



GÖTEBORGS
UNIVERSITET

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

UNITED BY FAITH, DIVIDED BY ...?

A comparative content analysis on the splintering of the
Islamic Terrorism Movement

Karin Lidqvist

Master's Thesis:	30 higher education credits
Programme:	Master's Programme in Political Science
Date:	August 14, 2019
Supervisor:	Kristen Kao
Words:	20 241

Abstract

Through a qualitative comparative content analysis, this thesis sets out to describe current splintering within the Islamist terrorist movement – a noteworthy change given previous inter-group tolerance. The comparison is made between al-Qaeda, Islamic State, and Hamas. These have been chosen partly because of shared ideological and territorial backgrounds (facilitating tolerance in the first place), and partly to point to the breadth and complexity of the movement lacking in many portrayals. Through a comprehensive collection of coding categories, ranging from strategic and structural to ideological ones, the results show splintering across an array of themes. The most prominent issues of contention surround strategy, and differences in what is perceived to be the real enemy – ranging from local to global in scope, and from the very tangible regional enemy to a more nebulous global entity and discourse, respectively. Important differences of timing and ambition of the idea of consolidating Islamic land and rule can be found here, too. Less tangible differences, though equally important in describing disagreement, are ideological matters of waging religious warfare, and views on heretical behaviour. These results show the importance of contextualisation and nuance in describing this movement. Whether it be research, media portrayals, or counterterrorism-work, similar emphasis on contextualisation should be practiced to avoid oversimplification and wrongly drawn conclusions of what constitutes a phenomenon as complex as Islamist terrorism.

Keywords: al-Qaeda, Islamic State, Hamas, Terrorism, Militant Islamism, Fragmentation, Content Analysis

Table of Contents

- INTRODUCTION 5**
- LITERATURE REVIEW 9**
 - DIFFERING VIEWS ON THE SUPPOSED INHERENT NATURE OF ISLAM & ISLAMISM 9*
 - RESEARCH ON FRAGMENTATION AND COOPERATION AMONG TERRORIST ACTORS 10*
 - THE CONTRIBUTION OF THIS THESIS TO THE LITERATURE 13*
- THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & CODING CATEGORIES 14**
 - TERRORISM 14*
 - ISLAMISM, SALAFISM & JIHADISM 14*
 - CODING CATEGORIES & CODING TABLE 16*
- METHODOLOGY & DESIGN COMPARATIVE SMALL-N STUDY 18**
 - CONTENT ANALYSIS & DATA SELECTION 18*
 - CASE SELECTION 20*
 - LIMITATIONS 21*
- ANALYSIS 22**
 - STRATEGY OF OPERATIONS 23
 - Perceived Enemy 23*
 - Strategy and Tactics 26*
 - IDEOLOGY 29
 - Violent Religious Struggle – Jihad 29*
 - Unfaithfulness & Disloyalty - Takfir 31*
 - Oneness of God - Tawhid 34*
 - GOVERNANCE 37
 - Islamic Land – Territory and Governmental Capabilities in Theory and Practice 37*
 - Organisation and Leadership – Structure & Capabilities 40*
 - Judiciary & Law and Order – Laws & Religion 43*
- CONCLUSIONS 47**
- REFERENCES 49**

FIGURE 1. CODING FRAMEWORK OF CATEGORIES 17

FIGURE 2. OVERVIEW OF INTRA-, AND INTER-CATEGORICAL SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES, AS EXPLORED IN THE ANALYSIS. 46

Introduction

Following the Arab Spring and its many conflicts, Islamic terrorism has experienced significant proliferation. The most notable groups belonging to this movement are arguably al-Qaeda (AQ) and Islamic State (IS)¹ – described as ‘ideological epicentres of the violent jihad movement’ (Cohen et al. 2018, 146) given what has become a far-reaching influence - but there exist no shortage of relevant players. Despite initially fruitful, or at least tolerable, alliances among groups, relationships appear to have soured considerably; ending relatively committed relationships in messy divorces (Weiss & Hassan 2015; Morrison 2017; Lister 2016; Habeck 2010). Why is the Islamist terrorism movement beset by organisational splitting? In covering Islamic terrorism, both scholarship and media treat groups within this movement as being ideologically the same. If ideology is identically shared between groups - and we believe that there is strength in numbers - would Islamic terrorist groups not be better off continuing working together? As these groups appear to, in fact, splinter, rather than converge, a better understanding of why these groups currently refuse to do so is warranted. Given former inter-group tolerance among Islamist terrorist groups, largely – and Sunni Islamist groups specifically, in the case of this thesis - the guiding research question is the following: How can current splintering among Sunni Islamist terrorist groups be understood? I will conduct a descriptive comparative content analysis on the three notable Sunni-Islamist groups al-Qaeda, Islamic State, and Hamas, which have been chosen due to previous periods of cooperative behaviour. In sharing regional and ideological characteristics and backgrounds, descriptive comparisons can be made of reasons leading to disagreement and splitting among groups despite shared foundations facilitating tolerance to begin with. Similarly, these cases emphasise the breadth and complex nature of the phenomenon as a whole, contrasting the often oversimplified portrayals made of the Islamist terrorist movement.

Terrorist actors are diverse and complex, though certain conditions exist to theoretically facilitate an environment enabling cooperation. Firstly, a shared jihadi ideology allows for the creation of a community with shared beliefs and values which are then relied upon to call believers to arms – creating a powerful and necessary motivator for cooperation.

¹ The official English name of IS has been debated. Depending on the translation from Arabic to English, *ISIS* (Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham) and *ISIL* (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) have become the preferred ones. The Arabic-derived acronym *Daesh*, or *Da'ish*, has found considerable traction, as well. Since its declaration of a Caliphate in 2014, the group has gone under the name *Islamic State (IS)* in an attempt to reflect their expansionist ambitions. Many have preferred the continued use of *ISIS* and *ISIL* due to the name *IS* inferring the group to be a legitimate representation of the Islamic faith, or a sovereign state.

Jihadi-ideology, put simply, posits that ‘Islam has been facing, and continues to face, a sustained military, political, cultural, and religious attack’ (Moghadam 2017, 72), making it an individual duty of all “true” Muslims to defend Islam by means of violence (*jihad*). To be sure, there exist divisions within this ideology, as with any other, which will be described further in the analysis. It has been remarkably successful – by any objective measure – however, in creating a strong narrative creating cohesion and in calling its followers to action.²

The prevalence of armed conflict also works as an important opportunity for cooperation. Terrorism has become a common practice in conflict-ridden areas, especially in civil wars and insurgencies. These settings, which often deal with a general weakness of government and complex groups of actors working simultaneously towards various goals, make for promising opportunities of cooperation (Moghadam 2017, 68-96). As said in a 2016 statement by the then U.S. Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper: ‘Sunni violent extremist groups are increasingly joining or initiating in insurgencies to advance their local and transnational objectives’ (Clapper in Moghadam 2017, 53). In fact, these facilitating factors all exist within the context of the three groups analysed in this thesis; indeed, histories and periods of joint partnerships and cooperation exist to prove it. Yet, these groups have increasingly moved *away* from tolerative behaviour of one another, turning instead to hostility and conflict. Insofar as these shared experiences *should*, and indeed *have*, created incentive for cooperation previously, the reverse appears to currently be taking place, begging further study.

Before embarking on the considerably more in-depth analysis that will follow below, a brief overview of my cases and how they relate to one another might be of use in understanding their respective contexts. To begin with, all three groups *do* share common subscription to Islamic, and specifically militant Islamist, beliefs – a crucial commonality between the three in facilitating relationships of any kind to begin with. Islamism, in this case, refers to wanting Islamic law and rule to guide social, economic and political life. It exists on a spectrum: ranging from moderate gradualists seeking to reconcile Islam and Islamic tenets with the modern nation-state and parliamentary politics while eschewing violence to do so; to fundamentalist and even militant Islamists seeking Islamic rule to *fully* guide *all* aspects of life (Hamid & Dar 2016). This thesis will deal with the latter, militant definition of the term, but it should be noted that the absolute majority of Islamists belong to the gradualist, moderate variety³. My chosen

² See p. 16-17 for a more detailed definition and discussion of jihadi-ideology.

³ See p. 15-16 for a more detailed definition of Islamism.

groups, moreover, all belong to the Sunni tradition of Islam⁴, and subscribe to the radical and militant narrative of jihadi-ideology, as argued for above (Moghadam 2017). Secondly, they all exist as non-state actors openly relying and making use of terrorist (violent) tactics and methods as a way to advance their agenda and goals. Clear examples of this practice can be seen in the spectacular 9/11 attacks in New York by al-Qaeda; the November 15th Paris attacks by Islamic State; and the heavy use and reliance on suicide attacks by Hamas in targeting Israeli population and property, respectively. Thirdly, they share geographical proximity with each other, all having their basis of operation in the Middle East. Not only are they operating in closeness to each other, they also exist in conflict-ridden environments – which, as mentioned, is another important facilitator for cooperation. AQ and IS both operate across a number of countries like Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, where civil-war and conflict is rampant, creating settings of uncertainty and thus strategic and organisational opportunity. Hamas focus their efforts on Palestinian territory (Gaza and the West Bank), existing in a continuous conflict against (what Hamas argues is unlawful) Israeli occupation. Shared characteristics such as these have allowed these groups to form tolerative, and even cooperative relationships with one another in the past given their quest to protect and champion Islam. Where tolerance and support once was, however, now exists discord and disunity. These three group therefore represent split factions of the broader global Islamist movement despite previous partnerships, motivating further study into why this has come to be.

A contribution made by this thesis will therefore be the mapping-out of characteristics defining and guiding AQ, IS, and Hamas, specifically, and Sunni-Islamist groups largely. Successful counterterrorist and intelligence work has come to be a notoriously difficult to deal with due to the blurry and often debated characteristics of terrorism. To do so successfully, we need to understand its intricacies. The notion of religious terrorism is often used in broad, sweeping manners, equating all religious terrorist groups as working off of the same foundations. This downplays the complexity of the issue, and may lead to lacking responses in countering the phenomenon (Duyvesteyn 2012, 37). Successful counterterrorist strategies rest upon the ability to fully understand one's adversary. This thesis seeks to contribute to a better understanding of what is shaping an increasingly divided Islamist terrorist movement, when the rational thing to do would be for these groups to converge. In mitigating the threat Islamist

⁴ Sunni and Shia are the two major denominations of Islam. Disagreement exists between the two on who is argued to be the righteous successor to the Prophet Muhammed – a pious devotee following in the Prophet's teachings (Sunnis), or someone in his bloodline (Shiites).

terrorism poses, a better understanding of current fragmentation can help strategies to be more efficiently redirected towards keeping groups separated.

The structure of the thesis is as follows: the subsequent chapter introduces relevant scholarship and leads the reader through themes relevant to understand current debates on the characteristics and interconnectivity between Islam, Islamism, and Islamic terrorism. It also looks into literature on both cooperation and fragmentation of the larger terrorism movement, concluding with the contribution made by this thesis. The third chapter defines the theoretical concepts of terrorism, Islamism and jihadism, ending with a run-through of coding-categories. The fourth chapter explores the chosen method of a comparative content analysis, and describes how cases and data have been selected and used. The analysis follows thereafter, answering the research question. It shows that there are indeed important differences along ideological lines, most notably issues of the superiority and oneness of God (Allah) and the extent of which each respective groups engage in the practice of declaring other Muslims to be infidels (*takfir*). Strategical considerations dealing with operational strategy and whom is perceived to be the enemy also make for important differences creating fragmentation. Finally, a conclusion sums up the thesis's findings and contribution, and offers ideas for future research.

Literature Review

The question of why Islamist terrorist groups splinter speaks to a number of scholarly bodies of literature. This chapter introduces themes relevant to understanding this phenomenon, focusing on the longstanding debate on what can be argued the inherent nature and interconnectivity of Islam, Islamism, and terrorism. It also looks to studies dealing with terrorist groups more broadly, and points to why caution should be exercised when dealing with a subject as complex as Islamist terrorism. The chapter is concluded by showing the specific contribution made by this thesis, namely highlighting individual, and perhaps crucial, differences among Islamist terrorist groups, thereby showing the actual breadth of the phenomenon, and the weight of contextualisation and nuance needed when analysing it.

Differing views on the supposed inherent nature of Islam & Islamism

This section will begin by looking at literature and arguments that this thesis is arguing against. This will be followed by a look at more nuanced portrayals of Islam and Islamism more in line with what this thesis contends.

In using historical data to explain difficulties of Islamic compatibility to values of modernity, Princeton historian Bernard Lewis makes the argument that contemporary *and* historical Muslims think and feel in identical ways. Muslims are portrayed as a homogenous group with dogmatic tendencies, and with little room for nuance (Lewis 2002). Lewis, admittedly, mentions the need to differentiate between Islamist terrorists and the ordinary Muslim, though offers a controversial claim regarding the idea that terrorism perpetrated by a Muslim *will* necessarily be religious in nature, whereas terrorism perpetrated by individuals of other faiths do not carry the same necessary religious connotation (Lewis 2003).

Islamism has been given similar treatment, with the argument that its supposed myopic nature makes it wholly incompatible with foreign values. Scholars have argued the history of Islam as centring around centuries of political and civilizational clashes rather than successful exchange. This has led Islam (and Islamism) to be seen a triple threat: politically, demographically, and also in terms of its civilizational quality. In these accounts, it is specifically Islamism's militant strain that is perceived as its only (significant) manifestation (Kramer 1996; Miller 1993; Pipes 1998). To historian Daniel Pipes, Islamism is 'an Islamic-flavored version of totalitarianism', and 'yet another ... radical utopian scheme' (1998). Journalist Judith Miller, similarly, argues the chance of a non-radical political Islam to successfully 'evolve and take root ... unlikely' (1993). In arguing Islam, and in extension

Islamism, as being inherently confrontational and militant, the portrayal made by these scholars reject a political Islam (i.e. Islamism) where a distinction is made between moderate Islamists effectively participating in politics, and violent extremists.

These views have been opposed by a number of scholars emphasising a more comprehensive portrayal of Islam and Islamism. According to terrorism scholar John Esposito (2001), Western engagement with Islam stems from ‘a base of ignorance and a wealth of widely-accepted stereotypes’, emphasising a political and cultural *exchange* as opposed to *clash*. With the 1979 Iranian revolution introducing Islam (and Islamists) into the political arena, Western observers (see above) have tended to equate political Islam to (violent) radicalism (2001, 19). Generally speaking, the late 1970s had experienced an increase of Islamically identified political movements arguing for the ‘Islamization of modernity’, contrasting otherwise global efforts toward modernity and a step away from religion. In contrast the dogmatic portrayal of political Islam as being radical in nature, Islam’s interaction with the political sphere has, indeed, proved multifaceted. To this end, John O. Voll (2013), professor of Islamic history at Georgetown University, emphasise Islamism as existing on a spectrum as opposed to something dogmatic; ranging from top-down approaches where Islamic (Sharia⁵) law is implemented through (generally gained or seized) state control; to a bottom-up approaches emphasising the gradual Islamisation of society from below (2013, 60-63). David G. Kibble, too, *emphasises* a similarly wide spectrum. Whilst acknowledging that there indeed, exists a militant strand of Islamist fundamentalism worthy of recognition, this strand should only be seen as one of many interpretations of what form Islam applied to the political should take (2002, 39-44). These studies have pointed to existing tendencies to simplify a phenomenon as complex as Islamism, while also showcasing the attempt towards showing nuance and complexity. Admittedly, this thesis will only deal with the militant and violent strand of Islamism recognised, and sometimes overemphasised, by many. This does not negate the fact, however, that much more moderate and gradual varieties of Islamism exist, and in the absolute majority of cases remain the prevalent type of Islamism being practiced (Hamid & Dar 2016).

Research on Fragmentation and Cooperation among Terrorist Actors

As inter- and intra-group fragmentation within the terrorism phenomenon is becoming more visible, studies on the topic are becoming more frequent. Existing literature tends to focus on divides *within* groups, most notably on the various affiliates and offshoots of the core al-Qaeda

⁵ For definition, see p. 14.

group (Celso 2012; Bencherif 2017; Filiu 2009; Mandelsohn 2018; Moghadam 2017). Studies have examined ideological divides (Cohen et al. 2018), as well as the strategic and structural implications of group fragmentation, both within Islamic (Morrison 2017; Byman 2015), and non-Islamic contexts (Mahoney 2017). In a study examining organisational splits among groups through the lens of organisational survival, James F. Morrison finds splits to be a way for groups to retain a shape they both recognise and respect. As such, splits can be a response against unwanted organisational change, and a way to keep independence (2017). Charles W. Mahoney (2017), in a study of non-Islamic rebel groups, emphasises a group's membership count (size) as being a major deciding factor in subsequent performance following a split. If a group's relative membership count is high, groups have a higher chance of successful survival. These studies look to a variety of groups, both individually and as a wider collection of actors. Of importance, however, is that they tend to study these group in insolation of each other, rather than as the symbiotic phenomenon that it actually is. That is, there exists relatively few systematic studies specifically comparing splits and fragmentation occurring between a wider range of interconnected groups.

The opposite phenomenon – cooperation among terrorist actors – has been covered extensively by Assaf Moghadam in his book *Nexus of Global Jihad* (2017). Terrorist groups operate under certain sets of constraints where even the smallest mistake can jeopardise survival (e.g. easier surveillance by governments, foiled plots). Cooperation, where more actors work in closer vicinity to each other, would therefore seem counterproductive (2017, 18-22). Moghadam, however, argues that 'cooperation ... demonstrably boosts the capacity and performance of terrorist groups' (2017, 9). Cooperation can help groups to "survive and thrive" and "influence and succeed" - strategies increasing capacity and capabilities (process goals); and ultimate ideological or political goals (outcome goals), respectively (2017, 20-29). Moghadam goes to create a typology of terrorist cooperative relationships, stating that it exists in varying quality ranging from high-end cooperation (mergers and strategic alliances) to low-end cooperation (tactical cooperation and transactional collaboration). Furthermore, whilst correctly stating the necessity in studying cooperation among terrorist actors to fully understand the dynamic nature of the terrorist phenomenon, the similar argument can be, and is made, here, that current divineness and competition need to be given similar treatment. If cooperation supposedly makes detection easier, the inverse should be true of fragmentation – more of it should make detection more difficult. Whilst the degree to which detection is possible is not the focus of this thesis, the argument – if it is to be believed - motivates further study into the phenomenon.

Rather, this thesis attempts to follow scholarship showing the importance of contextualisation in discussing (Islamist) terrorism. In quantitative work looking at the lethality of terrorist groups, a complex relationship appears between ideological leaning and organisational structure of a given group and their likelihood of high-causality attacks. While Islamist terrorist groups on *an aggregate level* are shown *not* to be more prone to such attacks, groups identifying as belonging to the AQ-network largely, *are*. A group's organisational structure also matters; an abstract, or diffuse, organisational structure⁶, like many AQ-affiliates, increases likelihood of high-causality attacks given an interest to demonstrate the 'level of commitment the group has to its cause and the purity of its struggle' (Piazza 2009, 65). Had AQ-affiliation not been controlled for, *all* Islamist groups would be labelled more lethal, lending support to the necessity to be cautious when, and if, assuming cases to conform to broad labels or categories such as "Islamist". Victor Asal and R. Karl Rethemeyer (2008), moreover, similarly argue ideological identification as playing a part towards a group's lethality-levels, pointing to killings being done 'in a more pronounced fashion among ... religious ... organizations' (2008, 445).

Research investigating Islamist terrorism in Africa, moreover, attempts to tackle ambiguity by examining a number of countries to assess their potential for Islamist terrorism (Ousman 2004). Developments differ markedly between countries, stressing contextualisation as opposed to generalisation. Generally speaking, comprehensive studies on the Islamist terrorism similar to the one mentioned here are few and far between. Studies tend to focus on just one group or parameter, such as *only* ideology or *only* strategy. This thesis seeks to use a similar approach to Ousman (2004) in explaining fragmentation, but does so emphasising on the Middle East, allowing for a focus on groups with similar theological and territorial backgrounds and experiences of political and social (dis)order.

Furthermore, in attempting to identify common ideological ground between (secular *and* religious) extremist militant groups, the influential Islamic theorist Sayyid Qutb's⁷ movement and ideology has been used as a baseline representative of Islamic extremists overall (see Saucier et al. 2009). Case selection based *only* on one individual's legacy comes close to the reductionist type of thinking mentioned earlier, and leaves perhaps vital differences of

⁶ These diffuse organisational structures are generally defined as having 'ambitious, abstract, complex, and nebulous goals ... driven primarily by ideology', often with a strong emphasis on communicative goals as opposed to military ones when launching attacks, as demonstrated with the quote above (Piazza 2009, 65).

⁷ 'A radical intellectual of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s who condemned the influence of secularism, nationalism, and other Western ideals and cultural practices that had filtered into the Muslim world and advocated a violent, global resistance to them' (Piazza 2009, 76).

various groups out of the analysis. Insofar as groups influenced by Qutb's thinking *should* lead to a more cohesive movement overall, it does little to explain the fragmented movement of Islamist terrorist groups seen today. Of note here is certain literature arguing militant Islamist groups to actually be based less-so in Qutb's and the ideology than what is usually assumed (Gilles 2005 in Hegghammer 2014; Lacroix 2008, 163), making it an insufficient measurement *on its own*.

The Contribution of this Thesis to the Literature

This tendency of lumping groups and individuals together has been referred to as a “cardinal sin of ‘terrorism research’” due to the unnuanced picture being painted when disregarding contextual and individual differences (Neumann 2013, 883). Islamic terrorism is far from monolithic, and a better, and more nuanced, understanding of what these differences actually look like is necessary.

Research attempting to contextualise Islamist terrorism is lacking; research addressing current splintering between actors on a larger scale even more so. This thesis aims to contribute to these strands of scholarship by examining individual differences between Islamist terrorist groups, namely AQ, IS and Hamas, to try and understand existing fragmentation. In identifying factors pertinent to such splintering, the aim is to get a better understanding of the internal workings of the contemporary Islamist terrorist movement, and to shed light on the shortcomings of treating the movement as one homogenous group. Research accepting the movement for what it is – its complexity and nuance – will not only contribute with a more contextualised understanding of individual group behaviour, but could also prove useful in identifying characteristics pivotal for successful countermeasures.

Theoretical Framework & Coding Categories

This chapter defines concepts necessary in understanding the subject of this thesis: terrorism, Islamism, Salafism, and Jihadism. These concepts are contested, necessitating conceptualisation and what they entail within the confines of this thesis.

Terrorism

Terrorism has become an “endlessly contested concept” (Weinberg et al. 2004, 76; Gibbs 1989; Fletcher 2006). The longstanding deadlock in finding an agreed upon consensus has led the concept to be stretched to the point of vagueness (Schmid 2004; 2012). The term “terrorism” is too politically and morally loaded to risk using it haphazardly (Wight 2015). Whilst a broad definition may have ‘normative appeal’, it risks ‘yielding ambiguous, misleading results that obscure rather than inform’ (Abrahms 2010). A narrow definition might therefore be preferred (Wight 2015, 122).

There does exist a certain degree of consensus on some basic elements of the concept: the use, or threat of use, of violence; a perceived illegality of such actions - whether conceptualised by statutory law or state officials; the existence of a goal - often seen as political in nature⁸ - attempting to change or alter societal norms; and its function as a distinct (provocational) strategy. Taken together, terrorism is used to spread fear throughout a given population, leading to overreaction, or at least concessions, on the part of a given government along the goals of the terrorists. Put differently: terrorism is ‘the use of violence against civilians by nonstate actors to attain political goals’ (Kydd & Walter 2006, 52).

Islamism, Salafism & Jihadism

Islamism(-ists) ranges from gradual moderate interpretations to fundamentalist extremist ones. The moderate, or mainstream, definition can be summed up as wanting to ‘reconcile pre-modern Islamic law with the modern nation-state’ (Hamid & Dar 2016), and includes a willingness to work within existing state structures and an avoidance of violence in doing so⁹. This thesis will specifically look to the fundamentalist and violent interpretation of Islamism sported by Islamist terrorist groups, and will thus refer to ‘individuals that mobilize around the idea of creating an Islamic caliphate as a solution to social and political problems they

⁸ Notably, this points to the assumption of un-political terrorism existing, too.

⁹ Examples are The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and Brotherhood-inspired movements; the Jordanian MB, and the Tunisian Ennahda party have proven successful examples.

face in the contemporary world. They aim to structure all (social, economic, political) life by Islamic rules and regulations' (Donker 2013, 208). A note on what an Islamic caliphate and 'Islamic rule and regulations' entail might be useful here. A caliphate refers to a "rightly guided" society in which a caliph¹⁰ (a successor of the Prophet Muhammed) rules to serve religious ends. In upholding a righteous Islamic order, the caliphate would inevitably prosper and expand through God's mercifulness (Robinson 2013). Life by Islamic rules is referred to as living by Sharia law. It originates from the Arabic word *Shara'a*, meaning to enforce a certain code of conduct to facilitate a way of life, particularly derived from Islamic precepts mentioned in the Qur'an and Hadith¹¹ (Fairak 2010, 849–50). Sharia is integrated in almost all aspects of life, dealing with matters of worship, relationships, social life, moral codes, and jurisprudence (Hathout 1995, 40).

In using religious heritage to conduct contemporary politics, Islamism is not 'just a reaction to modernity, but a product of it' (Hamid & Dar 2016). Although the definition of Islamism mentioned above covers the broad and basic impulses of Islamist movements, it is also an unnuanced one, as any actor on the Islamist spectrum can be included - be that mainstream political parties, or violent extremists.

Despite the tendency to slap the label "Islamist" on most any Muslim movement, in relation to terrorism, Islamism does, in fact, genuinely play 'a necessary, though not sufficient, role'. Put differently, while most Islamists do not engage in terrorism or violence, terrorism committed by Muslims tends to be expressed in relation to the Islamist ideology' (Duderija & Rane 2019, 163). The Salafist interpretation of Islam, specifically, plays a central part of terrorism (Hamid & Dar 2016).

Salafism is based in Sunni-Islam and often described as ultraconservative. It strives to imitate the lives of the first generations of Muslims that succeeded the Prophet Muhammed (the *Salafs*), as these are regarded to be following the most "authentic" and "pure" way of life. Salafists' message is revivalist, and guided by the idea of "progression through regression" (Maher 2016, 7). What sets them apart from more mainstream Islamist movements is the inclination to live not only in the *spirit*, but in the *letter* of Islamic law and text. Despite claims of their strict adherence to Islamic texts, Salafists have been known to project their own aspirations upon the texts to successfully revert back to a "true" version of Islam (El Fadl 2001, 33) – something which will become apparent in later chapters. Their blatant religious

¹⁰ The word caliph comes from the Arabic *Khalīfa*, combining words for "successor" and "deputy".

¹¹ The *Qur'an* is believed to be the spoken word of Allah, or God. *Hadith* refers to the official documentation of the words, actions and silent approvals of the Prophet Muhammed.

conservatism has been viewed with suspicion, leading it to be villainised and wrongly equated to extremist behaviour. This makes for a problematic way of thinking as actors subsumed in the “Salafist” category remain highly heterogenous (Hegghammer 2014).

With *jihadism*, it is important to distinguish between “jihadism” as a modern revolutionary ideology of contemporary Islamist extremists with a basis in (illegitimate) violence; and “jihad”, meaning “struggle”, referring to the Islamic concept of religiously inspired effort. This can be effort relating to multiple spheres of society, be it personal, spiritual, political or militarily. Thus, “jihad” and “jihadists” are not one and the same and jihad can actually mean a perfectly peaceful effort to act according to Islam. To violent extremists though, jihad is seen as religious struggle in the form of fighting, arguing for the need of every able-bodied Muslim to fulfil their duty to Islam and protect it against “non-believers”. Excessive violence is justified to this end. Of importance, however, is the simultaneous link this interpretation of jihad has with the adherence to Salafism, emphasising the narrow, puritanical interpretation of Sunni Islam in creating a world closer to that of the earliest Muslims (Hamid and Dar 2016; Maher 2016; Neumann 2014, 9–10). When the concept of “jihad” is used in this thesis, it will refer to the violent religious struggle advocated for by Islamist terrorist groups, rather than the non-violent religious meaning of the term. Similarly, “Salafi-Jihadism”, “Islamist”, and “Islamist terrorism” will be used interchangeably to denote the violent interpretation of Islam as advocated by terrorist groups. The following categories found under *Ideology* are all valid in relation to Islam, though particularly so in the more conservative and literal interpretations of Islam described above.

Coding Categories & Coding Table

The following table shows the coding categories being used in the coming analysis and comparison of AQ, IS, and Hamas. Three overarching categories have been identified, with relevant sub-categories within. These have been identified by reading an extensive list of existing literature and scholarship on terrorism (largely), Islamist terrorism of various strands, as well as literature on the three groups specifically under study. Previous knowledge gave some initial hints towards where conflicting characteristics may lie, but the examined literature ultimately guided the resulting coding categories. This list is by no means exhaustive, but nonetheless presents themes relevant when identifying issues of contention between these groups.

Overarching Category	Sub-category	Definition
<i>Strategic Operations</i>	Perceived Enemy	Examines the perceived enemy of the respective group, and the perceived threat that it/they pose.
	Strategy & Tactics	Refers to the overall campaign plan of the respective group, and the tactics used. Tactics refers to the <i>actual</i> means relevant to reach that strategy.
<i>Ideology</i>	Violent Religious Struggle - <i>Jihad</i>	Whenever the Islamic community is under attack or its land occupied, it is every Muslim's individual duty to take up arms and fight jihad. Refusing to do so is equivalent to committing sin.
	Unfaithfulness & Disloyalty - <i>Takfir</i>	Accusing Muslims to be unbelievers, or unfaithful to Islam – to be a <i>kafir</i> - and arguing for their excommunication. Important for the protection of Islam. A label given to people <i>by others</i> , and is not self-descriptive.
	Oneness of God - <i>Tawhid</i>	Preaching the absolute superiority and oneness of Allah. There is “no God, but God”. Requires complete adherence to the holy texts and laws of the Qur'an; everything else is apostasy.
<i>Governance</i>	Islamic Land – Territory and Governmental Capabilities in Theory and Practice	The need of Islamic land/a caliphate in response to the perils of modern secularism, modernisation, and the nation state. A requirement for the return to Islam's former glory. All land held by Muslims historically is argued rightful territory.
	Organisation and Leadership – Structure & Capabilities	Looks at organisational structures and differences therein. Includes structures and roles of the leadership.
	Judiciary & Law and Order – Laws & Religion	Potential and actual implementation of state and religious courts. The role and relevance given to Islamic law and subsequent enforcement of said laws.

Figure 1. Coding Framework of Categories

Methodology & Design

Comparative Small-N Study

Qualitative research explores meaning and meaning-giving processes (Towns 2017, 211-213). It is often praised for its complex and rich descriptions made possible by using a variety of data, samples and contexts (i.e. having ‘rich rigor’) in analysing various phenomena. This thesis employs a comparative qualitative method. An important function of comparisons is their descriptive ability, particularly relating to contextual descriptions. Descriptive studies only get us so far, however, which is why this thesis will approach the splintering Islamic terrorist movement in an explanatory fashion (George & Bennet 2004).

Content Analysis & Data Selection

As the focus of this thesis pertains to the differing characteristics of Islamic terrorist groups, content analysis makes for a useful approach as it revolves around systematic analysis of textual information. Doing a qualitative content analysis, as opposed to a quantitative, allows for a more interpretative analysis focused on uncovering hidden meanings, motives and purposes within texts. Moreover, it is better suited to make complex and holistic analyses of data, as it has a contextual focus generating more latent and underlying meanings (Drisko & Maschi 2015).

As the following analysis seeks to identify broader categories of ideology and behaviour, thematic categories have been made the chosen recording unit (Halperin & Heath 2012, 320-322). Generally, qualitative content analyses tend to rely on “open coding”, referring to codes emerging organically as text is read. Quantitative content analyses typically use pre-determined codes (“closed coding”) drawn from previous research. Whilst traditionally being kept separate, mixing strategies allows for flexibility in the coding process (Halperin & Heath 2012, 320–23; Drisko & Maschi 2015; Hsieh & Shannon 2005). Most themes relevant to this thesis have been created as text and data have been read. Knowledge of existing literature has helped to locate where differences might generally be found, however. Notably, in dealing with themes of ideology, previous research on violent extremist ideology in general, and violent Islamism in particular, have been especially valuable in narrowing down themes to code on (e.g. Cohen et al. 2018; Maher 2016; Saucier et al. 2009).

A variety of documentary evidence have been used in order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the terrorist groups under study. This has included both printed and online material, including books, magazines, reports, and journal articles. Both primary and secondary

data has been used. Due to the clandestine nature of the issue at hand, primary sources are most easily accessible online. This has included both translated transcripts of speeches by leadership figures, but also guides and propaganda in various forms published targeting English-speaking audiences. In choosing primary sources, I have attempted to focus on ones coming directly from leaders or otherwise regarded figures within the given organisation. While the rank-and-file of these groups are not excluded, the symbolic importance of these figureheads, both internally and externally, ought to lend credibility to the statements' ability to represent the organisation at large. This type of data is undoubtedly biased, and reliability of primary sources remains an issue. Authenticity is also difficult to fully establish with these types of documents. I have attempted pick primary sources used and referred to in other academic contexts to mitigate this risk and infer some level of reliability. For all their flaws, primary sources remain a crucial type of document when the goal is to examine underlying motivations and difference in behaviour, as they come directly from the horse's mouth. Primary data has greatly beneficial when analysing one of my cases – Islamic State. Their online presence has allowed them to publish a plethora of documents and speeches available to the public reflecting the group's worldview, both in hope of recruiting members and deterring possible resistance. Whilst a considerable online presence has been established by AQ, too, neither AQ nor Hamas rely on online publishing to the same extent that does IS, making collection of primary data on these two groups more difficult. Primary data has thus specifically been used to analyse IS (together with secondary data), and (solely) secondary data has been used to analyse AQ and Hamas. A principal issue when relying on secondary sources is that it merely complements existing research rather than create new information. Collection of appropriate and sufficient data overall can be tricky at the best of times; attempting to rely solely on primary data to describe current splintering among my three cases simply proved unfeasible, and was therefore limited to IS, where it was more easily accessible. In order to achieve satisfying and comprehensive results, then, secondary data has needed to be used elsewhere, due again to both availability and its relevance to answering the thesis's research question. Secondary sources are, however, sources that have ultimately already been interpreted, increasing risk of selection bias (i.e. choosing sources fitting the investigated research question). I have attempted to reduce this by choosing a broad array of sources by different authors investigating the same groups or characteristics, to include as many perspectives and interpretations as possible. I have also attempted to limit secondary data to authors with academic and otherwise trustworthy credentials to the largest degree possible. To this end, the secondary data used throughout could be argued to provide an overview and summation of existing literature on several characteristics

relevant to Sunni-Islamist terrorist groups. This, admittedly, turned out to be somewhat of an afterthought, but I contend that this literary study, of sorts, has been conducted in a more expansive manner to what tends to be done in comparative studies on Islamist terrorism elsewhere, thus contributing to terrorism scholarship overall.

Finally, due to limitations in language - Arabic in this case - English documents, translations, and transcripts have been used throughout. Conscious efforts have also been made when selecting translations to make sure a certain level of legitimacy can be given to the translator.

Case Selection

The decision to limit the analysis to three cases – al-Qaeda, Islamic State, and Hamas - is influenced by the relatively narrow phenomenon of Islamist terrorism under study (as opposed to terrorism broadly). To start off with, all three cases fit the definition of terrorism mentioned earlier: ‘the use of violence against civilians by nonstate actors to attain political goals’ (Kydd and Walter 2006, 52). Being non-state organisations, or groups, they have all made violence an important part of their identity in order to further their respective goal of spreading their influence, power, and ideology. Cases have been selected on the basis of sharing certain background conditions whilst still ending up with divergent paths, here referring to the increased splintering between Islamist terrorist groups (Seawright & Gerring 2008). Background conditions relevant for each of my three cases refer to shared geographical location within the Middle East; shared ideological roots as they are all Sunni-groups; ideological inspiration taken from radical Islamist thinkers like Sayyid Qutb and Ibn Taymiyya¹²; shared preference of terrorist tactics such as suicide bombings; and longstanding and continuous experiences with political and social conflict, increasing grievances and the perceived need for their respective cause. More importantly, perhaps, is the history and previous tolerance seen between these groups. As will be shown in the next chapter, IS evolved from al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), an ally of the core al-Qaeda group, making an amenable relationship between the two seem preferred; yet this is far from the reality we currently experience. Hamas, similarly, makes for a formidable ally in the movement’s shared strategy of armed violence in its continuous battle against Israeli occupation. Yet, Hamas’s relationships with other militant Islamist groups have become mired with confrontation, even outright hostility, since its venture into politics

¹² Traditionalist and Islamist thinkers bearing heavy influence on more extremist and radical circles of contemporary Islam.

despite continued adherence to strict Islamist practices (Cragin 2009; Habeck 2010). Admittedly, the argument could be made that these groups are not similar *enough* to be compared (Bennet & Elman 2007). The aim of this thesis is not to establish direct causality, *per se*, but to map out differences in the larger phenomenon of Islamist terrorism. Also, since their *primary* motivator is based in religion, I argue that they showcase some of the actual breadth of the Islamic terrorism. Indeed, while many portrayals of the phenomenon working off of solely these very assumptions tend to make sweeping generalisations, this thesis includes a similar breath of cases but for the opposite reason – to make a more nuanced and distinct portrayal. Selecting cases with a broader variety of group-characteristics therefore works in its favour. Similarly, as this case selection is limited to groups connected enough to interact with each other, this specific focus still adheres to the initial claim of this thesis in how these groups *ought* to act pragmatically and cooperate but ultimately are not.

Limitations

This thesis does not pretend to be exhaustive on the subject at hand; nor does it try make generalisations applicable to all violent Islamist groups. Rather, the aim is to establish certain themes, or categories, representing important matters of contention through which a better understanding of current fragmentation can be gained. There is also an inherent issue of establishing causality when performing a comparative study. Establishing causality is not a particularly feasible, nor expected, goal of this research design. These very qualities, moreover, help solidify at least some degree of *internal* and *external validity*; internal validity referring to how well the study actually says something useful about the case(-s) being studied, and external validity referring to the (at least hypothetical) applicability of one's results to contexts outside the scope of the study (Halperin & Heath 2012, 205; Collier 1993). Selection bias is also an issue with a smaller number of cases. Small-N studies' lacking ability to create robust and reliable generalisations should also be kept in mind. Since the number of cases being analysed here are relatively few, any inferences or conclusions drawn from the results of this study should thus be treated with relative caution (Halperin & Heath 2012, 217-218). As this study's focus is on Sunni-Islamist groups, specifically, the resulting analysis and conclusions will ultimately be more applicable towards groups of this Islamic denomination than of any other. It should be noted, however, that the coding categories used in the analysis generally tend to exist across the militant Islamist-spectrum to at least some degree, and as such may be of use when dealing with terrorist groups of other Islamist expressions, as well.

Analysis

The following analysis will analyse AQ, IS, and Hamas to answer the research question: ‘how can current splintering among Sunni Islamist terrorist groups be understood?’. The coding categories identified above will be used to this end. What follows is a brief overview of the chosen groups, so to give the reader some context useful in understanding the ensuing analysis.

Created as a response to the Soviet-Afghan war (1979-89), AQ has been spearheaded by two key figureheads - Osama bin Laden as the first leader, and Ayman al-Zawahiri, as the second and current leader - in an effort to win the hearts and minds of fellow Muslims, and mount a resistance towards the West and its influence. It was, and continues to be, an ambitious endeavour towards global jihad¹³ (Gerges 2011, 30-35). A similar reaction to external influence was made in response to the US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan (2003 and 2001, respectively). In wanting to continue global jihad against the supposed “enemy”, Jordanian-born Abu Musab al-Zarqawi founded al-Qaeda of Iraq (AQI) – a group known for its exceedingly brutal methods of violence against anyone opposing them (Muslims and non-Muslims alike) – swearing allegiance to bin Laden and AQ. Zarqawi’s tendency towards indiscriminate violence was something AQ’s bin Laden and Zawahiri argued to be a failure due to proving a distraction from focusing on the “real” enemy – the West. Cracks thus began to show in AQI’s relationship with the larger AQ group. Following Zarqawi’s death in 2006, AQI merged with likeminded groups, creating Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi came to power in 2010, and after usurping territory in 2014 changed the organisation’s name to Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Baghdadi proclaimed an Islamic Caliphate in June of 2014, changing the group’s name once again, this time to Islamic State (IS). Baghdadi has continued Zarqawi’s flamboyant and ritualised violence, further fuelling existing conflict with others (Gerges 2016; Kilcullen 2016).

Similar arguments over failure of conduct fuelling disagreement between groups are by no means limited to AQ and IS. Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement), another well-known Sunni Islamist organisation, have been both targeting and receiving critique in equal measure. It was founded in 1987 as a Palestinian offshoot to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood during the first Palestinian uprising (*intifada*) against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza¹⁴.

¹³ Referring to the violent interpretation of religious struggle discussed above.

¹⁴ The first Palestinian uprising – *intifada* – took place between 1987-1993. It was an armed uprising against Israeli occupation of land deemed as rightfully belonging to Palestine. A second *intifada* took place between 2000-2005. Like the first *intifada*, this period was also characterised by heightened conflict and violence between Israeli and Palestinian actors in the region.

Like AQ and IS, Hamas sports Islamist ideology emphasising armed conflict to institute Islamic rule in society – a change which is fundamentally hindered by the presence of Israeli forces and occupation of Palestinian territory (the West Bank and Gaza). Hamas’s militant Islamism and support of jihad have made them a formidable player among the Islamist terrorism movement. As of 2006, however, Hamas have also been a political player within the Palestinian context, winning parliamentary elections and taking a majority of parliamentary seats¹⁵. Of note is that for all Hamas’s talk of its commitment to parliamentary politics, political participation has not lessened adherence to either militant ideology or terrorist tactics to any noticeable degree. What is seems to have done, however, is worsen an already inflammatory environment of terrorist actors (UCDP 2018; CEP 2019; Cragin 2009).

Strategy of Operations

Perceived Enemy

Perhaps one of the most striking differences between AQ, IS and Hamas is the difference in what constitutes the enemy. Like many religious extremist groups, they tend to dehumanise the perceived enemy to legitimise aggression (Saucier et al. 2009, 263). Enemies are generally characterised by their proximity to the respective group, from the “near enemy” to the “far enemy”. AQ and Hamas find themselves on opposite sides here, AQ emphasising the far enemy and a global approach, whereas Hamas deals with a very localised near enemy. IS exists somewhere in the middle, dealing closely with the near enemy, but with the far enemy functioning as a constant backdrop.

A supposed ‘clash’ between Islam and other “un-Islamic” beliefs and values remain a stark reality for many extremist group; a reality where Islamic values and traditions are being replaced by technology and economy. To AQ, the West and the US are absolute embodiments of this threat, leading the group to adopt global aspirations. To begin with, AQ had generally focused their efforts against apostate and corrupt Arab regimes, rather than external influence. This has come to encompass all external influence and forces inhibiting the eventual re-establishment of an Islamic caliphate, including the US and the West (Cragin 2009, 583-585). This followed naturally from the earlier aggressive sentiments held towards the Soviet Union following their invasion of Afghanistan (1979-89). In AQ’s mind it was the *mujahedeen*¹⁶ who

¹⁵ The idea of parliamentary politics as perceived by Islamist groups will be explored further below, but is generally argued illegitimate governance due to democratic institutions and conducts being un-Islamic.

¹⁶ Those engaged in jihad (violent religious struggle).

had ousted Soviet troops, and they then turned their sights to the next superpower – the US (Lewis 2003). In a *fatwa* (a religious ruling) issued by bin Laden, the satanic nature of the US was emphasised:

Killing the Americans and their allies - civilians and military - is an individual duty for every Muslim who can carry it out in any country where it proves possible ... We also call on Muslim ulema, leaders, youth, and soldiers to launch the raid on Satan's U.S. Troops and the devil's supporters allied with them and to displace those who are behind them, so that they may learn a lesson (bin Laden in Saghi 2008, 55).¹⁷

As the US invaded Iraq and Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks, the arguments intensified with the argument to ‘cut [off] the head of the snake’, and to ‘burn the hands of those who have set fire to our countries’. Western and American adherence to democracy was admonished as wrongful governance and a different religion entirely: ‘deputies are men and women, Christians, communists and secularists ... they made the people equal to and similar to God’ (in Lacroix 2008, 184). The superiority of Islam and God himself was denied, and as long as this enemy supported regimes in the Middle East and elsewhere, an Islamic caliphate was unviable.

IS is not a transnational organisation to the same degree as AQ. Its primary focus is the expansion of an Islamic caliphate and the Muslim world, placing more focus on local regions and regimes. While having clearer international ambitions as an affiliate of AQ, this shifted following their split. Despite their narrower immediate focus, their “Islamic State” branding has proved useful in spreading their message worldwide. Groups following in their footsteps have gladly adopted their label to signal similar ambitions and goals; thus letting IS’s reach and influence remain global despite a reprioritised focus and enemy. This is perhaps most visible in the spread of IS’ *wilayats*, or provinces, and its stream of foreign fighters seeking to join the organisation. In seeking to expand, IS perceive *anyone* standing in their way to be an enemy, be that invading foreign forces, non-Muslims living under their control, or Muslims accused of infidelity to Islam (particularly Shiites). Global actors, such as the US and the West, therefore remain viable targets, and if chances arise, attacks are encouraged. Thus, while the far enemy might find themselves in the crosshairs of IS operations, the majority of its work is performed in the surroundings of their caliphate and various international *wilayats* an effort to expand

¹⁷ *Ulema* refers to Muslim scholars specialising in sacred Islamic law and theology.

immediate territory (Gerges 2016; Kilcullen 2016; Piazza 2009; Levitt 2017; al-'Ubaydi et al. 2014, 29).

Hamas uses an even narrower definition of the enemy, still, focusing entirely on Israel - the Zionist enemy - occupying parts of Palestine rightfully belonging to Muslims and the Palestinian people. Israeli occupation is equated to foreign invasion of Islamic land and has resulted in widespread disposition of the land's true inhabitants. Further claim to Palestinian land by Muslims has been emphasised by Hamas's previous deputy leader Dr. Abdel Aziz Rantizzi:

In the name of Allah we will fight the Jews and liberate our land in the name of Islam. We will rid this land of the Jews and with Allah's strength our land will be returned to us and the Muslim peoples of the world. By God, we will not leave one Jew in Palestine. We will fight them with all the strength we have. This is our land, not the Jews' ... We have Allah on our side, and we have the sons of the Arab and Islamic nation on our side (in Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010, 4)

Any recognition of Israel, or the slightest of compromises, would mean breaking Islamic principles pivotal to maintaining their Islamic identity. Jews, in this instance, are treated as an entirely homogenous group whereby the state of Israel is equated to the entire population of Jews globally. Narrower distinctions beyond this label are rarely made (Litvak 2010; Tamimi 2007, 153-155). Enmity towards Jews come not only from their worship of someone other than Allah, but from historic wars fought between Muslims and Jews representing proof of the Jews' treachery against the Prophet (Litvak 2010). Causing this enemy harm 'by killing, injuries, inflicting fear in their hearts, destabilizing the foundations of their state and inducing them to leave Palestine' is to fulfil an obligation to God and fellow Muslims (Filastin in Litvak 2010, 722).

Whereas AQ and IS has a more global scope in in terms of both ambition and potential target and enemy, Hamas spends relatively little time dwelling on worldwide ambition. Establishment of Islamic land remains a goal for each group. As Islamic territory eventually expands, grandness of ambitions will need to follow. Boundaries in terms of what constitutes the prioritised target is likely to remain, however. Regardless of what the *ultimate* objective of groups are, there will exist distinctions of whom the perceived enemy is. Depending on what these are, consequent behaviour will differ dramatically. Thus, this distinction plays a crucial role in understanding why these groups might have a hard time cooperating with each other. If the ultimate adversary differs between groups, motivations are bound to be equally dissimilar, and successful collaboration is guaranteed to a problematic endeavour. Wrongly assuming

groups to have global or local ambitions could therefore have considerable implications in predicting behaviour, stressing careful analysis.

Strategy and Tactics

AQ have settled for a “long war” approach, where “slow and steady wins the race” (Stewart 2017). IS go for a “remain and expand” strategy, instead emphasising aggressive expansion, both territorially and brand-wise. Their idea of a caliphate is immediate, and one of the quickest strategies to get there has been through sectarian war with the Shiites (Kilcullen 2016). AQ leaders, like Zawahiri, have castigated Baghdadi’s leadership of IS because of it. IS undertook the establishment of an Islamic state too quickly, and with no consultation of other major groups. The lack of communication with others during this process have proven a major point of contention (Lister 2016). As the goal of Islamist groups is to eventually exist in a world ruled by Sharia, IS proclaiming a caliphate all on their own with no consultation of others have become a major sore spot and daily reminder of the obvious lack of such achievements elsewhere. Hamas, notably, rather than picking a decisive side in an ever-thornier debate between the righteous causes of militant islamists, are entirely separate from the other two arguing for a nationalist-separatist strategy towards liberating Palestine. Even the very notion of nationalistic tendencies has been argued a secularist idea propagated by unbelievers by both AQ and IS, signalling clear distance between groups in terms of strategy. In their eyes, recognition of borders belonging to the modern nation-state (more on their rejection below) (Piazza 2009; Byman 2015).

To AQ, apostate regimes in the Middle East cannot be dealt with as long as they are backed by external influence; attacking the “far enemy” - the West – is said to facilitate their retreat (Kilcullen 2015, 74). To ‘scorch the earth beneath the feet of the invaders’ would therefore work as a means to an end (in Lacroix 2008, 234). This is best done through expeditionary terrorism – an approach involving recruitment of perpetrators in one country, then movement into another country where attacks are made on already pre-determined targets. These, much like the 9/11 attacks, have a spectacular quality to them, and come with a hefty price tag in terms of money, time, and resources. High risk, however, yield high rewards. Successful attacks reaps great benefits in terms of media coverage and increased support from members, new and old. Expensive counter-measures on the part of the enemy also magnify the impact of any given attack (Kilcullen 2015, 117-118). Several attacks tend to be performed simultaneously to eliminate hypotheses of chance, luck, circumstance, or accident. Media

exposure and propaganda therefore remains vital for AQ in spreading and amplifying their message and cause. It feeds off of media exposure, and is only as strong as its portrayal in terms of their global influence. After all, terrorism does not work when nobody is watching (Byman 2015).

IS have proven themselves militarily sophisticated well beyond most other groups. They make use of clandestine reconnaissance, urban warfare, roadside bombs, terrorist cells, and suicide attackers to a degree not seen in its rivals. They make use of remote radicalisation and the same “leaderless jihad” approach that AQ does (described further below), contributing to their growth. A considerable online presence and propaganda machinery has also managed to attract large numbers of people. The global reach of virtual presences helps create even more *wilayats* (provinces), foreign recruits, and affiliates willing to take up arms in IS’s name. The propaganda of IS has proven impervious to the organisation as they have lost increasing territory in recent years. By continuing to broadcast their viability and resilience against their enemies, the group has granted themselves foothold globally, continuously creating *wilayats* swearing allegiance to Baghdadi’s IS (Gerges 2016). The group has experienced significant territorial loss in recent years, culminating in the forfeiture of its caliphate in early 2019. This has led to renewed incentives to proclaim *wilayats* to spread its global footprint. With territorial loss, a new reliance has been put on tactics of guerrilla warfare (e.g. hit-and-runs, sabotage, hostage-taking, seizing material) and attrition, referring to avoidance of direct confrontation with the enemy and using less direct attacks to wear them down (Masri & Abdelaty 2019).

As targets go, Western civilians are generally argued vicariously liable for the actions of their governments, and are justifiable targets under the Islamic principle of “retaliation in kind”¹⁸. This relates to the practice of *tatarrus*, dealing with human shields. If the enemy is shielded by women or children, they, too, become permissible targets. Similarly, since states tend to be comparatively superior militarily (making open warfare unviable), the only practical way of waging war is through asymmetrical means and tactics, away from the actual battlefield (Maher 2016, 59). With the limited geographical territory Hamas has to choose from, they have no choice but to wage asymmetric warfare in densely populated areas where civilians are put in harm’s way (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2008, 150-151). All three groups recognise the necessity and application of human shields. Where Muslims and non-Muslims cannot be differentiated, moreover, intension takes precedent. Everyone become potential targets as long as intentions of harming the enemy exist.

¹⁸ E.g. Ayman al-Zawahiri on weapons of mass-destruction (WMD): ‘Is it not all the more proper for us to use such means [WMD] by way of equivalence? ... To bomb them as they are blowing us up.’ (in Maher 2016, 52).

All three groups also advocate the importance of martyrdom and dying for the sake of Islam. Self-sacrifice is seen as the most noble display of jihad and grants double rewards – attainment of paradise in the afterlife, and honour and bounties to families left behind (Lewis 2003, 153; Litvak 2010). The honour given to families is obvious in the following statement by a Finnish IS fighter, stating that ‘my son was martyred, and this was yet another blessing ... what could be better than him being killed for the cause of Allah?’ (Dabiq 2016a, 39). The nobility given to the practice is made evident in a 2003 interview by the then Hamas leader Sheikh Yassin: ‘This is a society raised on war and it wears the clothes of occupation. We have the right to retaliate if they kill our civilians and target them ... A sacrifice in this way is for the nation and brings our people one step closer to liberation (in Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2008, 141). AQ’s Bin Laden has even corrected a statement by one of the Prophet Muhammed’s own companions, replacing ‘death matters little, if your hour is come’ with ‘death matters little, *when* [emphasis added] the time is come’ (bin Laden in Saghi 2008, 70). Zarqawi, continuously inspiring his successor Baghdadi’s indiscriminate use of violence, argued: ‘triumph and power can grow only if it is watered with blood and persistence, that the global Muslim community can live only on the odor of martyrdom and the perfume of blood spilled in God’s name.’ (Zarqawi in Milelli 2008, 260).

A clear difference exist between AQ and IS’s more idealistic strategies compared to the more pragmatic one of Hamas. These differences in grand strategy are crucial to understand growing aversion towards cooperation. The long-term strategy of AQ versus the short-term and immediate strategy of IS point to immediate issues of contention between the two groups. Despite similar end-goals, their strategies of getting their differ greatly. Hamas’s nationalist strategy is not even seen as a viable strategy to begin with for AQ and IS due to the reliance it puts on modern, internationally recognised nation-state borders – fundamentally opposed by both. This is noteworthy as the issue of Palestinian independence, and Muslims’ right to its territory, remains a primary issue for Muslims worldwide, regardless of Islamic leaning. The timeframe of Hamas’s nationalist strategy remains relatively open-ended. While independence is sought as quickly as possible, the strategy remains the primary goal organisation until successfully accomplished. The scope of strategy makes for important distinctions, too. AQ and IS engage in more idealistic strategies, with an eventual end-point in a global caliphate. While the idea of an eventual usurpation of global Islamic land is ultimately ideal for Hamas, most of their strategical scope is limited to the nationalistic focus of an independent Palestine.

Ideology

Violent Religious Struggle – Jihad

Jihad, as mentioned above, refers to armed resistance, or warfare, in the name of God. In their work on identifying themes of violent extremist ideology, Saucier and colleagues (2006, 262-263) identify a ‘duty and obligation to kill’, and ‘glorification of dying for the cause’ as prevalent for violent extremists. Jihad is portrayed as exceedingly important for a group’s self-perception, and is essential for justification of their methods. All three groups use the concept of jihad as referring to armed combat, and an individual duty of every Muslim.

Distinctions are made between defensive and offensive jihad, and individual and collective duty. Defensive jihad means to expel the enemy from one’s own territory, and is an individual duty of every able-bodied Muslim. Whenever Islamic land is attacked, everyone has to take up arms. Nothing, after faith itself, is more important than repelling the enemy, and defensive combat is the best way to defend both religion and honour. Failing to do so is equal to heresy (Habeck 2010). Offensive jihad means to attack the enemy, or unbeliever, in their own country. This is a collective duty, and can be carried out by a smaller part of the Muslim community. Whereas offensive jihad is the deliberate act to conquer territory, defensive jihad arises organically in response to external events (Maher 2016, 38; Hegghammer 2008, 106-107).

To AQ, jihad is the “lifeblood” of Islam (Maher 2016, 39). Existing beyond human agency, it takes ‘precedence over feeding the hungry, even if the hungry would starve as a result’ (Zawahiri in Maher 2016, 33). According to one of the founding member and spiritual leader of AQ, Abdullah Azzam, ‘Islamic society needs to be born, but birth takes place in pain and suffering’ (in Hegghammer 2008, 119). Similarly, jihad is ‘the only solution’ to oppression and brutality towards Muslims, equalling Muslims to ‘orphans at a banquet for the villains’ (Zawahiri in Milelli 2008, 195), referring to enemies of Islam. Little to no choice is given in whether to wage jihad or not:

Any Muslim who cares about the victory of Islam must reject calls to stop jihad or slow it down, or to remove responsibility for jihad from the shoulders of the community ... at a time when our enemies are continually attacking our sanctuaries, our wealth, and all that we hold most sacred (Zawahiri 2002 in Lacroix 2008, 232).

Zawahiri adds, somewhat menacingly: ‘We call on the nation and all those who constitute it to join the caravan of jihad, to follow its path and strike at the enemy ... We want to

warn our community against passivity and disregard for the colossal dangers that face us' (Zawahiri 2002 in Lacroix 2008, 233), making jihad an absolute necessity put upon every Muslim. Failure to adhere to this practice equals failure towards the entire Muslim community.

IS have distanced themselves from AQ for not being steadfast *enough*. In recounting IS's history, the group's official spokesperson Abu Mohammad al-Adnani declared that as its previous manifestation Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) was established, any and all ties to AQ had been severed:

The leaders of Al-Qaeda deviated from the right methodology, we say this as sadness overwhelms us and bitterness fills our hearts ... Verily Al-Qaeda today is no longer the Qaeda of Jihad and so it is not the base of jihad. ... rather its leadership has become an axe supporting the destruction of the project of the Islamic State and the coming Caliphate (Adnani 2014 in Lister 2016, 215-216).

Furthermore, AQ had generally supported the popular uprisings of the Arab Spring against what they argued were apostate Arab regimes. IS thought AQ to be twisting the nature of jihad towards raising popular support and democracy instead of committing to the fight it was really meant to be (Stewart 2017). Disagreements and failure to wage jihad successfully, in their mind, is bound to end in calamity, resulting in 'blood being spilled and lives being lost' (Dabiq 2015, 9-10). Individual failure to wage jihad is a failure to the entire community: 'Your brothers all over the world are waiting for your rescue, and are anticipating your brigades' (Baghdadi 2014). IS reinforced their commitment to jihad following their declaration of an Islamic Caliphate spanning parts of Syria and Iraq in June 2014: 'the sun of jihad has risen. The glad tidings of good are shining. Triumph looms on the horizon. The signs of victory have appeared' (Dabiq 2014, 9). This – if not renewed, then at least spurred vigour – towards continued jihad is visible in later texts arguing that 'as long as there is an inch of territory left for us to reclaim, jihad will continue to be a personal obligation on every single Muslim' (Dabiq 2016a, 32), and further:

Jihad is the ultimate show of one's love for his Creator, facing the clashing of swords and buzzing of bullets on the battlefield, seeking to slaughter His enemies – whom he hates for Allah's hatred of them. A religion without these fundamentals is one that does not call its adherents to fully manifest and uphold the love of the Lord (Dabiq 2016a, 80).

Hamas, too, found itself in conflict with AQ and the larger Salafi-jihadi movement, though notably because of opposite reasons to what IS maintained - what Hamas believed to be *too*

fervent a commitment to jihad. The political nature in which Hamas exists, similarly, has proven a thorn in the side of AQ and likeminded groups in whether to continue granting Hamas support. Once Hamas won official elections in 2006, AQ changed their tone drastically and revoked support entirely (Habeck 2010). Hamas has been accused of being too lax in how they view Islamic rules. This struck a nerve internally and caused ideological conflict within the organisation, stressing the various ruptures taking place between and within militant Islamist groups. This is noteworthy as Hamas enjoyed friendly ties with Salafis-jihadis groups prior to entering parliamentary politics. In doing so, ties with these groups tarnished Hamas's own self-image, leading them to tone down potential ambitions of jihad. Hamas took pride in portraying itself as the most Islamic political faction in Palestine; keeping ties with militant Islamist groups threatened this portrayal (Brenner 2017, 75-76).

Hamas's military wing, the Qassam Brigades, experienced these internal clashes first-hand. Many members of the organisation were attracted by Salafi-Jihadi ideas and supported waging armed jihad. Following the 9/11 attacks, many had come to adopt the AQ notion of this practice, and argued for violent resistance towards the religiously impure. They, too, resisted the political characteristic of the organisation, and Hamas saw itself becoming gradually more radicalised ideologically. Contrary to what the political wing of Hamas wanted to achieve, the growing discontent of its membership actually seemed to drive more people toward surrounding Salafi-jihadi groups, achieving the opposite of what the organisation set out to do (Brenner 2017, 72-73).

As can be seen across the three groups, all commit to the practice of jihad rather unequivocally, all emphasising the central role it must play for the individual Muslim. This conviction has proven insufficient in fostering long-term cooperation. It is not an issue about *whether* to wage jihad or not, but *to what degree* it should be carried out. If these nuances are ignored in trying to understand terrorist groups, and the focus is simply on whether the practice is performed or supported, most militant Islamist groups would fall under the same label, equating them to be made from the same cloth. The scale upon which jihad evidently seems to exist on, however, plays a crucial role in understanding terrorist splintering.

Unfaithfulness & Disloyalty - Takfir

The idea of complete adherence to the Islamist doctrine is of crucial importance in how groups legitimise behaviour. Accusing others of takfir - a practice where a previously pious Muslim is argued unfaithful to the religion - has become a useful instrument for Islamist groups arguing

themselves to be carrying the banner of Islamic supremacy. To proclaim takfir on others make for a practice that can effectively recalibrate internal balances of power among Muslims. It is a subjective practice, where true adherents tend to be defined narrowly and disbelievers are painted in broad brushstrokes, changing it to fit the intended victim (Maher 2016, 82-84). Three categories of takfir are generally argued: apostate Muslim authorities and rulers; criminal offenders; and heretics (Shiites) (Maher 2016, 89-104). Accusations of insufficient adherence are used to make others lesser-than, or inherently flawed, compared to those with correct adherence. While groups tend to hold their own adherence to the highest of standards, judgment of others is fundamental in putting themselves above the rest (Cohen et al. 2018).

The practice of takfir has become an important issue for AQ, IS, and Hamas, though for rather opposite reasons. AQ and IS embrace it and emphasise its necessity in creating Islamic purity to their preferred levels. A notable difference between these two is the length to which IS is prepared to make use of this practice, usually applying it to any and all refusing IS's specific creed. AQ limits its use to cases of undisputable unfaithfulness, supposedly based off of less subjective interpretations. Takfir has been an important concept for Hamas, too, but for decidedly opposite reasonings, arguing for the *damaging* consequences the practice can have on the creation of a strong Islamic community backing their specific cause.

Takfir has become a useful practice for IS and AQ. Excommunicating those thought to undermine the ideology from within is done to safeguard doctrinal purity. It is seen as an effective way of creating violence among Muslims by creating boundaries of faith. The incessant questioning of who constitutes a true Muslim and who a disbeliever (a *kafir*) creates an in-group of pure Muslims, and an out-group of disbelievers (Maher 2016, 72). These subjective, though dogmatic, fault lines make for powerful tools in delegitimising anyone doubting or attacking those arguing themselves to be of perfect doctrinal adherence. While both AQ and IS rely on the practice, IS tends to take it considerable lengths compared to AQ. This is especially visible in how they view the relationship between Shiite and Sunni Muslims. Both groups consider Shiites to be on the wrong side of Islamic creed as they refuse to recognise the rightful successor of Prophet Muhammed, Abu Bakr. AQ's more lenient stance on the matter has perhaps less to do with whether or not Sunni and Shiite denominations of Islam are inherently heretical, however, and rather due to the fact that indiscriminate targeting of Muslims could lead to alienation of potential Muslim allies (Glenn 2015).

IS presents itself as the rightful replacement as the leader of global jihad, arguing anyone else to be falling short in creedal adherence. It projects an image of Sunni power, and by playing favourites in an already highly sectarian region, the hope is to make for an attractive prospect

for aggrieved Sunnis (Lister 2016). The group's predecessor, AQI with its leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, engaged in fratricidal civil war against Shiite communities during the Iraq war. This was meant to fuel sectarian tensions, hoping for retaliation from the Shiites which would lead Sunnis to fall prey to levels of aggression forcing them to see Islamist terrorist groups as the ultimate saviour. In Zarqawi's own words: 'next to faith, there is nothing more important than repulsing an assailant enemy who ruins the religion and the world' (Zarqawi in Maher 2016, 33). Shiites represents one such heretic enemy. As slaughtering along sectarian lines have continued, prospects of cooperation between AQI (now IS) and AQ seem increasingly slim (Kilcullen 2016, 23).

While both Zawahiri and Bin Laden of AQ have argued that Muslim dishonour comes from compromises on Islamic values and befriending disbelievers, they find themselves at odds with both Zarqawi's practices in Iraq, and IS's current stance on the absolute necessity to target the individual Shiite (Kilcullen 2016). While it is true that AQ think Shiites to be on the wrong side of Islam, they stress the importance of Muslim unity, speaking against the partisan extremism of Zarqawi and later Baghdadi (Lister 2016, 196). IS have argued that while these 'various jihad claimants' try to argue Shiites to be 'excused due to ignorance', if 'a claimant of Islam worships anything or anyone besides Allah, mocks Allah, or completely abandons submission to Him, then he cannot be considered a Muslim' (Dabiq 2016b, 37). *No one* is spared from IS's use of takfir: 'We call on them to think long before embarking to fight the Islamic State, which rules by that which Allah revealed. ... by fighting the Islamic State you fall into kufr [disbelief] whether you realize it or not' (Dabiq 2015, 16). Despite its staunch adherence to takfir, not even IS's own members can consider themselves protected from being labelled an infidel – a charge meriting death. As the organisation grew in numbers, parts of its membership base adopted even more extreme interpretations of Islam, turning the group's weapon of ideology against itself. These dissidents have broken off from the official organisation, even going so far as to calling Baghdadi himself an infidel (Mironova et al. 2017).

While the actual practice of takfir is not of particular importance to Hamas, a strong projection outwards of a strong and pure Islamic identity is paramount. This has been met with mixed feelings, placing the group between a rock and a hard place – parts of the membership demanding a more moderate position, and the other an even more hard-line Islamic one. It has been challenged on its Islamic credentials by other militant Islamists, most notably the Salafi-jihadi cohort (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010, 13). The picture painted of Hamas is made more complicated as many critics (particularly Western) liken it to a vanguard for Islamic fanaticism

(likening it to the very Salafi-jihadi groups arguing Hamas to actually be too lax). Hamas's own supporters, moreover, argue it to be a beacon of hope for Sunni Muslims.

Hamas rejects the practice of declaring takfir, emphasising the damaging aspect of declaring other Muslims infidels who would otherwise be able to strengthen one's own cause (Brenner 2017). Hamas's role as a political actor, for one, make aversion to more indiscriminate practices like takfir more likely. In wanting to create an entirely Islamic Palestine, use of practices potentially declaring its constituency unfaithful would hardly work in their favour to ensure votes.

While at least officially distancing itself from the broader Salafist movement (despite parts of its membership base preferring its principles), admonishment of takfir is not something limited to groups only located outside the Salafist movement. One of bin Laden's mentors, a prominent Salafi scholar named Salman al-Awdah, even reprimanded his former student's use of the practice: 'You are responsible – brother Osama – for spreading takfiri ideology and fostering a culture of suicide bombings that has caused bloodshed and suffering and brought ruin to entire Muslim communities and families', 'Is Islam only about guns and war? Have your means become the ends themselves?' (al-Awdah in Gerges 2011, 119).

Adherence to the practice of takfir is important to understand decreasing tolerance among the larger Islamist terrorist movement. While it is a practice mostly limited to militant Salafism, it remains important in understanding the aversion towards these groups as shown by others sharing Islamic and Islamist beliefs, as seen in Hamas. IS's dogmatic adherence to takfir, with little scrupulosity, even within the organisation itself, has made them reach draconian levels of devoutness even compared to other Islamist hard-hitters like AQ. In doing so, IS is able to portray the group as being inherently more Islamic than others, making it so barely anyone is deemed righteous enough to join the group. Strict adherence can help create a sense of exclusivity and superiority, aiding to explain the dedication seen among its members. Hamas's role as a political party and its vote-seeking behaviour stands in stark contrast here, requiring it to adopt a more approachable identity to garner votes, rendering the group less exclusive in terms of its Islamic identity. Given the importance of being able to portray a strong Islamic identity, this practice appears to carry considerable weight.

Oneness of God - Tawhid

Tawhid is a doctrine advocating for implementation of Islam in its totality in society – realising the absolute oneness and supremacy of God - including implementation of sharia law and Islam

as being given political authority (Maher 2016, 153–55). There is an absolute dichotomy between tawhid and everything else, creating a need for equally dogmatic acts and behaviour in upholding Islamic superiority. This can manifest itself as an ‘imperative to annihilate evil and/or purify the world entirely from evil’, or anything different from Islam (Saucier et al. 2009, 262), making it useful in allowing groups to admonish things they argue un-Islamic, and simultaneously hold their own practices to be in absolute accordance.

In his *Declaration of Jihad*, Osama bin Laden states: ‘It is no secret to you, my brothers, that the people of Islam have been afflicted with oppression, hostility, and injustice by the Judeo-Christian alliance and its supporters. This shows our enemies’ belief that Muslims’ blood is the cheapest’ (bin Laden 1996). War should be fought until ‘justice and faith in God altogether and everywhere’ exists, and Islamic superiority can be reclaimed. When Muslims choose not to engage in jihad to realise this goal, it is abandoned ‘out of love for this world and disgust at death’ (in Hegghammer 2008, 111). The 9/11 attacks of 2001, for example, worked to show the truth about the fight between Muslims and the enemy - the “Crusaders” - stripping ‘the wolf of its sheep’s clothing and showed ... its horrifying face’, referring to the drastic measures taken by the West towards the Middle East in response to the attacks, showing its supposed distain towards Muslims. The attacks therefore emphasised importance of ‘the doctrine of loyalty to God’, and represented a crucial step towards ‘unification of Muslims under the banner of monotheism’ as the attacks showed the enemy the strength held by the Islamic doctrine and warfare (in Saghi 2008, 63-64).

IS are equally severe in their interpretation of the omnipotence of God:

If they abandon their religion, their patience, their jihad against their enemy, and their certainty in the promise of their Creator, they are defeated and humiliated. And if they hold firmly to it, they will attain honor and be victorious, even if after some time, for indeed, the final outcome is for the righteous. (Baghdadi 2018)

Little room for manoeuvre for doctrinal interpretation exists, if any at all, emphasising the existence of ‘only one sect and only one creed ... run, governed, and protected by Sunni mujahedeen and as such is now completely unique in the splintering, infighting mess that is collectively referred to as the Middle East’ (Dabiq 2015, 49). They present themselves as being *the* oasis of stability and fundamental truth in an otherwise chaotic environment, equating all other loyalty faulty.

Further examples of supposed unbelief can be seen in Hamas’s political participation which have led them to sign onto international agreements. AQ especially, have branded them

as engaging in “doctrinal deviation”. In signing on to such agreements, and even participating in politics to begin with, Hamas is thought to recognise and accept democracy and all its vices; equating it to sacrilege. Rejecting God in this way means that they are no better than the heretics, and open war against Hamas becomes justified (Habeck 2010). In accepting democracy, Hamas had ‘fallen in the swamp of capitulation’ (Zawahiri 2007). Zawahiri stated further: ‘I appeal to all my Muslim brothers to set themselves free from the shackles of the organizations leading them into the mazes of politics. They should know that their affiliation with Islam is higher, more sublime, and more worthy than their affiliation with any group or organization’ (Zawahiri 2007). As shown, Hamas’s adherence to democratic politics are seen as dabbling in another religion, effectively leading to polytheism on Hamas’s part. Once a Muslim participates in *anything* other than politics or society guided fully by Islamic law and principles, their faith is nullified. Throughout 2006 and 2007, following Hamas’s first electoral win, AQ posited that the only way of ending conflict between them was to return to true tawhid, the denouncement of international accords and the resumption of global jihad together with AQ – the “honest fighters” – as one community and one religion.

Hamas was clear about its Islamic credo and stance:

In the name of Allah we will fight the Jews and liberate our land in the name of Islam. We will rid this land of the Jews and with Allah's strength our land will be returned to us and the Muslim peoples of the world. By God, we will not leave on Jew in Palestine. We will fight them with all the strength we have. This is our land, not the Jews’ ... (in Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010, 4).

Even Hamas’s flag is flanked by the words ‘There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the messenger of Allah’. The conflict between Hamas and Israel is made inherently religious, arguing that ‘The Jews made their religion their nation and their state. They have declared war on Muslims and our faith system of Islam’ (in Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010). The religions are two unbridgeable absolutes – one religion superseding all others, Islam, and the repealed Judaism (Litvak 2010).

While the notion of tawhid differs between groups when the importance of *other* concepts like jihad and takfir are taken into account, not least in their behaviour toward each other. They all champion the banner of total Islamic adherence over any other type of rule or governance, and by combining them with other practices and ideas they manage to find ways of delegitimising other militant Islamist movements. Hamas, most notably, show a more flexible reading of monotheism compared to AQ and IS. While they still emphasise the utmost importance that should be given to Islam and its role in guiding society and human behaviour,

they refrain from using it in as dogmatic ways as the more Salafi-leaning groups. Once again, the groups exist on a spectrum regarding what they believe to be permissible within the religion while still claiming perfect adherence for themselves. Movement on this spectrum in either direction, would mean compromise on inviolable Islamic values each group hold to be absolute.

Governance

Islamic Land – Territory and Governmental Capabilities in Theory and Practice

Violent Islamist groups believe society and politics should be ruled by Islamic values and creed. A crucial addition is the establishment of an Islamic state, or Islamic land (going back to the historic caliphates) guided purely by implementation of sharia law. Civil governments, and rule by regular men as superseding God - as is seen in modern nation states - are thus deemed illegitimate (Saucier et al. 2009).

Though AQ, IS and Hamas all want an Islamic state, there are important differences between the three groups in terms of establishment and what this might ultimately look like. Whereas IS and Hamas both have a relatively clear-cut image of what they picture an Islamic state to be, AQ has been notably absent with their input regarding any kind of blueprint on government. Their focus has been theoretical rather than practical. They have generally focused their efforts on developing their militaristic ideology of violent struggle, establishing themselves as a religious player to the larger Muslim community, improving public standing, and inspiring new followers (Maher 2016; Hoffman 2016). The re-establishment of a Caliphate remains an ultimate goal of AQ, but is something that cannot be established before the world and Muslim community has been properly primed for its arrival.

The 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement made between Great Britain, France, and Russia to divide up the Ottoman Empire into different spheres of influence in the event of its demise in World War I and subsequently redrawing borders of the Arab region and the Middle East has been a cause for great grievance to Islamist groups. It has been argued an attempt to fragment the Muslim world, indefinitely threatening the Ummah (Saghi 2008, 31). External influence determining the fate of the Middle East has reinforced AQ and IS's rejection of alternative forms of government other than an Islamic state. They refuse to believe in the possibility of creating democratic governments legitimately influenced by Islamic law (i.e. the moderate Islamist stance). As long as illegitimate regimes exist in the Arab region, establishment of a caliphate is stalled (Cragin 2009).

While IS have a reputation for extreme violence, Hamas and AQ appear similar in wanting to convince Muslims to adopt the respective group's views on their own terms, rather than by sheer force as advocated by IS. These views are clear in the following passage made by Zawahiri:

We must win the people's confidence, respect, and affection. The people will not love us unless they feel that we love them, care about them, and are ready to defend them. In short, the jihad movement must enter the battle in midst of the community and lead it to the battlefield (Zawahiri in Lacroix 2008, 196).

Islamism found itself a happy home among Palestinians and their fight to retake rightful Palestinian territory. Hamas inspired in people a new, victorious identity of being one with God, giving them a greater purpose and project of resurrecting the Muslim community. Not only would this free Palestine and its people, but Hamas also created the opportunity for people to become *good* Muslims when they joined the fight. Social activism functioned as a cornerstone of Hamas's work. The idea was to "Palestinianize Islam" by portraying itself as the embodiment of Islamic practices within Palestinian territory, and through creating social trends gain popular support (Dunning 2015). Indeed, as a successor of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas has taken comparable stances in emphasising the importance of societal renewal, communal welfare and education (Dunning 2015, 288). To this end, Hamas has been hard at work with providing governmental services such as education, social recreation, supplies, and health care to its population (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010).

While an end goal is to establish an Islamic state, Hamas have gradually dropped *absolutist* demands for such an entity, and has accepted the possible necessity of ideological compromise if this is to be successfully established (Delacoura 2006). The Palestinian cause is primarily 'a matter of faith and religion, and not one of earth and soil', emphasising the still *ultimate* goal of establishing an Islamic state and society. The thing of note, however, is the creeping realisation that short-term religious compromises might need to be made in order to successfully mobilise against adversaries (Litvak 2015, 506). Until Islamic governance can be fully established, Hamas considers, and justifies, political participation and electoral democracy as thinking it to be the lesser of two evils compared to dictatorship. This, once again, has been criticised by the likes of AQ and IS as taking power by means *other* than implementation of strict sharia rule, and is argued forbidden (Habeck 2010).

IS have worked their violent reputation to their advantage in a scarily effective way. Following the proclamation of their Islamic Caliphate across Iraq and Syria, it argued that 'by

way of its singularism, it is a better model for future stability in the region than any of the Gulf states supported or shaped by Western intervention that have subsequently declared war upon it' (Dabiq 2015, 50). While the brutality and excessive violence performed and experienced under IS rule are reasons enough for local populations to detest the group, oftentimes alternatives might be even worse; be that continued violence and conflict by militias once territory is recaptured, or the continuation of bolstered sectarian clashes spurred on by IS.

Violence has become an important policy instrument for IS to get people into submission and cooperation. It engages in brutal levels of violence, such as public beheadings, symbolic crucifixion and mass executions to terrorise and purify the population into obedience (Byman 2015; Kilcullen 2016). Once cooperation is enforced, IS brings governance and essential services to its populations, bringing material benefits in attempting to keep populations loyal. Governing territory in this way can contribute to some type of returned normality (Kilcullen 2016, 67). In IS-controlled territory, hospitals, mosques, and businesses were reopened and infrastructure reconstructed. Due to a lack of resources, as well as expertise, management and operation of local services were largely kept with their original employees, though with added oversight by IS. They also provided free healthcare and other charitable services to the poor¹⁹, and held "fun days" for children. Seen in isolation, then, life under IS rule may be argued comparatively positive (Lister 2016, 274). A goal of this type of state-building project is to create homegrown support within held territory – a crucial part in determining the group's continued success. Governing allowed IS to extract and enforce taxes and fines, making out the bulk of its finances along with gas and oil businesses (Revkin 2016; Gerges 2016, 269). Two primary obligations are put on citizens: exclusive allegiance to IS prohibiting association with other groups, and contribution either in way of material goods or military conscription (Revkin 2016).

Reasons for discontent among groups on this theme are relatively straight forward, primarily due to the timeframe given by each group in forming an Islamic state. IS, in establishing a caliphate as quickly as possible, contrasts AQ and Hamas's more long-term approach, and the necessity they give to laying down the proper groundwork prior to establishing an enduring caliphate. To establish a lasting caliphate, Muslims should find their own, preferably comfortable, place within the group and Islamic society. While AQ is not adverse to using violence, it differs to IS which rejects any such boundaries, applying indiscriminate violence towards any and all rejecting it. This relates once again to reasons

¹⁹ The practice of *zakat*, an alms-giving practice of providing a percentage tax of one's income to charity, is an obligatory tenet of Islam.

mentioned above: an unwillingness to risk alienating Muslim populations from joining the larger violent Islamist cause of reinstating Islamic supremacy. The more long-term approach to groups like AQ and Hamas is presumably also why the immediate implementation advocated by IS is seen as so radical. While not necessarily applicable to AQ, reliance and performance of governmental services differ, too. IS engages in a relationship with its population that is entirely built on strategic interest. Hamas does it more so because it genuinely sees itself to represent Palestinian and Islamists' best interests. One way of doing so successfully is through the use and recognition of political and electoral practices – something AQ and IS both fundamentally reject. When some groups within the militant Islamist movement recognise the use of political participation to strengthen Islamic identity and interests, those who stand in opposition, then, have no difficulty finding reasons to blame them for cosyng up to the very thing they detest, leading, perhaps unsurprisingly, to conflict within the broader movement.

Organisation and Leadership – Structure & Capabilities

Harking back to ideals of an Islamic state, there are clear differences among leaders of AQ and IS. To AQ leader Zawahiri and other AQ seniors, the idea of a caliphate is a vague, utopian ideal helping to unify groups within the larger movement, simply because of how far away the actual implementation of such a caliphate is. The opposite is true for IS and Baghdadi, where the caliphate is an immediate objective, contributing to disunity among the larger movement as opposed to unification (Kilcullen 2016, 34).

IS and AQ are similar in that leadership matters greatly for the portrayal of the group, both internally and externally. It can be likened to a cult of personality, though not necessarily towards a particular individual, but towards the leadership position in itself, whomever this might belong to. Depending on how leadership portrays and wields power matters for the respect they will receive internally, but also in how the group is perceived by outsiders. Both groups have gone to great lengths in establishing themselves as the main radical Salafist groups in the region. Whenever one of them loses power, others are there to fill the vacuum. Legitimacy is granted through devotional piety rather than any specific position. In fact, tethering religious legitimacy directly to a titular position is generally seen as incorrect (Maher 2016). Additionally, with the symbolic power held by the leadership, acknowledgement of Islamic adherence *is* a requirement. Arguments of any infallibility on the part of leaders may lead to methodological blindness and should be avoided (Lacroix 2008, 195). IS under Baghdadi's leadership, especially, represent a deviation to this notion; more on this below.

AQ leaders Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri originally came together because of shared sentiments towards Muslim humiliation being created by a loss of Islamic values, support of infidels, and materialism. AQ was created as a clandestine organisation, forged in the combat against society to create and rebuild a global revolution (Kilcullen 2016, 43). The structure has since changed. It kept a tight hierarchical structure for many years, placing power and legitimacy in the hands of top-ranking individuals and leaders. Over time, it has come to favour a more leaderless and abstract approach, engaging in a “leaderless jihad” with leaders being more so symbolic than they are power-wielding, though influence is still exercised. These leaders, be they bin Laden or Zawahiri, issue general statements of strategy, but the realisation of such plans is up to the independent actor or cell. AQ’s structure has been called a “dune-network”, too, referring to a structure where the core group *and* loosely affiliated groups continue actively use terrorist tactics within loosely defined, as opposed to strict, intervals of time (Mishal & Rosenthal 2005, 288). In moving away from more formal structures and systems, it reduces strategic coherence, and risks of compromise are reduced. In attempting to strengthen its global identity and presence, this type of disaggregated structure makes AQ into a sort of “network” of loosely coordinated groups, rather than a neatly concentrated group (Kilcullen 2016; Piazza 2009). While leadership is more symbolic at this point, it does need to live by good example for members to take after: ‘our only hope is to serve as a spearhead, a vanguard, a bridge the nation will cross toward the promised victory and the future to which we aspire’ (in Milelli, 267). If groups show slackening or weakening, it can be understood as indicative of the state of the entire battle they have committed themselves to fight.

IS’s state-like structure have contributed to a more rigid structure than those of a looser variety, like AQ. It is considerably more hierarchic than AQ, with a clear leader, deputies, ministers, governors and councils, with an extensive command-and-control process is used to steer the group. Through its considerable presence on the Islamist scene, the establishment of IS’s caliphate has created a highly competitive dynamic within the larger movement. In a hierarchical, top-down group like IS, strong personalities are pivotal in steering the organisation. In being the “protector of the organisation” and the “custodian of the faith”, Baghdadi demands himself to be held to higher esteem than his peers, and even other leaders like bin Laden or Zawahiri, for that matter. He bears the title of the *Amir al-mu’mineen*, the “Commander of the Faithful” – a title usually reserved for Caliphs - and claims to descend from the Quraysh tribe - the tribe of the Prophet Muhammed (Gerges 2016, 129; Tamimi 2010). Despite its more hierarchical and established structure of the organisation, IS remains widespread and global in reach. It makes use of established provinces, or *wilayats*, around the

world to further its influence, emphasising its world-revolutionary nature. This type of structure has been referred to as “glocal”, combining both a local or regional focus with global ambitions. As the official caliphate was declared in 2014, provinces and fighters fighting by their side, or in their name, and even Muslims in general, *must* swear allegiance (*bayat*) to the caliphate and Baghdadi, or face the consequences. Binding allegiance has been labelled a universal Islamic value. As IS issues statements, their provinces follow suit without need for further instructions. As such, IS, takes on a leaderless dimension, and potential defeat of the organisation becomes considerably harder (Kilcullen 2016; Gerges 2016; Bancherif 2017).

AQ promotes a more diffuse network of global insurgency of loosely connected groups and make use of franchises instead of provinces. These franchises are less connected to the core AQ group than *wilayats* are to IS. These franchises operate on their own accord and with their own agendas, though under the common banner of global jihad led by AQ (Gerges 2011).

Hamas is a highly bureaucratic organisation, making it more similar to IS than to AQ. The most striking differences to these groups is firstly, the political part of the organisation, and secondly, how decidedly non-diffuse it is in its structure. Its focus is solely in Palestine, and no efforts of expansion exist. Power is shared between three major parts – the political bureau, an external consultative (*Shura*) council, and the military wing, the Qassam Brigades²⁰. Hamas has been argued to function as a “chain network”, operating without a strong strict command and control structures, but still keeps a relatively strong sequence of communications throughout its ranks (Mishal & Rosenthal 2005, 286). The division of labour and exact responsibilities of these wings are not entirely clear, and are kept under relative secrecy to minimise risk of exposure. These have further been argued by Hamas themselves to work separately and independently of each other. This claim has been disputed by many, however, marking it as a “public myth”, and noting that the two work together more closely than the organisation says it to (Brenner 2017).

While AQ and IS are fronted by figures operating within something resembling cult of personality leaderships, Hamas is not necessarily led by the will of one individual, although distinct leaders exist (Mishal & Sela 2006, 173; Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2008). Hamas exist The actual nature of organisations’ leaderships notwithstanding, all three groups use *other* leaderships as frequent target practice when behaviour or ideas are criticised or admonished, as can be seen throughout this analysis. While leadership figures themselves may have varying degrees of actual input into the larger organisations’ doings, they are nonetheless seen as

²⁰ The military wing, specifically, is present on a number of terrorist group lists. This has been extended to the entirety of the organisation by some, perhaps most notably the EU (EU 2019).

integral parts of each organisation's projected identity experienced by external actors. Regardless of the actual sensitivity these groups have to leadership changes internally, leadership does play an important symbolic role in how the groups are perceived outwards.

Judiciary & Law and Order – Laws & Religion

Since AQ does not have any type of caliphate or state established, *actual* judiciary or law-enforcement is difficult to comment on. An Islamic state remains a utopia only reachable in the distant future, and so what judiciary within this state would look like is yet to be realised. What they do emphasise is the failure of Islam in Muslim regions due to a lack of exposure to Sharia law faithful enough – similar to the other two groups (Maher 2016). Islamic rule and its enforcement does differ between IS and Hamas, however.

Hamas finds itself, yet again, between the hammer and the anvil when it comes to the extent of enforcing Islamic law and values in society. Not everybody agrees unconditionally to their ultimate goal of wanting to establishing a wholly Islamic state; and the question remains whether they should apply strict versions of sharia immediately, or submit to the wills of already established judicial bodies and therefore compromise on Islamic values. They wanted broader applicability and practice of sharia, something which could only be done by compromise, leading them to reinstate statutory, military *and* sharia courts, where previously existing courts had only dealt with family matters (Brenner 2017, 144). Hamas, once again, is seen as accepting the idea of making compromises in their ideals in favour of meeting demands of the Palestinian society. Even still, Hamas's willingness to make concessions on Islamic values and sharia law makes for yet another example of why the stricter groups like AQ and IS are unable to commit to successful cooperation.

Palestinian territory has a complicated history with judiciary. There exists a battle of wills between community and custom, on the one hand, and government and official institutions, on the other. Independent judiciary and rule of law have struggled to solidify power and influence over Gazan society, leading traditional customary law and practices to attempt to re-establish some level of communal harmony. The extended family as a whole becomes the legal person rather than the individual within these circumstances. There is a collective responsibility to minimise exposure to legal transgressions, and if offences are committed, the entire family takes collective offense. Reconciliation is made through negotiation and compensatory measures (*urf*, i.e. "eye for an eye") rather than through official courts, either through monetary compensation, threat of shame, or retaliatory measures (*thar*, i.e. blood

revenge). While Hamas regards customary law unfavourably within the Gazan society to begin with, they realised its usefulness in stabilising the deteriorating security situation within its borders. The two types of law have since become complementary rather than competing (Brenner 2017).

While fear and coercion matter in IS-led governance overall, their rule still hold relative legitimacy compared to worse alternatives. Granted, individual and political freedoms are severely limited, but the group still maintain the need for these rights to be legally enforceable in courts (so called “complaints” departments). While perhaps well-intentioned in their own mind, the ultimate arbiter remains IS itself (Revkin 2016).

Both IS and Hamas take additional measures to ensure obedience of established Islamic codes of conduct. This has become especially relevant in Hamas’s work as more Salafist values have spread among its rank and file, particularly within its military wing. As these have become more prevalent, efforts to preserve such values have increased. To this end, Hamas have made use of a morality police, patrolling their territory to ensure appropriate and right levels of modesty and humility, warning people of transgressing stipulated codes of conduct and dress codes (Brenner 2017). IS, to an even greater degree, have made use of their respective morality police - *Hisbah* - in enforcing religious regulations and rules. These include strict forbiddance of smoking, music, alcohol, and photos in public places, strict female clothing rules, and men needing to attend all five daily prayers at the mosque (Lister 2016; Speckhard 2018). Not only are strict sharia laws imposed on Muslim citizens, strict laws are also enforced on non-Muslims living within its territory. This refers particularly to the notion of non-Muslims – Jews and Christians – as belonging to dhimmi pacts, or being dhimmi citizens, meaning that they have to pay a religious poll tax – the *jizya* – to be able to live within Islamic territory and expect protection. If payment is not made, any right to protection is lost. All three groups allow for it, and indeed forces it upon others, but the degree to which these poll taxes ensure protection differs between groups. IS, as has been explored, targets non-Muslims, but also non-Sunni Muslims, with excruciating discriminatory violence, and any misstep risks removing protection (Lister 2016, 207; al-Tamimi 2014). AQ tends to come across as having a somewhat more tolerant approach towards non-Muslims within their bounds as long as they behave correctly. Leader Zawahiri has been critical towards those not in absolute opposition towards apostate regimes, equating it to actually being in support of these regimes. Muslim civil servants, workers, media, and thinkers have all been blamed for their tacit rejection. This has given rise to the question: ‘who is paying the *jizya* to whom?’, referring to how these Muslims all accept salaries paid by these regimes (argued as disguised support in these cases) (Lacroix 2008, 228).

Hamas have an interesting relationship to non-Muslims, especially Palestinian Christians. Palestinian Christians are generally seen as having shared the same history and tragedy as Muslims; they have experienced the same aggression and imperialism by the enemy, and have lived 'as one body' in the face of battles and hardships (Litvak 1996, 513-514). Regardless, Hamas still support jizya for all non-Muslims. One Hamas member of parliament stated in a televised speech that 'we must restore them [the Jews] to the state of humiliation imposed upon them. They should be dhimmi citizens. This status must be imposed upon them by war. They must pay the jizya security tax while they live in our midst' (Al-Astal 2014).

Yet again, rejection of other Islamist terrorist groups in terms of imposed laws are made based on the willingness to compromise on what ought to be strict implementation of Islamic rule. IS's rejection of anything or anyone belonging to groups other than Sunni Muslims, or adhering to laws other than the strict interpretation of Islamic rule they themselves promote, means that AQ and Hamas stand in refusal to true Islam. Seen the other way around, IS represent a group out of tune with the rest of the Muslim ummah, portraying a movement unable to reconcile with the Muslim population at large.

2. Overview of intra-, and inter-categorical similarities and differences, as described in the analysis.

	<i>Enemy</i>	<i>Strategy and tactics</i>	<i>Religious Warfare - Jihad</i>	<i>Unfaithfulness - Takfir</i>	<i>Oneness of God - Tawhid</i>	<i>Islamic Land & Governance</i>	<i>Structure & Leadership</i>	<i>Judiciary & Laws</i>
<i>AQ</i>	The “far enemy”, focusing on the US and the West.	“Long war” approach; Utopian ideal of an Islamic State exists in the distant future. Large-scale indiscriminate attacks.	Individual duty of every Muslim. A principal tenant of Islam. Indiscriminate targeting.	Recognises the practice as legitimate, but remains cautious in its application due to its implications for the larger Islamist cause.	Rejects faiths other than Islam.	No real blueprint of Islamic governance and territory. Utopian ideal.	Abstract, “leaderless”, and network-based. Symbolic leadership.	Sharia law guiding society. Religious tax to be paid by non-Muslims.
<i>IS</i>	The “near enemy”, focusing on regional apostate regimes prior to pursuit of global targets.	“Remain and expand” strategy; Immediate establishment of an Islamic State and expansion thereafter. Militarily sophisticated, indiscriminate attacks.	Individual duty of every Muslim. Perceived superior adherence to the practice. Others lack their devoutness.	Proclaims takfir on any Muslim unwilling to accept their practices.	Complete rejection of non-Muslims and non-Sunnis, alike.	Islamic state as immediate goal. Services and provisions provided. Violent repercussions in case of disloyalty.	Hierarchical structure. Leaderless in its global projection of its brand.	Strict sharia law guiding society with morality police to ensure absolute adherence.
<i>Hamas</i>	Israel and the Jewish population.	Retaking Palestinian territory from Israeli occupation.	Individual duty of every Muslim. Competing views internally on the degree to which jihad should be promoted outwards.	Rejects the idea of issuing takfirs on fellow Muslims. Damaging in creating support.	Rejection of Judaism. Acknowledgement of Palestinian Christians.	Islamisation of Palestinian society. Education and services provided.	Hierarchical structure. Divided into a military and political wing, though with disputable independence.	Sharia law guiding society. Customary law over statutory law. Morality police.

Conclusions

Equating Islamist terrorist groups as being one and the same is not only unfair, but woefully incorrect. By emphasising a lack of comprehensive studies on the subject, this thesis attempts to show the importance of contextualisation, thereby adding to an emerging field of research - fragmentation within the broader Islamist terrorist movement. To do so, this thesis presents an inventory, though by no means exhaustive in scope, of important issues of contention existing between three well-known and well-established (Sunni) Islamist terrorist groups to describe current splintering, as well as point to the importance of complex and nuanced portrayals to create informed understandings of the larger phenomenon of Islamist terrorism.

The results of this thesis show an atomised movement – by no means as homogenous as many portrayals would like to suggest - with noteworthy differences between groups facilitating current splintering; strategical and governmental matters relating to grand strategy and ideas of Islamic land and rule appear especially important. Differences along strategical lines make a cohesive movement unlikely. Ideological differences are important not only in whether groups agree with the religious motivations of others’ – something argued important to facilitate cooperation in begin with - but also seem important for intra-group harmony and stability. Conflicting internal values have been shown an important factor for disagreement to exist *within* groups, making it an effective starting-point in sowing seeds of organisational fragmentation.

To be able to successfully counter terrorist organisations and the threat they pose, one must have an understanding of both external *and* internal behaviours and conducts of these groups. If focus is only put on one type of factor, such as violent activity - ultimately the reason why these groups are being studied - much is left unknown as to what brings about specific behaviour. More comprehensive and inclusive studies create more coherent analyses able to show groups in a more pragmatic light – something hopefully shown by the results of this thesis. Furthermore, the analysis shows that while there are a number of areas where groups *are*, indeed, similar and share characteristics with each other, it would be incorrect to say that these groups are made from the same cloth, creating an unfair and unnuanced representation of what the phenomenon actually entails. Depending on where the most competition and contention between group lies, bespoke ways of targeting each of these differences will likely be necessary to sufficiently counter them. Each issue pose different challenges, making any one-size-fits-all solution the incorrect way forward in mitigating or containing the threat of terrorism.

Moreover, these findings can be used for further development of theoretical frameworks or typologies mapping out differences among Islamic terrorist groups. Given the focus on Sunni groups, any meaningful applicability on the broader (non-Islamist) terrorist movement is unlikely from these results. (Militant) Islamism is not limited to Sunni groups, however, and the categories analysed in this thesis pertains to militant Islamism largely (i.e. the idea of seeking Islamic adherence and rule to guide society by use of violence), making them a possible feature, to at least some degree, of non-Sunni Islamist groups, as well.

In arguing for the importance of contextualisation, however, similar studies would undoubtedly be needed on other types of religiously (or otherwise) motivated terrorism to better understand its intricacies. I contend that while the results of this study are by no means exhaustive of (Sunni) Islamist terrorism, they do represent a foundation upon which further research on Islamist terrorism could, and perhaps should, be built upon; either in the form of adding new broader categories, or to bring more complexity to the ones already identified.

References

- Abrahms, Max. 2010. "Lumpers versus Splitter: A Pivotal Battle in the Field of Terrorism Studies." <https://www.cato-unbound.org/2010/02/10/max-abrahms/lumpers-versus-splitters-pivotal-battle-field-terrorism-studies> (March 15, 2019).
- Al-Astal, Yunis. 2014. "We Must Massacre Jews, Impose Jizya Poll Tax on Them" *Memri TV*. <https://www.memri.org/tv/hamas-mp-al-astal-we-must-massacre-jews-impose-jizya-poll-tax-them/transcript>.
- Al-Tamimi, Aymenn J. 2014. "The Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham's dhimmi pact for the Christians of Raqqa province". <http://www.aymennjawad.org/14472/the-islamic-state-of-iraq-and-ash-sham-dhimmi>.
- Asal, Victor, and R. Karl Rethemeyer. 2008. "The Nature of the Beast: Organizational Structures and the Lethality of Terrorist Attacks." *Journal of Politics* 70(2): 437–49.
- Baghdadi, Abu Bakr. 2018. "And Give Glad Tidings to Those Who Are Patient." *Al-Hayat Media Center*. <https://kyleorton1991.files.wordpress.com/2018/09/abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-2018-08-22-give-glad-tidings-to-the-patient.pdf>.
2014. "A Message to the Mujahidin and the Muslim Ummah in the Month of Ramadan." *Al-Hayat Media Center*. <https://scholarship.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/bitstream/handle/10066/14241/ABB20140701.pdf>
- Bencherif, Adib. 2017. "From Resilience to Fragmentation: Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Jihadist Group Modularity." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 00(00): 1–19.
- Bin-Laden, Osama. 1996. "Declaration of Jihad against Americans." *Milestone Documents in World History* 1996. [https://www.911memorial.org/sites/default/files/Osama bin Laden's 1996 Fatwa against United States.pdf](https://www.911memorial.org/sites/default/files/Osama%20bin%20Laden's%201996%20Fatwa%20against%20United%20States.pdf).
- Brenner, Björn. 2017. *Gaza Under Hamas: From Islamic Democracy to Islamist Governance*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Byman, Daniel. 2015. "Terrorism in Africa: The Imminent Threat to the United States: Prepared Testimony before the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence of the House Committee on Homeland Security." (March): 1–8. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Byman-AQ-v-IS-HSC-042315-2.pdf>.
- Celso, A. N. 2012. "Al Qaeda's Post-9/11 Organizational Structure and Strategy: The Role of Islamist Regional Affiliates." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 23(2): 30–41.
- Cohen, Shuki J, Arie Kruglanski, Michele J Gelfand, and David Webber. 2018. "Al-Qaeda's Propaganda Decoded: A Psycholinguistic System for Detecting Variations in Terrorism Ideology Al-Qaeda's Propaganda Decoded: A Psycholinguistic System for Detecting Variations in Terrorism Ideology." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 30(1): 142–71.

- Collier, David. 1993. "The Comparative Method." In *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*, ed. Ada W. Finifter. Washington, DC.: The American Political Science Association, vii–535.
- CEP, Counter Extremism Project. 2019. " Hamas".
<https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/hamas>
- Cragin, Kim. 2007. "Understanding Terrorist Ideology."
- Donker, Teije Hidde. 2013. "Re-Emerging Islamism in Tunisia: Repositioning Religion in Politics and Society." *Mediterranean Politics* 18(2): 207–24.
- Drisko, James W., and Tina Maschi. 2015. "Qualitative Content Analysis." In *Content Analysis*, , 1–40.
- Duderija, Adis, and Halim Rane. 2019. "Islam and Muslims in the West." *Islam and Muslims in the West* (Rane 2009): 161–82.
- Duyvesteyn, Isabelle. 2004. "How New Is the New Terrorism?" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27(5): 439–54.
- El Fadl, Khaled Abou. 2001. "Islam and the Theology of Power." *Middle East Report* 221(221): 28–33.
- Esposito, John. 2001. "The Future of Islam." *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 25(2): 1–31.
- European Union (2019). Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/25 of 8 January 2019. Available from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32019D0025&from=EN>
- Fairak, Amani. 2010. "Sharia." In *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion*, , 849–450.
- Filiu, Jean-Pierre. 2009. "The Local and Global Jihad of Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghrib." *Middle East Journal* 63(2): 213–26.
- Fletcher, George P. 2006. "The Indefinable Concept of Terrorism." *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 4(5): 894–911.
- George, Alexander L, and Andrew Bennett. 2004. "Case Studies and Social Sciences." *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*.
- Gerges, Fawas A. 2016. *ISIS: A History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
2011. *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*. New York: Oxford University Press USA.
- Gibbs, Jack P. 1989. "Conceptualization of Terrorism". *American Sociological Review* , 54(3): 329–40.

- Glenn, Cameron. 2015. "Al Qaeda v ISIS: Ideology & Strategy". *The Wilson Center*.
<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/al-qaeda-v-isis-ideology-strategy>
- Habeck, Mary. 2010. 3 *Al-Qa'ida and Hamas : The Limits of Salafi-Jihadi Pragmatism*.
 Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point (CTC).
- Halperin, Sandra, and Oliver Heath. 2012. *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*.
 1st ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hamid, Shadi, and Rashid Dar. 2016. "Islamism, Salafism, and Jihadism: A Primer."
Brookings Institute. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2016/07/15/islamism-salafism-and-jihadism-a-primer/> (February 22, 2019).
- Hathout, Hassan. 1995. *Reading The Muslim Mind*. American Trust Publications.
- Hegghammer, Thomas. 2014. "International Arbitration and Global Governance: Contending
 Theories and Evidence." In *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, eds.
 Walter Mattli and Thomas Dietz. , 45–66.
2008. "Abdallah Azzam." In *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, eds. Gilles Kepel and Jean-
 Pierre Milelli. London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 363.
- Hoffman, Bruce. 2016. "The Coming ISIS-al-Qaeda Merger. *Foreign Affairs*.
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-03-29/coming-isis-al-qaeda-merger>.
- Hsieh, Hsiu-Fang, and Sarah E Shannon. 2005. "Three Approaches to Qualitative Content
 Analysis." *Qualitative health research* 15(9): 1277–88.
- Kibble, David G. 2002. "Evidence of a Clash of Religions ?" *World Trade* (September 2001):
 34–45.
- Kilcullen, David. 2016. *Blood Year: Islamic State and the Failures of the War on Terror*.
 London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd.
- Kramer, Martin. 1996. "Islam vs. Democracy."
<http://martinkramer.org/sandbox/reader/archives/islam-vs-democracy/> (April 9, 2019).
- Kydd, Andrew H, and Barbara F Walter. 2006. "The Strategies of Terrorism The Strategies of
 Terrorism." *International Security* 31(1): 49–79.
- Lacroix, Stéphane. 2008. "Ayman Al-Zawahiri." In *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, eds. Gilles
 Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli. London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press,
 363.
- Levitt, Matthew. 2017. "Shutting the Door to the Islamic State." *The Washington Institute*.
<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/closing-the-door-against-isis>
- Lewis, Bernard. 2003. *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*. New York: Modern
 Library184.

2002. *What Went Wrong? : Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Maher, Shiraz. 2016. *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*. Penguin Books.
- Mahoney, Charles W. 2017. "Splinters and Schisms: Rebel Group Fragmentation and the Durability of Insurgencies." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 00(00): 1–20.
- Masri, Lena and Ali Abdelaty. 2019. "Instructions from headquarters: Islamic State's new guerrilla manual". *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-security-islamic-state/instructions-from-headquarters-islamic-states-new-guerrilla-manual-idUSKCNISU19J>
- Milelli, Jean-Pierre. 2008. "Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi." In *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, eds. Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli. London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 363.
- Miller, Judith. 1993. "The Challenge of Radical Islam." *Foreign Affairs* 72(2): 217–23. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1993-03-01/challenge-radical-islam>
- Milton-Edwards, Beverley, and Stephen Farrell. 2010. *Hamas*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Mishal, Shaul, and Maoz Rosenthal. 2005. "Al Qaeda as a Dune Organization: Toward a Typology of Islamic Terrorist Organizations." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28(4): 275–93.
- Mishal, Shaul, and Avraham Sela. 2006. *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Morrison, John Francis. 2017. "Splitting to Survive: Understanding Terrorist Group Fragmentation." *Journal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice* 3(3): 222–32.
- Neumann, Peter R. 2013. "Options and Strategies for Countering Online Radicalization in the United States." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 36(6): 431–59.
2014. *The New Jihadism: A Global Snapshot*. London. <http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/ICSR-REPORT-The-New-Jihadism-A-Global-Snapshot.pdf>.
- Ousman, A.. 2004. "The Potential of Islamist Terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa." *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 18(1): 65.
- Pipes, Daniel. 1998. "Distinguishing between Islam and Islamism." *Center for strategic and International Studies - June 30, 1998*. <http://www.danielpipes.org/954/distinguishing-between-islam-and-islamism> (April 9, 2019).
- Revkin, Mara. 2016. "ISIS' Social Contract." *Foreign Affairs*.
- Robinson, Chase F. 2013. "The First Islamic Empire." *The Roman Empire in Context: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (March 2019): 229–48.

- Saghi, Omar. 2008. "Osama Bin Laden." In *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, eds. Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli. London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 363.
- Saucier, Gerard et al. 2009. "Patterns of Thinking in Militant Extremism." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 4(3): 256–71.
- Schmid, Alex. 2004. "Terrorism - The Definitional Problem." *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* 36: 8–23.
2012. "The Response Problem as a Definition Problem." In *Terrorism: A Reader*, eds. John Horgan and Kurt Braddock. New York: Routledge, 1–504.
- Seawright, Jason, and John Gerring. 2008. "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research." *Political Research Quarterly* 61(2): 294–308.
- Speckhard, Anne. 2018. "The Islamic State Hisbah". *International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism*. <https://www.icsve.org/the-islamic-state-hisbah/>
- State, Islamic. 2016a. "Dabiq 15: Break the Cross." Al-Hayat Media Center.
- 2016b. Dabiq 13: The Rafidah, from Ibn Saba' to the Dajjal. Al-Hayat Media Center.
2015. "Dabiq 12: Just Terror." *Dabiq* 12: 66. Al-Hayat Media Center.
2014. "Dabiq 1: The Return of Khilafa." : 1–82. Al-Hayat Media Center.
- Stewart, Scott. 2017. *Can the Islamic State and al Qaeda Find Common Ground?*. Stratfor. Available at: <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/can-islamic-state-and-al-qaeda-find-common-ground>.
- Tamimi, Azzam. 2007. *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*. London: Hurst & Company.
- Towns, A. (2017). *Kvalitativ textanalys*. In Esaiasson et al. (2017), *Metodpraktikan: Konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad* (5ed.). Stockholm: Wolters Kluwer.
- Al-'Ubaydi, Muhammad, Nelly Lahoud, Daniel Milton, and Bryan Price. 2014. Combating Terrorism Centre at West Point *The Group That Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State*. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-group-that-calls-itself-a-state-understanding-the-evolution-and-challenges-of-the-islamic-state%5Cnhttps://www.ctc.usma.edu>.
- UCDP, Uppsala Conflict Data Program. 2018. "Hamas". <https://ucdp.uu.se/#actor/209>.
- Voll, John O. 2013. "Political Islam and the State." In *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*, , 56–67.
- Weinberg, Leonard, Ami Pedahzur & Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler. 2004. "The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism". *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 16(4). 777-794.

Wight, Colin. 2015. *Rethinking Terrorism: Terrorism, Violence and the State*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Zawahiri, Ayman. 2007. "Palestine Is Our Concern and the Concern of Every Muslim." : 1–6. <https://scholarship.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/bitstream/handle/10066/4731/ZAW20070311.pdf?sequence=4>.