allegiance when their leaders retreat from their stated ideological commitments.[10]

Second, jihadi groups' broader patterns of interaction matter. This includes the number of groups, their relative size, and the overall balance of power.[11] Jihadi groups' analogous ideological outlooks and objectives have exacerbated factional rivalry in increasingly competitive environments.[12] If they want to achieve their long-term publicised objectives, they have to prevail over multiple competitors who are vying to recruit new members in similar constituencies, attack the same enemies, and potentially control shared geographic areas. This setting explains why organisational survival often predominates over the achievement of other long-term objectives. Analysing these groups' internal interactions is therefore necessary to interpret the interplay between their ideological and organisational construction, factional interactions, and reaction to broader environmental change. Furthermore, considering the Salafi jihadi trend as a whole instead of merely focusing on individual factions can help to distinguish jihadi groups' internal and external objectives. Jihadi groups compete to achieve their stated ideological objectives (the external dimension) and to prevail within their broader social movement (the internal dimension). However, internal hegemonic drives are often overlooked, although these easily trump armed groups' explicit objectives.

This research therefore examines the Salafi jihadi trend in a multilevel analytical framework that integrates the ideational and material features of these groups' modes of organisation, macro-level developments, and cross-factional interactions. Moreover, this article analyses the Salafi jihadi trend in the *longue durée* to reconstitute broader patterns of developments that cannot necessarily be altered easily, as argued in recent civil war studies. [13]

This research situates individual Salafi jihadi groups in a jihadi social movement (JSM) from which they initially originated. Social movement studies define the JSM by its structuring networks, shared ideological corpus and approach to religion, as well as conflict issues, and use of violence in their repertoires of action.[14] The roots of the JSM are situated in Egypt and Syria where armed groups embracing the Salafi approach to Islam legitimised the use of violence against authoritarian domestic authorities in the 1970s. The JSM then coalesced during the war in Afghanistan when thousands of Muslim foreign fighters and activists gathered to undo the Soviet occupation. These actors collectively elaborated an activist approach to political action, legitimising the use of violence against domestic Muslim authorities and foreign occupants within a Salafi theological corpus. [15] The Salafi jihadi trend that evolved agglomerated a plurality of groups and networks fighting to impose their conception of Islamic law across the Muslim world and expel foreign forces. From Afghanistan to Bosnia and Iraq, the constitutive networks of the JSM, its ideological corpus, historical narrative [16], and peculiar repertoires of violence then collectively differentiated it from other Islamist armed groups [including those stemming from the Muslim Brotherhood (MB)]. Numerous internal conflicts, sometimes degenerating into

violent confrontations, do not negate Salafi jihadi groups' shared initial belonging to the JSM, from the inclusive Ahrar al-Sham to the exclusivist Islamic State.

The second analytical level is formed by the macro-level. Armed groups are affected by structural changes inducing substantial consequences on their evolution. As in the political opportunities theorised by social movement scholars, macro-level developments transform the features of armed groups' external environments and their collective actions. The American decision to invade Afghanistan and Iraq in the aftermath of 9/11 and the 2011 Arab uprisings are quintessential systemic changes; these decisions altered the Salafi jihadi trend's ideological corpus, organisational making, and relation to the broader environment. In contrast with non-systemic developments, macro-level changes have lasting, transformative effects.

The last analytical level refers to Salafi jihadi groups' internal making. Armed groups' structures vary across cases, depending on distinctive pre-war networks and wartime modes of organisation. Pre-war networks notably shape their organisational developments after the beginning of a conflict in combination with endogenous and exogenous processes.[17] For instance, uncontrolled organisational expansion can erode armed groups' ability to control their followers, use violence in line with their political objectives, and control broader ideological developments. It is therefore necessary to consider armed groups' internal structures and their interplay with broader social movement and macro developments.

The JSM: From Multiparty Rivalry to AQ's Hegemony

The JSM is the fruit of the 1980's war in Afghanistan. The JSM crystallised against the backdrop of a moment of reckoning for the Islamist movements settled in the region. How to use in-war military experience to free the Muslim world from domestic despotism and foreign occupation? What should be the military priority? What is the position regarding strategic alternatives, including parliamentary opposition? Such questions divided these groups according to diverging national priorities, ideological commitments, and political preferences. Moreover, inter-factional rivalry in a competitive environment radicalised their positions on an array of political and theological issues - with lasting consequences. The crystallisation of the Salafi jihadi trend in exile triggered its doctrinal formalisation in a Salafi theology demarcated from the ideologies of other Islamist movements. The political rationales of jihad motivated by authoritarianism were notably supplanted by theological rationales based on Salafi doctrinal concepts (primarily *al-wala wal-bara*) by new ideologues, including Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Abu Qatada, and Sayyid Imam al-Sharif.[18]

The JSM remained scattered throughout the 1990s. Most Salafi jihadi groups departing Afghanistan focused on their homelands. Only a minority dispatched throughout the Muslim world, including Osama bin Laden's organisation whose early achievements were rather modest in scope. As a self-defined elitist vanguard, al-Qaida was torn between different strategic choices before dedicating itself to focusing on the American enemy by the mid-1990s. This decision coincided with nationally-focused Salafi jihadi groups' strategic failures in Algeria and Egypt. AQ tried to exploit the momentum and absorb them under its banner but ultimately failed. [19] The 1996's declaration of war against the United States and the 1998's creation of a World Islamic Front did not achieve the intended objectives. Beyond tactical cooperation, no Salafi jihadi group formalised any organisational integration with AQ before 2001. Bin Laden's plan to unite the Salafi jihadi trend was opposed by major jihadi groups and commanders, from the Egyptian Islamic Group (*al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya*) to Khattab in Chechnya. Bin Laden only managed to integrate several leaders of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad in spring 2001 but AQ remained a comparatively minor player in the 1990s. The organisation paled in comparison with larger Algerian and Egyptian groups while its cause failed to reach the popularity of jihadi groups' war in Chechnya.

AQ's 9/11 attacks facilitated the seizure of the JSM's leadership. Although the rationale and modus operandi behind the 9/11 attacks was very contentious amongst most jihadi groups, including AQ's own consultative council, the American declaration of a never-ending "war on terror" favourably positioned the group at the forefront of Islamist armed opposition to America's military presence in the Middle East. The U.S.'s successive interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq were critical macro upheavals that significantly bolstered AQ's popularity among a new generation of Muslims appalled by the apparent impunity of America's military operations in

the region. Moreover, the American focus on AQ marginalised the nationally-focused Salafi jihadi groups that previously had failed to achieve their domestic objectives. AQ exploited the aftermath of 9/11 to recruit previously unaffiliated youths in the Middle East, gather extensive financial support, and eventually impose its hegemony over the Salafi jihadi trend through its franchising strategy.[20] After 9/11, jihadi Salafism became virtually indistinguishable from AQ as bin Laden's organisation exploited American ill-fated choices to become the new social movement hegemon.

AQ's hegemony was also consolidated in the 2000s on non-military fronts. The group's exclusive opposition to Western countries coincided with the growth of new means of communication. Online platforms and satellite TV channels *(especially al-Jazeera)* publicised AQ's communiqués and positions, which bolstered the group's monopolisation of the Salafi jihadi narrative in the absence of any significant alternative. New sympathisers therefore embraced the group's symbols, including the Afghan dress code and musical *nasheeds*, based on their support of AQ's agenda. Domestic opposition to authoritarian Muslim states gradually merged with AQ's foreign enemy agenda when local groups adopted AQ symbols, brand, and tactics to boost their own popularity.

But AQ's domination over the JSM combined with the dissolution of its safe-haven in Afghanistan substantially affected its internal factionalisation. While the organisation defined itself as an elitist avant-garde seeking to liberate the Muslim *ummah* from foreign and domestic oppressors, the dispersal of its members abroad, in addition to the group's growing popularity, transformed its organisational structures. From a small organisation composed of a few hundred members sharing a joint experience in the Afghan conflict, AQ's new franchising strategy from North Africa to Yemen unprecedentedly broadened its ranks. The internal reaction to 9/11 and its immediate consequences demonstrated that even a small organisation whose leadership reside in a single place can easily divide over the wisdom of a single operation. But when thousands of previously unaffiliated members and commanders associated with AQ thereafter, bin Laden's main challenge became the maintenance of tight operational control over the effective use of violence.[21] Exercising internal hegemony over the JSM brought with it high costs for the organisation.

AQ's main predicament was that clear ideological tenets did not always align with limited political preferences. Newcomers' approach to violence often differs from the one of established leaders. This issue was particularly acute in Iraq, where AQ's designated leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi unleashed a counterproductive spiral of violence against Shi'ite Iraqis that contained the germs of post-2011 developments. In addition to the revulsion of many jihadis over AQ's Iraqi branch undisciplined violence against local opponents and, increasingly, against much of the population, AQ's reputation was tarnished in the Muslim world by the actions of Zarqawi's group. The brand became a costly banner for the Salafi jihadis that were still willing to be endorsed, including Somalia's Al Shabaab movement. Although AQ maintained its hegemony over the JSM until 2011, the factors that precipitated its decline preceded the Arab uprisings and the rise of IS.

The Diversification of the JSM and IS's Relative Domination after the Arab Uprisings

Unprecedented uprisings shattered the Arab world in 2011. In a few months, several states partially democratised while Libya and Syria descended into civil wars. In Libya, Western support for the burgeoning armed opposition successfully helped to overthrow the regime before militias started to assert their local control throughout the country. In Syria, the repression of massive protests triggered its transformation into a full-fledged civil war where Islamist armed groups gradually took the lead. Salafi jihadi groups prospered in these two countries, where they began to mobilise locally and internationally. The Arab Spring of 2011 represented a new macro upheaval for the JSM.[22]

This macro change presented new opportunities that restructured the JSM after the death of Osama bin Laden along three lines that reflected unspoken pre-2011 divisions. The new political openings in the Middle East and North Africa differentiated: (1) the individuals and groups that remained faithful to AQ and its legacy; (2) AQ's former branch in Iraq, whose dissociation from the organisation's central leadership emerged; and (3) the jihadi Salafis formerly marginalised by AQ's hegemony over the JSM, especially those who opposed the internationalisation of AQ's agenda from the late 1990s onwards.

AQ's pre-2011 domination seemed to publicly wane after the uprisings. Even the Salafi jihadis who remained faithful to AQ and their leaders initially downplayed the organisation's brand. Many groups endorsed the generic label *ansar al-shari'a* (the partisans of sharia) to suggest that they were primarily local organisations with territorial concerns untainted by AQ's controversial legacy. This arrangement was particularly significant in Syria with the emergence of *Jabhat al-Nusra* (the Front of Support - JN). JN initially concealed its ties to AQ before going public when the split with Islamic State (IS) imposed the need for expressing an official allegiance to AQ to maintain the loyalty of its troops. However, the group's official allegiance did not entail a reproduction of pre-2011 public hegemony over the armed opposition to the regime. JN instead endeavoured to embed itself within the opposition to secure its long-term interests and gradually impose its project under non-AQ generic labels.

But JN's organisational expansion and integration in the Syrian opposition were costly for AQ. The group's transformation from an elitist vanguard into a larger entity with territorial aspirations altered the nature of its project. Although territorial aspirations previously materialised in Mali and Yemen, the multi-party nature of the Syrian insurgency imposed a repeal of the group's allegiance to AQ. While the nature of group's abrogated links to the organisation is contested, several former JN leaders and AQ-linked religious figures have strongly opposed the decision.[23] In all cases, JN's national priorities have taken precedence over AQ's transnational agenda.

The second group that distanced itself from AQ is IS. The roots of their disagreements spanned more than a decade, when AQ demurred al-Zarqawi's behaviour in Afghanistan. IS's dissent nonetheless remained forcibly concealed by AQ's unquestionable hegemony over the JSM before 2011. The death of bin Laden combined with new opportunities in Iraq and Syria, against the backdrop of a gradual 'Iraqisation' of IS's leadership, subsequently facilitated the group's emancipation.[24] When JN refused to remain under IS's authority, the latter's dispute with AQ's new leader Ayman al-Zawahiri was used to assert its independence. Then, the group's military prowess - in addition to new means of mobilisation abroad - magnified its influence worldwide. Although IS did not replicate AQ's hegemony over the JSM, the group undoubtedly became its dominant player. This status subsequently attracted new franchised groups, from Nigeria to the Philippines.

The restructuring of the JSM finally gave space to Salafi jihadi critics of AQ. These voices did not emerge in a vacuum. They had previously been marginalised by AQ's post-9/11 hegemonic control over the JSM. They were formed by jihadi fighters and ideologues who participated in previous jihads abroad and opposed bin Laden's agenda from the beginning or gradually expressed doubts over AQ's actions (especially after the war in Iraq).[25] But these jihadis did not have the means to propose a Salafi armed alternative to AQ before 2011, when the war in Syria presented an unprecedented opportunity. Most of the AQ critics identified with the group *Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya* (AS), which was determined to develop a non-AQ non-MB alternative in Islamic politics from its early days. The group's gradual integration with the opposition only reinforced this strategic direction overtime.

The end of AQ's hegemony was finally reflected on non-military fronts. While Salafi jihadi cultural attributes used to be monopolised by AQ, post-2011 organisational diversification materialised along with cultural differentiation. IS's extensive use of social media and associated recruitment of adroit Westerners widened its production of Islamic *nasheed* and visual banners, broadcasting its modus operandi and *raison d'être* to a wider audience. Being a self-declared state with an internationalist outlook meant that IS broadened AQ's more limited constituency since every Muslim can potentially play a role in a state. Cultural production was also essential for AQ's jihadi critics. For instance, AS felt threatened by AQ's former monopoly on Salafi jihadi concepts and symbols. The group's founder argued that it soon became necessary to develop its own jihadi symbols and to reinterpret Salafi jihadi concepts in order to foster a distinctive collective group identity that could pre-empt the defection of its members to JN.[26] However, the group's national objectives and the absence of an explicit focus on foreign fighters narrowed down its cultural appeal to Syria. While AS can serve as a model for Salafi critics of AQ in other countries, it is questionable whether its influence can have a lasting impact comparable to AQ and IS's internationalism. AS is nonetheless a significant dissociation from the previous Salafi jihadi trend, towards a new and more inclusive project, reasserting national politics over theology and internationalism.

The Arab uprisings helped to fracture AQ's hegemony over the JSM. New opportunities and the succession of the group's leadership by Zawahiri after bin Laden's death exposed pre-existing dividing lines and fuelled the emancipatory development of new actors on both sides of the spectrum. IS fought with AQ based on purist credentials and established a long called-for caliphate. AS distanced itself from AQ and jihadi Salafism itself by becoming a mainstream armed opposition group. Even AQ's initially faithful followers started to fluctuate between the national priorities and the organisation's transnational ambitions.

Future Prospects after IS's Territorial Losses

In 2017, two major developments changed the balance of power inside the JSM. When IS lost its wide territorial anchorage in Iraq and Syria, JN formed a new dominant player in the Syrian opposition (*Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham* (HTS), the Committee for the Liberation of the Levant) that nearly took over North West Syria after officially cutting ties with AQ. This new internal setting is not a macro upheaval per se. It is primarily the outcome of a combination of endogenous processes and some level of foreign state intervention. But these developments potentially mark a turning point for the future of the JSM. These groups' recent histories help to delineate their prospects after 2017, based on a combination of internal decisions and Western countries' actions.

The first inference is that the JSM will remain internally diverse for the foreseeable future. No single actor is currently in a position to reproduce AQ's post-2001 hegemony over the JSM. IS's territorial losses will erode the group's domination over the JSM but the group is likely to survive. Recent setbacks are reminiscent of the misfortunes suffered in 2010, which did not impede the group's subsequent resurgence. IS still retains the allegiance of franchised groups abroad whose existence is not directly threatened. Its leaders will substitute territorial control with guerrilla warfare to destabilise new local authorities while waiting for the next phase of the conflict. In the meantime, IS's membership will become simultaneously more elitist and geographically centred on local strongholds. Foreign sympathisers will be conversely incited to attack their home countries to maintain the group's standing in the JSM. More generally, IS will build upon the narrative of the glorious days of the caliphate to maintain its distinction from AQ's failure to create a state while AQ could try to achieve some local or international victories to contest IS's recent domination over the JSM and thereby reassert itself.

On the other side of the spectrum, the nationally-focused jihadi critics of AQ will maintain their strategic dissociation from the JSM. AQ critics had long opposed the organisation's strategic choices and the war in Syria merely catalysed the emergence of an alternative on the ground. This alternative will not vanish. Its future prospects in Syria are primarily contingent on local developments. This inference does not mean that affiliated individuals cannot dissent and join AQ or IS if they believe that their group is in a strategic deadlock or on the verge of collapse. But the idea of a national jihadi project that opposes transnational violence while striving to be embedded in its local constituency is likely to remain. This project will not directly compete with AQ and IS's projects in terms of transnational mobilisation, although it is a credible alternative for jihadi groups fighting local authorities. While AQ's local branches have hitherto maintained their allegiance to the organisation, they could eventually be inclined to pursue a similar path if their loyalty erodes and if and when they realise that their interests would better be served by taking an independent course.

Third, the rise of local jihadi governance will have lasting consequences. With a few exceptions, pre-2011 governance was a rarity but local experiments quickly spread afterwards throughout the Muslim world. [27] These attempts are very diverse. They range from IS's establishment of an encompassing caliphate to local militias' control over limited territories to the gradual development of Syrian Islamist courts. The first consequence is that Islamist governance has materialised as a practical reality rather than an impalpable long-term objective. New experiments signify that Salafi jihadi constituencies have reasonable expectations that local armed groups establish local infrastructures to rule the population instead of remaining elitist avant-gardes. In turn, these expectations might transform jihadi organisational structures. When Salafi jihadi groups become more encompassing and internally diversified, their practical realities will change. The creation of state building alternatives means that they have to choose between the replication of the unviable IS's model, which entails the combination of local governance and foreign attacks that will be thoroughly opposed internationally, or insist that they do not have foreign objectives and gamble on the absence of foreign intervention. In all cases,

the development of local governance is likely to alter their strategic outlooks.

This pivotal choice poses a particular dilemma for al-Qaida. While the development of locally embedded Salafi jihadi groups is imperative to compete against IS's model, their survival is contingent on their dissociation from the organisation. Remaining affiliated to AQ antagonises local allies and captures international attention if not intervention, which conjointly threatens a group's long-term viability. This puzzle has proven particularly fierce in Syria, where AQ's former local branch gradually had to modify its strategic approach. Notwithstanding existing debates on JN's real or pretended rupture with AQ, the group had to incorporate contested actors from a Salafi jihadi standpoint into a broadened organisational structure, consider compromises with so-called apostate regimes, and renounce foreign endeavours. Under present conditions, the group's utility for AQ is questionable, which explains its affiliated ideologues' quarrels with the new strategic direction. In the long run, AQ leaders face a problematic question: do they want AQ's domination over the JSM or simply the emergence of local and independent forms of Islamist governance throughout "liberated areas" in the Muslim world? These objectives might be eventually antithetical.

Other factors will additionally shape the fate of the JSM. Ongoing developments in Syria will be critical for the future. National and (unlikely) international acceptance of some form of HTS's governance in North West Syria could help the group consolidate itself locally, potentially eradicate its competitors (including AS), and erode AQ's local role. The alternatives presented by the group's competitors (including AQ, AS, and IS) would conjointly lose relevance. An intervention by Russian, Syrian, Turkish, Iranian or Western military forces that would eventually eradicate HTS's experiment would conversely reinforce AQ proponents. Losing local anchorage could help to resurrect a new AQ-led organisation that could resume its transnational ambitions.

This predicament has implications on Western governments' decisions. Any military intervention against officially non-AQ unaffiliated groups that do not directly threaten Western countries is paradoxically poised to bolster AQ and IS supporters. Western countries have to clearly delimit the frameworks of foreign military endeavours.[28] Furthermore, disaggregating the JSM [29] and exploiting their diverging viewpoints is critical to exacerbate internal differentiation. In turn, this choice means that Western countries have to tolerate the rise of Islamist alternatives on the ground, although their practices can be antithetical to Western world order preferences. The endogenous development of practical alternatives to AQ and IS's internationalist agendas is more credible than the "counter-messaging" increasingly promoted by Western countries.

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Notes

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[2] As argued by Seth G. Jones, "Will al Qaeda Make a Comeback?." *Foreign Affairs* (2017).

[3] E.g. Wiktorowicz, Quintan, (Ed.) *Islamic Activism: A Social movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004; Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism and Political change in Egypt*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005; Meijer, Roel, "Taking the Islamist Movement Seriously: Social Movement Theory and the Islamist Movement." *International Review of Social History*, 50 (2005): p. 279; Wagemakers, Joas. *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

[4] Armed groups combining the Salafi approach to Islam for the legitimisation of the use of violence against local Muslim rulers or Western states are included in this definition. The Egyptian Islamic and Jihad Groups, Algerian GIA, Libyan LIFG, and al-Qaida are the precursors, but Salafi armed groups active in Chechnya, Iraq, Syria, and other parts of the Muslim world are also included.

Groups associated with the Muslim Brotherhood legacy like Hamas are not.

[5] Lia, Brynjar, and Thomas Hegghammer. "Jihadi Strategic Studies: The Alleged al Qaida Policy Study Preceding the Madrid Bombings." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism,* 27,5 (2004), pp. 355-375; Ryan, Michael. *Decoding Al-Qaeda's Strategy: The Deep Battle Against America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.

[6] Meijer, Roel. "Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong as a Principle of Social Action." *The Case of the Egyptian al-Jama'al al-Islamiyya;* in: Meijer, R, *Global Salafism. Islam's New Religious Movement,* Hurst (2009), pp. 191-195; McCants, William. *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*. New York: Macmillan, 2015.

[7] For instance, many insisted that IS thoroughly followed Abu Bakr Naji's *Management of Savagery (2004).*

[8] Shapiro, Jacob N. *The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

[9] Enders, Walter, and Xuejuan Su. "Rational terrorists and optimal network structure." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51.1 (2007), pp. 33-57; Asal, Victor, and R. Karl Rethemeyer. "The nature of the beast: Organizational structures and the lethality of terrorist attacks." *The Journal of Politics,* 70,2 (2008), pp. 437-449.

[10] Ugarriza, Juan E., and Matthew J. Craig. "The relevance of ideology to contemporary armed conflicts: A quantitative analysis of former combatants in Colombia." *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 57.,3 (2013), pp. 445-477; Oppenheim, Ben, et al. "True believers, deserters, and traitors: Who leaves insurgent groups and why." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59.5 (2015), pp. 794-823.

[11] In non-jihadi cases, see Krause, Peter. *Rebel Power: Why National Movements Compete, Fight, and Win*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017.

[12] Brown, Vahid. *Cracks in the Foundation: Leadership Schisms in al-Qa'ida from 1989-2006*. Westpoint,N.Y. Military Academy, Combating Terrorism Center, 2007; Moghadam, Assaf, and Brian Fishman. *Self-Inflicted Wounds: Debates and Divisions within al-Qa'ida and its Periphery*. Westpoint,N.Y.: Military Academy, Combating Terrorism Center, 2010.

[13] E.g. Staniland, Paul. *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014.

[14] These factors are drawn from Diani, Mario, and Doug McAdam (Eds.) *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 6.

[15] Lav, Daniel. *Radical Islam and the Revival of Medieval Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012; Maher, Shiraz. *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

[16] Including stories from the liberation of Afghanistan where many prominent Salafi jihadi figures emerged.

[17] Paul Staniland, op. cit..

[18] Lav, Daniel. *Radical Islam and the Revival of Medieval Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012; Wagemakers, Joas, op.cit.

[19] Farrall, Leah. "How Al Qaeda Works-What the Organization's Subsidiaries Say about Its Strength." *Foreign Affairs,* 90 (2011), p. 128.

[20] Mendelsohn, Barak. *The al-Qaeda Franchise: the Expansion of al-Qaeda and its Consequences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

[21] J. Shapiro*,* op.cit..

[22] Lia, Brynjar. "Jihadism in the Arab World after 2011: Explaining Its Expansion." *Middle East Policy,* 23.4 (2016), pp.74-91.

[23] Bunzel, Cole, "Abandoning al-Qaida: Tahrir al-Sham and the Concerns of Sami al-'Uraydi", *Jihadica,* May 12, 2017.

[24] Weiss, Michael, and Hassan Hassan. *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror* (updated edition). New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016; Gerges, Fawaz A. *ISIS: A History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017.

[25] Multiple interviews with AS leaders.

[26] Khalid Abu Anas, interview with the author.

[27] Lia, Brynjar. "Understanding Jihadi Proto-States." *Perspectives on Terrorism,* Vol.9, Issue 4 (2015).

[28] Byman, Daniel, and Will McCants. "Fight or Flight: How to Avoid a Forever War against Jihadists." *The Washington Quarterly* 40.2 (2017), pp. 67-77.

[29] Kilcullen, David. *Blood Year: Islamic State and the Failures of the War on Terror*. London: Hurst, 2016..